



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

House of Commons Debates

VOLUME 148 • NUMBER 109 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 17, 2016

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 17, 2016

The House met at 10 a.m.

(Division No. 152)

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 10 petitions.

While I am on my feet, I would also like to at this point in time move a motion.

I move:

That the House do now proceed to the Orders of the Day.

The Speaker: 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 Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1040)

[Translation]

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

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson

Government Orders

Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Robillard	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Tabbara	Tan
Tassi	Tootoo
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Whalen
Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Zahid — 167	

Zimmer — 113

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.*[English]*

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, I just wanted a clarification. Normally in the morning is the opportunity for individual members to raise issues, for example, petitions from Sault Ste. Marie by people who feel their voices are not being heard in this Parliament.

Is this procedural game by the Liberals erasing our right as parliamentarians to speak on behalf of the people who sent us here?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. I think the hon. member is familiar with the situation. I am not sure this is a point of order as much as a point of debate. I think he has made the point he wished to make.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS*[English]***CANADA PENSION PLAN**

BILL C-26—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.) moved:

That, in relation to Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, not more than one further sitting day shall be allotted to the consideration at second reading stage of the bill;

and

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

● (1045)

[Translation]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

I invite hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise in their place so the Chair has some idea of the number of members who wish to participate in this question period.

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Beaulieu	Benson
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boucher
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brassard	Brousseau
Brown	Calkins
Cannings	Caron
Carrie	Choquette
Clement	Cooper
Deltell	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dusseault	Egliniski
Falk	Garrison
Généreux	Genuis
Gill	Gladu
Gourde	Harceastle
Harder	Hoback
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Kmiec
Kwan	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukivski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Raves
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tilson
Trost	Trudel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vecchio	Viersen
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Weir	Wong

*Government Orders**[English]*

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that I rise to ask this question today. On this piece of legislation, the Minister of Finance has obviously abdicated his role and his duty to be in this place to speak up and defend his own legislation. We have seen these time allocation motions before, where the Liberals do not give any compelling reason. I am looking for a compelling reason why the bill needs to be pushed at this time in this way. I do not want platitudes. I want to hear how pushing the bill forward is going to help anyone except the government in pushing its agenda through.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for giving me the opportunity to start off with two congratulatory statements.

First, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Finance, who worked very hard with the provinces and territories over the past few months to wrap up a long and serious conversation about issues related to income security for seniors.

The discussion was so focused that in June, after a few weeks of work, all of the provinces affected by the enhancement of the Canada pension plan reached an agreement with the Canadian government to enhance it. As we all know, this will have a major impact on income security for seniors and the opportunity for all current and future workers to be fully integrated into the labour market.

Second, I would like to congratulate the many members of the House who took the opportunity to express their views on this issue. Sixty of our colleagues worked very hard to speak to this matter at second reading.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Beloil—Chambly, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we heard the outrage expressed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons yesterday. As he said, he wanted to work. One of the most important components of our work here happens in parliamentary committees.

Time allocation is inherently undemocratic. The government is currently preventing parliamentary committees from doing their job. This affects more than just parliamentarians; we also have to think about the witnesses who have been invited.

• (1050)

[English]

I will give some examples of witnesses who have come to Ottawa, who have come to committees to testify, who now either will not be able to testify or will testify for a shorter period of time because of this kind of action. At the agriculture committee, we have the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, Soy Canada, Food and Beverage Ontario, and the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. At the health committee, we have Alzheimer's Disease International, the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, and the Council of Senior Citizens' Organizations of British Columbia.

If the Liberals are not going to respect Parliament, can they at least respect those witnesses?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for pointing out how important it is that we hear not only from the members of this House, but also from the witnesses who are to appear before the parliamentary committee to share their views on this important bill.

Not only does the bill make significant changes in terms of reducing income insecurity for our seniors, but it also increases opportunities for workers to integrate the labour market, particularly those most vulnerable, because it gives them better, easier access to a sound public pension plan, now and for many years to come.

[English]

May I also suggest that we have had, in this House, six days of full discussion at second reading of this bill and six additional days for Bill C-29. That means that we have allocated 27% of the total available time for government business, between September and December, for only these two bills at second reading.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to say that the government is actually misleading Canadians by saying that we have debated this for six days, but the truth is the truth. The government has misled Canadians in terms of the \$10-billion deficit it is willing to put forth. Again, what we are seeing from the government is that if it does not like what it is hearing from the other side, or from Canadians, it is going to ram it through.

There are 338 members of Parliament who have been elected to be the voices of Canadians. The government is muzzling those members of Parliament. We have not had a chance to actually represent our ridings in a speech or talk about how the government is effectively neglecting rural Canada. This is shameful. How is this being open and transparent?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, may I also signal that our Conservative friends have been very active on this bill. I congratulate and welcome their input. They have had 35 members of their party, which is more than a third of their caucus, contribute actively to this important debate. We, of course, look forward to hearing their views later on in committee as well as at third reading of the bill.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question, actually, is for the government House leader.

Since I became House leader in September, and it was a new position for her, we have been working together in good faith. There have been many bills on which our members did not want to speak. They said that they did not have a lot to say on specific bills, and bills have been able to get through and the government has been able to accomplish things. We negotiated those things in good faith. However, we asked that our members be able to speak on these really important fiscal bills, the budget bill and the CPP bill.

Government Orders

Just over a third of our members have been able to speak to this bill. The government did not say that it was going to give us four or five days. It just sprung this on us, twice in one week. It has absolutely wrecked any goodwill we had. It has changed the tone, and it is not a good tone that is going on right now.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to provide further details on the important responsibility we, as parliamentarians, have, not only to members of this House but to Canadians.

We want to have an open and constructive debate on the important issues my colleague has signalled. We also want to fulfill our responsibilities and the expectations of Canadians. That means that when it is time to allocate the important days we have for discussions in this House, we need to do it in a very responsible manner.

As I mentioned earlier, at only second reading of two important bills, we are allocating more than 25% of the total time available for government business between September and December.

• (1055)

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we go again. For the second time this week, the Liberal government has invoked time allocation. It is not as bad, I concede, as it was under the Harper government, where over 100 times it resorted to it. However, the sledgehammer of time allocation is simply not the only tool available. There are other tools. Whatever happened to the co-operative, collaborative approach promised by the Prime Minister?

Here is what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons said not that long ago:

The government, by once again relying on a time allocation motion to get its agenda passed, speaks of incompetence. It speaks of a genuine lack of respect for parliamentary procedure and ultimately for Canadians.

This bill with which we are seized, Bill C-26, despite the excellent work of my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain, is deeply flawed in discriminating against women and disabled people.

Why are we rushing a flawed bill through by imposing time allocation?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I know that some of us in the House have not had the misfortune, or good fortune, depending on one's point of view, of going through time allocation under the previous government, when it was a bit more complicated. I am a new member in the House so I cannot fully appreciate my colleague's take on how things were done before, under the previous government.

In this new government we are trying to be respectful of the numerous points of view in this House and also of the important social and economic development objectives that Canadians want us to meet. For this bill in particular, that means reducing the financial insecurity of 300,000 seniors in Canada in the long term; raising the income of 6,000 low-income workers, starting in 2019; and reducing the economic vulnerability rate of our seniors from 24% to 18%. These are ambitious goals and we must move forward to achieve them.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pick up on the point of the hon. opposition House leader. When these debates about time allocation take place, the questions and responses are directed to the substance of the bill, in this case Bill C-26. However, the real issue lies beneath the surface, and it is the deteriorating relationship between the larger parties in this place, which unfortunately bleeds into and contaminates other important work in committees and so on.

The tone and the unwillingness to collaborate I have rarely found to be the fault of only one party. Rather, it generally reflects a lack of co-operation on the part of all parties. Therefore, my question is not really a question to the government. It is a plea to all the House leaders in this place, whether that be the member for Victoria or the opposition party and government House leaders. With all due respect, please do a reset.

Whatever has gone wrong in their relationship, they should go out, find a bar somewhere, have a scotch, and figure it out.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, these words from our respected and experienced colleague are well taken. We all feel this great responsibility Canadians gave us just a year ago. We know that they expect us to work together in a respectful relationship, open and critical but always respectful. Our colleague is a good demonstration of not only the importance of doing this work individually but of doing this work collectively.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this time allocation motion coming at this time is particularly troubling. Not only have fewer than half of our members had an opportunity to speak, but since we last had an opportunity to debate this bill, things have changed quite significantly in Canada. There was an election to the south, and we know that there will be a new plan that will impact businesses, trade, and many of our small businesses in Canada. What I am mostly concerned about is that we have not had a chance to articulate how this plan at this time is particularly foolhardy, given what is happening to the south.

They have broken promises to our small businesses about their tax rate and item after item. Now the government is putting us in an incredibly difficult position compared to the south, and we have not had an opportunity to debate that point.

• (1100)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I think we all appreciate our colleague's view.

We are grateful to him for emphasizing the importance of continuing this debate. As we all know, this debate will continue in committee, at which time we will have the opportunity to hear the views of those who are not as fortunate as we are to be here in the House of Commons.

Government Orders

We look forward to hearing their points of view and also look forward to third reading stage when we will read the committee's report and the important opinions expressed during the work of the committee in an inclusive manner.

Mr. Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Winnipeg Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, which had the opportunity to study this matter from November 14 to 16, 2016. Furthermore, on November 1, we spoke with the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and officials from the Department of Finance.

[*English*]

It is time this bill moves on to the next stage and goes to committee so that we have the opportunity to finally sit down and study it in greater detail, clause by clause. I really hope this House can start moving on the work we would like to be doing at the finance committee in a more appropriate way.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, our colleague knows more than many of us in this House how important the work of the committee is and will be in guiding the next step of this important legislation. We have very important responsibilities. We are talking about the inclusiveness of this generation and future generations of workers in the labour market. We are also talking about fighting economic vulnerability and insecurity for many of our seniors, many of whom are waiting for more help when it comes to living in retirement with dignity and security.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when time allocation motions are used outside of exceptional circumstances, such as war, it shows an inability to work with the other parties in order to reach an agreement.

Given that the government promised to work with the other parties, why is it unable to do so, and why is it resorting to the use of parliamentary tools that it often criticized?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to emphasize something we just heard. It is important that we work together in the House and respect the different views expressed here while also meeting our obligations towards Canadians, which consist of advancing programs of public and social interest. As Canadians know, these programs will result in a more prosperous and inclusive society that leaves no one behind and is focused on sustainable development.

We are well aware that our society is facing some very significant issues and challenges. Therefore, I invite all members of the House, no matter what side they sit on, to recognize the importance of working together for the well-being of all Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my riding neighbour, the minister and member for Québec for his remarks. It is essential that this bill be debated publicly because it directly affects taxpayers' wallets.

[*English*]

With this bill, the government would like to take more money out of the pockets of the Canadian people, around \$1,000 from each person who is working. For entrepreneurs, the backbones of our economy, those who create jobs, those who create wealth, this bill

would cost them \$1,000 for each worker in their business. We are talking about a real issue.

[*Translation*]

Earlier, my colleague from Manitoba mentioned the parliamentary committee. The committee did in fact meet on Monday. An expert from the Department of Finance appeared and confirmed that this bill would have a number of consequences, including reductions in jobs, the gross domestic product, corporate investments, disposable income, and private savings.

Given all of these negative effects, why is the government still insisting on moving forward and infringing on parliamentarians' right to speak?

● (1105)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question and the answer is quite simple. This is what Canadians want. They know that this measure will be good for their generation and for future generations.

All the provinces affected by the Canada pension plan expansion fully agree that the Government of Canada should move forward on this. According to the polls, 75% of Canadians living in the nine provinces affected by the Canada pension plan expansion support it. That is extremely important. Canadians have been waiting for years for this type of measure.

The rate of financial insecurity among seniors in Canada is very worrisome. There are workers who are looking for a safe, reliable, inexpensive, and easy way to save. These Canadians have been waiting for a CPP expansion for years. Members of the House have the opportunity to participate in something incredible that all Canadians will want to remember and celebrate in the years to come.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats want to get back to work on this. We do not want to have another closure debate. We do want to debate the CPP bill. The debate already has identified serious flaws that would interfere with access to the CPP by persons with disabilities and women who choose to stay at home and do unpaid work. The debate has already raised important issues that we need to further discuss and to hear that the government wants to resolve. We oppose the closure motion.

I will recycle the words of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the member for Winnipeg North, who in April of last year, when the Conservatives were proposing closure motions, said, "My question to the government House leader is this: How does he justify any sense of democracy and respect for the House when he continues to bring in time allocation only to get the government agenda across? At the end of the day, it is denying Canadians...their voices".

Government Orders

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and am grateful for this opportunity to remind all members of the House that we have a double responsibility. We have the responsibility of listening respectfully and critically to the diversity of views in the House. We also have an important responsibility toward Canadians in advancing the agenda of this government, a government that has signalled how important sustainable development is, how important economic development that grows the middle class is, and how important inclusive development that leaves no one behind is.

That combination of development objectives speaks very much in favour of this particular legislation, which would not only grow the economy and make workers more integrated in the labour force, more able to engage in a fruitful and long-term relationship with employers, but also protect the inclusiveness and security of our seniors.

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about having a double responsibility. The Liberals clearly have a double standard when it comes to using time allocation. When they were in opposition, they bayed like stuck pigs, if I can mix those two metaphors, about how terrible time allocation was for democracy and how it was an outrage of epic proportions. The member for Winnipeg North made a career out of it. Maybe he is the most knowledgeable about time allocation and is now putting that knowledge to good use by moving time allocation here.

I was one of the lucky ones on our side of the House. I got to talk about how the bill would do nothing for seniors today. It would do nothing for the next generation of seniors. It would hurt families living paycheque to paycheque by taking nearly \$100 out of their bank accounts every month.

Why are the Liberals taking away the opportunity from nearly 60 of my colleagues to represent their constituents and talk about how the bill is bad for the economy and would do nothing for seniors?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I have two quick responses.

First, as I signalled earlier, and as my colleague a few minutes ago mentioned, some of us were not here in the last government and therefore did not see how frequent these closure procedures were used, and so I cannot speak on the history of the previous government.

Second, it is a bit surprising to hear that a bill that is going to take 300,000 seniors out of income vulnerability would do nothing for seniors.

• (1110)

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that Bill C-26 is important legislation. I think we can also all agree on the facts that nine out of 10 provincial governments are supporting this legislation. I wish the hon. opposition House leader was in the House to hear this—

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot rising on a point of order, and I think I know what he is going to say. I will direct the hon. parliamentary secretary that we do not refer to the presence or absence of members in the House.

Does the hon. member for Battle River—Crowfoot have something more to add?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, indeed, that is the point of order. I know the member is a new member and does not have experience in the House, but the Liberals seem to have experience when it comes to moving time allocation on a very important bill, preventing us from being able to debate it.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my hon. colleague for pointing that out. I will try not to make that error again.

Mr. Speaker, we are very grateful for the Province of Manitoba's leadership as well as of other governments across the country.

Does the hon. Minister of Social Development believe there is a national consensus on improving the CPP, not only among governments but also across the Canadian public, and should Parliament really reflect the will of Canadians and move this legislation to a standing committee expeditiously?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, may I say how proud and privileged I am to work with my parliamentary secretary every day in addressing the needs of seniors in particular.

In the context of this particular debate, we have seen, over just one year, a government that has been listening to the interests and views of the vast majority of Canadians on this important matter. In a matter of a few months, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, has advanced this discussion very quickly and has come up with a strong agreement with all provinces that participate in the Canada pension plan. This is not only a remarkable outcome in such little time, but even more importantly, it is a very important outcome for the current and future generations of workers, as well as all seniors in our country.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I find awfully distressing about this, as I am sure do the 33 new colleagues on this side of the House, is that I was sent to this place to extend my voice on behalf of the people I represent but cannot. What is most disappointing about it is the hypocrisy on the part of the government.

A year ago, in their throne speech, the Liberals they set a new tone, and I remind them again of what they said: “And to give Canadians a stronger voice in the House of Commons, the Government will promote more open debate”.

One thing I have found as a new member is that my word is my worth in this place. It means everything. Why do their words not matter? Why do the words of the throne speech not matter in this situation? Why do not they matter in terms of the direction that the Prime Minister set for his ministers with the appendix on conflicts of interest? Why are their words not worth anything?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, all opinions expressed in the House are important, including those of the opposition, which I personally have the privilege and pleasure of listening to every day. Members of the House have heard from 35 Conservative Party members on this issue. That is slightly more than a third of the Conservative Party caucus.

We look forward to hearing more of their views and those of all members of the House during parliamentary committee debates. We are also very much looking forward to the committee's report, which will lead to third reading of the bill.

[English]

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have ably discussed many of the issues around time allocation. I want to ask a question specifically on Bill C-26.

Many people, when they put money aside privately, are not just saving for their retirement, but for interim priorities. They are maybe saving for an education, and then after realizing the value of that education, start to save for a new home, and then realize the value of that home to help them save for retirement. But the government, by restricting the eligible investments people can make in tax-free savings accounts, and by taking more money away from them and saving for them on their behalf, robs people of the ability to use their savings for interim projects, things like education, buying a home, and investing in a business.

Is this not another reason why we are much better off empowering people to save for their own futures, as well as long-term projects? Are we not better off doing it that way than by having a government-knows-best approach?

• (1115)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to talk about very important issues concerning our seniors.

In recent months, we announced two important measures that will have a significant impact on our seniors' well-being. The first was dropping the age of eligibility for old age security down to 65. That will protect 100,000 seniors from extreme poverty, prevent the poverty rate among seniors aged 65 to 66 from climbing from 6% to 17%, and guard the most vulnerable 20% of seniors against a 40% burden.

The second was increasing the guaranteed income supplement, which will help 900,000 seniors across the country by giving them up to \$950 more per year. This measure will lift 13,000 seniors out of poverty.

[English]

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is another way of shutting down debate. We call it time allocation in Parliament. In different scenarios, we call it the “guillotine” when they literally shut down debate.

I am a newly elected MP like so many others. We were so happy, honoured, and privileged to take our place in our seats. Part of that

privilege is making sure that every single community has a voice in the House of Commons, but with the shutting down of debate, I will not have the opportunity to bring forward my constituents' point of view on this important bill. It impacts seniors and families in all of our communities.

The Liberals said they would do things differently. I was so hoping and looking forward to doing things differently, but now I see a pattern of behaviour that is leading us down a road that shows they are not that different from the former Harper government.

Why is the government doing this? Will the minister consider withdrawing this motion so we can all do our job and bring—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Families, Children and Social Development.

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos: Mr. Speaker, may I start by congratulating my colleague not only for her election, but also for her passion and the sense of pride she feels, as I and others do, in belonging to this House, the pride that is attached to two things: first, the opportunity to spend fruitful and critical time with members of the House, all of them distinguished; and second, the responsibility to move forward in advancing the interests of all Canadians.

In that context, may I repeat that we are allocating 27% of the total available government business time between September and December to just the second reading of two bills. That is a sign of the importance we attach to this particular bill. We are looking forward to further discussion at the committee stage.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

The vote is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1155)

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

*Government Orders**(Division No. 153)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhaliwal	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easton
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Gerretsen	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal
Hajdu	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hussen	Hutchings
Iacono	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Kang
Khalid	Khera
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lapointe	LeBlanc
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)	McCallum
McCrimmon	McDonald
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Medicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Robillard	Romanado
Rota	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann

Tabbara
Tassi
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 167

Tan
Tootoo
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif	Albas
Albrecht	Allison
Anderson	Angus
Arnold	Ashton
Aubin	Barlow
Beaulieu	Benson
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Blaikie
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Block
Boucher	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Brosseau	Brown
Calkins	Cannings
Caron	Carrie
Choquette	Clement
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Donnelly	Dreeschen
Dubé	Dusseault
Duvall	Eglinski
Falk	Fast
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Hardcastle	Harder
Hoback	Johns
Julian	Kelly
Kent	Kitchen
Kwan	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Laverdière	Lebel
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacGregor
MacKenzie	Maguire
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)
Mathysen	May (Saainich—Gulf Islands)
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound)
Moore	Motz
Nantel	Nater
Nicholson	Poilievre
Quach	Ramsey
Rankin	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saganash
Sansoucy	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Ste-Marie	Stetski
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Thériault
Tilson	Trost
Trudel	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vecchio
Viersen	Wagantall
Warawa	Warkentin
Watts	Waugh
Webber	Weir
Wong	Zimmer — 118

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

Government Orders

● (1200)

[English]

SECOND READING

The House resumed from November 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to start the debate today on this very important bill. It would be transformational for our nation, and I am delighted to express that on behalf of this government. We would improve the lives of future generations. People would be able to retire with dignity because of this government.

The essence of what we would do is very simple. We would increase pensionable earnings from one-quarter to one-third for generations to come. I am sure that one day, when members in the House retire, they will look back with pride to the great day we adopted the enhancement to the Canada pension plan, because future generations will know that we did the right thing.

It is my privilege to rise today to speak about how this government is honouring its promises to Canadians, how it is helping to strengthen the middle class and all of those working hard every day to join it, and how, through collaboration and partnership as well as a strong commitment to do what is right, we are at the threshold of progress on a very important initiative for our country. The promise of a dignified retirement is fundamental to the Canadian dream. Our country has long been a haven for hard-working middle-class families who helped build this modern, open, and cohesive country that we all enjoy today.

For decades, people in Canada believed that, if they were willing to work hard, the goal of a comfortable retirement was well within reach. That assurance is one of the reasons that our country has thrived, but lately the goal of a secure retirement has come under threat. The world has shifted, and many citizens have not seen the benefits of the tremendous economic growth we have achieved together over the last several decades. The soft underbelly of the world economy has revealed itself in expected and unexpected ways. Hard work does not always equal progress anymore. In many cases, a fundamental promise has been left unkept.

Let us consider these facts. We know that today one in four families nearing retirement, which is 1.1 million families in this country, risk not having enough for retirement. In particular, middle-class families without workplace pension plans are at greater risk of under-saving for retirement. A third of these families are at risk. We also know that young Canadians, in particular, are facing the challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at a time when fewer can expect to work in jobs that include workplace pension plans.

We knew we needed to act, but we could not act alone. That is why, at the earliest opportunity, our government invited provinces to an inaugural discussion on enhancing the Canada pension plan. This goes back to last December, mere weeks after we took office. We

made excellent progress at the first meeting, so much progress that consensus was achieved with the provinces by June.

The federal government, alongside participating provinces, reached a historic agreement to make meaningful changes to the CPP that would allow Canadians to retire with more money in their pockets and with dignity. That has truly helped to underscore the importance of partnerships and how serious we are about renewing the relationships we have with other jurisdictions so that we can work together on the challenges that affect us all.

We need our federation to be strong. That is how we will succeed. Let us look at what we have done so far. For young workers in their early twenties, just starting their careers, this would be a great benefit when they retire. In fact, young workers would see the largest increase in their retirement benefits.

● (1205)

I am sure members in the House are looking not only at the immediate term, but at the long-term future, whether it is for their children or grandchildren. As I went across this nation, when we were looking at budget 2016, as I am still doing for budget 2017, people wanted us to act for the immediate term, but they also wanted us to act for the long term.

That is why the Minister of Finance is called the long-term guy. He is looking at the long term to ensure there will be prosperity in our country for generations to come.

By strengthening the Canada pension plan, workers will receive more money from their pension, from one-quarter of their eligible earnings to one-third. This is a significant achievement. It is a historic agreement. It is a transformative agreement for this nation and for future generations.

Let me get to the example. If people are making \$50,000 a year over their working life, they will receive about \$16,000 each year in retirement instead of today's \$12,000. That is \$4,000 more each year in their pockets. This is money to save and invest. It is money that Canadian families and hard-working workers expect to have when they retire to be able to contribute to society.

What about those Canadians who are worried that this is nothing more than a new cost on their paycheques? We have heard some members express that. Let me give them a very straight answer. First, we ensured that the increase in contributions would be phased in gradually, so people know about it in advance. When policies are to be changed, we need to tell people about it in advance. That is exactly what we have done.

Someone who is working, with a constant earning of \$50,000 a year, will contribute an additional \$70 a year or \$6 a month in 2019. Let me go back to the example. That person would get \$4,000 more in benefits, and in 2019 the individual would contribute \$6 a month more.

I can assure members, when they go across this nation, people get that this is in their best interest.

Government Orders

For the employee contribution portion of the enhanced CPP, we are also going to offer a tax deduction instead of a tax credit to ensure that new CPP contributions do not cut into the cost of savings.

How will employers be affected? We have heard members on the other side talk about employers. Let me give them a very straightforward answer. The employers will also benefit from a long and gradual phase-in starting in 2019. This is the responsible way to ensure that businesses and workers have time to adjust to the additional contributions associated with the enhanced program.

What about the low-income worker who is worried about the effect of increased CPP contributions on his or her paycheque? How will an enhanced CPP help? Let me tell the House in a very straightforward manner. I want to assure my colleagues and low-income workers that an enhanced CPP will benefit all workers, including those with low incomes.

In order to ensure eligible low-income workers are not financially burdened as a result of the extra contributions, the government will also enhance the working income tax benefit. The proposed enhancement to the WITB is designed to provide additional benefits that roughly offset incremental CPP contributions for eligible low-income workers.

With this enhancement, there will be no impact on their disposable income, and when they retire, they will also get a larger retirement benefit payment. The bottom line is that people who are working in Canada, are paying into the CPP and are planning to retire after 2019 are going to have more money in their pockets from their CPP retirement pension benefit.

The time has come to restore the faith of Canadians in their government and to reward hard-working people having the audacity to dream of a secure retirement, like their parents and grandparents before them. After all, that was the deal. With these changes, Canadians can worry a little less about having enough later in life, and can spend a little more time in the present, raising kids and building their communities for the better.

We feel this is a win-win. I urge my hon. colleagues to support an enhanced CPP because they will be doing the right thing, not only for this generation but for future generations. When members retire, they will look back in time and say that they are proud to have been in the House when we did the right thing for our children and grandchildren.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have an opportunity to explore this in greater detail later.

Still, the member failed to mention one number, and that number is 40. It will take 40 years for the effects of this legislation to actually kick in, because that is the full cycle needed before that can happen, and that is a long time. Meanwhile, business owners will be forced to pay on average \$1,000 more for each employee, and workers will have to pay \$1,000 more, too.

Why is the government bragging about creating justice in the world, when in fact, it failed to mention that it is taking an extra \$1,000 away from every worker?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for his question and for the very important contribution that he makes to the Standing Committee on Finance.

The member mentioned one number. I am going to give him four. People who are making \$50,000, over their working life, will receive \$16,000 in CPP benefits instead of today's \$12,000. That is \$4,000 more for the contributions that are made now.

I know my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, and I know that he is concerned about this generation. However, I also know that he understands that we need to invest today for tomorrow. I can assure him that the people in his riding and mine will remember this historic moment for Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau introduced important measures to protect pension benefits of parents who stayed home to raise children. The current government appears to have forgotten them in Bill C-26.

Women already receive lower average CPP benefits than men. If this problem is not fixed, the gender inequality will only get worse. Bill C-26 contains a significant flaw that hurts women and people with disabilities. The proposed legislation fails to copy the child rearing dropout provision that were included in the existing CPP, so parents are not penalized for taking time out of the workplace to raise their children. Similarly there is a problem vis-à-vis the people with disabilities.

Is the government open to amendments to address this significant flaw?

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, the member has raised a very important point. Let me be very clear for Canadians watching at home and members of Parliament in the House today. With this CPP enhancement, all Canadian workers will be better off. The statistics show that when people retire, women tend to have less income than men. The enhancements to CPP will benefit women. We are very proud to provide additional retirement income for all Canadians, particularly women, who retire with lower incomes than men.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoy working with my colleague on the finance committee. It seems like the \$50,000 mark mostly is a point of argument that is favourable for him to start by showing that \$4,000 increase. To be honest that \$4,000 increase, from \$12,000 to \$16,000, in a four-year term with the inflation rate, is very shy and very short of reach. Therefore, this is not going to benefit. The extra investment will be put in place by employees. By the way, he never mentioned the contribution of employers, which is a significant number. It would be more credible for him to mention that to Canadians so they understand what the employers are going to pay, which is an additional tax and a disadvantage for employers.

Government Orders

How can the member work the math properly to show Canadians the proper news when they will not see any benefit four years from now and from a financial position, an investment position, that will help Canadians and make sense of an investment? I do not see it. It is not shown—

•(1215)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne: Mr. Speaker, I value the member's contribution to the finance committee. He is a man of numbers. Let me give him some numbers again. People who make \$50,000 a year over their working life will receive \$16,000 each year in retirement instead of \$12,000 this year. That is \$4,000 more per year when they retire. What will they have to contribute to get that additional pension? If they make \$50,000 over their lifetime in pensionable earnings, they will have to contribute \$6 a month starting in 2019, to get \$4,000 more in additional benefits. Canadians get it and they want it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this debate, even though we saw from the vote that took place earlier that, unfortunately, the government is infringing on parliamentarians' right to speak.

This government is allowing no more than one-third of the members of the official opposition to speak about this bill, which will have a direct impact on taxpayers both in the short and long term. The so-called positive measures set out in this bill will not take effect for 40 years. I do not want to make anyone feel old, but there are many people here who will not benefit from the supposed enhancement of the CPP set out in this bill.

There are in fact two conflicting views. On one hand, there is the view of the Conservative Party, which would prefer to give Canadians the tools they need to save for themselves. Let us not forget that we came up with the well-known TFSA, which is very popular and should not only be maintained but also made more accessible. We are giving people the tools they need to make the best choice about how to save.

On the other hand, the Liberal government says that it knows what is good for Canadians, that it will take more money from workers, and that it will force employers to pay higher CPP premiums.

These are two conflicting views. Not everyone will agree on which one is best, but it is clear to us that it should be the worker, the citizen, or the business person who decides what works best for them, rather than leaving it up to the government.

What will this bill do? It will result in workers paying an additional \$1,000 on average into the Canada pension plan. For business owners, it means paying \$1,000 more on average for every employee in every business. What a heavy burden to bear.

Let us first look at the \$1,000 per worker. We believe that it is always better to leave money in people's pockets than to put it in the government's hands. A tax grab of \$1,000 per worker is not the right thing to do.

What about businesses and employers? We believe that private enterprise, not the government, creates jobs. The government must do everything it can to support, empower, and pave the way for businesses. It is not the government's job to do the work of business people, who are the real creators of jobs and wealth. They are the backbone of the Canadian economy. We have to do everything we can to help them create jobs and wealth, but mostly, we should not be foisting new taxes on them, and yet, the government has decided to saddle them with additional costs amounting to \$1,000 per worker.

Knowing that this government is going to charge our businesses even more fees does not bode well for the future. Let us not forget that this government wants to impose the Liberal carbon tax, which will have a direct impact on every one of our businesses. Let us not forget that this government was committed to reducing the business tax rate from 10.5% to 9%, but there is not one iota of information on how the government plans to do that. Let us also not forget that this government was elected on a promise of running a modest \$10-billion deficit, but in reality it is three times worse and so far we have no idea when there will be a return to balanced budgets. Let us not forget that a deficit is a tax we are deferring to our children and grandchildren who will have to pay for today's mismanagement.

We believe that the government is on the wrong track with this bill.

Let us face facts: it goes without saying that we would all like to have a more pleasant and worry-free retirement. That is what everyone agrees on, hopes for, and wants to work toward. Here is another fact: the situation has vastly improved over the past few decades thanks to the sound policies put in place by previous governments, including that of the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney.

I should point out that, in recent years, the government implemented measures to help people save money. As a result, according to Statistics Canada, the proportion of low-income seniors dropped from 29% in 1970 to 3.7% today, which is one of the lowest rates in the world. That is something to think about. Of course, we always have to be mindful of the less fortunate among us, but there are fewer of them than before, particularly among seniors.

•(1220)

We were on the right track because we gave people the tools they needed to make the right choices for themselves. In 1990, Canadians saved 7.7% of their paycheque, and now they save 14.1%. That is happening because we got people more interested in saving and investing wisely.

Government Orders

If, God forbid, this bill is passed and comes into force, what impact will it have? According to a Finance Canada analysis, it will result in reduced employment, reduced GDP, reduced business investment, reduced disposable income, and reduced private savings. That is five reductions all told. That is two more strikes than baseball players get. Five strikes, five reductions, five factors that will slow economic growth. We know we need growth, especially considering that the people across the aisle are on such a spending spree, have no control over public spending, and do not even know when the budget will be balanced. Theirs is a worrisome approach.

A paper released by the C.D. Howe Institute shows that the Liberal Party's plan will not benefit low-income workers, because their premiums are going to go up but their net increase in retirement benefits will remain low, since higher CPP payments would be offset by clawbacks in GIS benefits.

Bragging about one's fine principles is all well and good, and so is saying that the most vulnerable among us will have more. That is fine, but what the government has given with one hand, it has taken away with the other. We, the Conservatives, are not the ones saying so; this is coming from the C.D. Howe Institute.

Incidentally, C.D. Howe was one of the greatest ministers in Canada's history. From my perspective, he was one of the people who helped shape Canada in the 20th century and helped establish this country's industrial base at a time when we were at war. I really like making historical asides from time to time. If we are going to be talking, we might as well enjoy ourselves a little.

The guaranteed income supplement was supposed to help the most vulnerable among us in the unfortunate event that people could not make ends meet with their private pension alone. Given that we pay more attention to that these days than we did in the past, when wages were lower and saving money did not occur to people so much, we created the guaranteed income supplement to bridge that gap and put people on a more equal footing.

However, considering the Liberal approach, that goal can unfortunately no longer be reached as it should be, and that spells trouble.

[*English*]

This bill is a clear indication of where we can draw the line between the government and our party. As far as we are concerned, we must give people the tools they need to make the right choice with respect to a good pension plan that is based on their own priorities. Of course we do not want to cancel anything that is coming from the federal government. The point is this. If it has to bring something new, then it should bring it on behalf of the people instead of putting it into the hands of the government. If we adopt this bill, the reality is that people will have less money in their pockets. This bill will give the government the right to take \$1,000 a year out of the pockets of working people. Worse than that, it will cost entrepreneurs, those who create wealth and jobs and who are the real backbone of our economy, around \$1,000 more for every worker in their business. This is not good for the Canadian economy, nor is it good for the people who work because it will take 40 full years before it achieves anything good for the people.

● (1225)

[*Translation*]

I urge all members of the House to vote against this bill.

Mr. François-Philippe Champagne (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent knows that I have a tremendous amount of respect for him. That said, I would like to pick up on what he said.

Let us not forget what we told Canadians and what they voted against.

Let us not forget that we promised to help the middle class. The first thing this government did was introduce a tax cut for the middle class, of which nine million Canadians are benefiting today.

Let us not forget that we promised to help Canadian families. We did that with the Canada child benefit, which will help nine out of ten families and lift 300,000 children out of poverty. Our Conservative colleague voted against that measure.

Let us not forget that we proposed improvements to the Canada student loans and bursaries program. The Conservative Party voted against that measure.

Let us not forget that we have made an historic \$8.4 billion investment in first nations in order to provide services in indigenous communities properly. The Conservative Party voted against this measure.

Let us not forget what we have done for our seniors. Today we are proposing improvements to the Canada pension plan. We also proposed improvements to the guaranteed income supplement that would help 900,000 seniors in the country, especially women, since most seniors living alone are women.

Let us also not forget that we lowered the age of retirement back to 65 from 67.

I have a simple question for my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent: why is he planning to vote against measures that benefit our seniors, our young people, the middle class, and everyone in his riding?

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, this measure will take even more money out of the pockets of taxpayers and business owners who need that money to create jobs and wealth so that people can make their own choices.

Since we are once again talking about the Liberals' election platform and the budget implementation bill, I am pleased to remind members that 65% of Canadians are not affected by the so-called tax cuts. Those who will benefit the most from the government's new tax cuts are Canadians who earn between \$140,000 and \$200,000 a year.

I must admit to my conflict of interest, as I am indeed in that tax bracket. However, I voted against the measure because the Liberals were leading people to believe that everyone would have more money when that is not true. In fact, 65% of Canadians will not benefit from the measure.

Government Orders

Let us remember that the Canada child benefit, which was supposed to be revenue neutral, is going to end up costing \$3.4 billion more than our existing programs. Also, need I remind my colleagues that the Liberals forgot to index that benefit? That small oversight will add billions of dollars to the national debt.

My colleague spoke about first nations. Need I remind him that, on June 11, 2008, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, issued a formal apology to the first nations here in the House? That is the only time in Canadian history that a prime minister has done that. The only time in Canadian history that the grand chief addressed parliamentarians was when our government was in power, and we are very proud of that.

Must I also remind him that this government was elected on a platform that states, on page 76, that the Liberals would run a modest deficit of \$10 billion and return to a balanced budget in three years? The deficit is three times larger, and we do not know when we will return to balance. Shame on them.

[English]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his passion, although I do not necessarily agree with some of my colleague's comments.

I would like the member to respond to the fact that we do have a pension gap in this country. There is a crisis. Canadians are saving less money for their retirement. Unfortunately, for many Canadians who are saving for retirement this pension gap became worse under the previous Stephen Harper government.

I would like to know what my colleague's party is talking about. Could he explain to us what lessons Conservative members learned from their retirement plan for Canadians that obviously did not work and many Canadians are living in poverty in retirement.

• (1230)

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Deltell: Mr. Speaker, there is definitely no perfect solution. The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

We had specific goals and we did not exactly reach them all. Let us still take a look at Canada's overall situation today. In 1970, some people were living in abject poverty. They are much fewer in number today. According to Statistics Canada, 29% of seniors had low incomes in 1970, compared to 3.7% today. In my opinion, our achievements speak for themselves.

Could we have done more and had better results? That is quite likely the case. However, we were on the right track.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just to respond very quickly to my colleague and friend across the way when he posed the question of whether the previous Conservative government could have done more, I would argue that the Conservative Party did virtually nothing in regard to assisting Canadian seniors. Indeed, the Conservatives could have done a whole lot more. In fact, for many years I sat in the opposition benches and listened to provinces calling for strong national leadership on the CPP. The Stephen Harper Conservative govern-

ment continued to turn a deaf ear to what many provinces wanted and pushed the federal government to act upon. There is no doubt in my mind that it was a very low priority of the Stephen Harper government, that the Conservatives did not see the pensionable incomes.

To give any grace, I would suggest that at the very least the Conservatives did not understand and appreciate the importance of the CPP to the Canadian population and to many of the jurisdictions that wanted to see the national government demonstrate leadership on the file. That was not seen until we had our current Prime Minister in this current government who has taken decisive action and has demonstrated strong leadership in terms of recognizing what Canadians indeed wanted to see happen.

Before I get into that aspect, I want to make this very clear. I am a sensitive guy at times and I hear members provide questions or quotes, and maybe a little earlier quotes even about me in regard to the issue of time allocation. Let me address this issue because it is important for us to recognize. The Conservatives might have hoodwinked or fooled the New Democrats across the way, but they have not fooled the government members. I do not think it is going to be any surprise that what the Conservatives really want to do is kill Bill C-26. They might be the only entity in our country that opposes Bill C-26, but let there be no doubt that they want to kill this bill. They would be very happy if this bill never saw the light of day. That is why I was not surprised to see the Conservative Party play its games yesterday to try to prevent an ultimate vote occurring on Bill C-26. If it were up to the Conservative Party, we would never be voting on Bill C-26. That is why the Conservatives brought forward amendments.

They fooled the NDP, the third party. I give them credit for that, but sometimes it is not the easiest party to fool in this chamber. At the end of the day, time allocation is in fact a tool that is used to try to get the government business dealt with. This is something that Canadians want. A vast majority of Canadians support Bill C-26. I know that. If we are not prepared to use the tools, at times, that government has provided, then we will not be able to pass the important types of legislation that Canadians expect governments to pass.

I will give the Conservatives some credit. They have focused on what I would suggest is a bad bill, to line up and say that they do not want the bill to ever see the light of day. The Conservatives have had 30 speaking spots, but that does not mention the good number of other spots that they had in questions and answers. I would suggest that very easily more than half of the Conservatives, if they wanted to, could have actually spoken to the bill.

Government Orders

I will go further by saying that it does not take much. It takes 10 or 12 MPs to have party status. Any party can be fairly destructive in terms of the proceedings of the House because we have a finite amount of time in order to pass legislation through this chamber. If an opposition party chooses to be mischievous and not recognize what the government is trying to accomplish, it does not take very much to invoke time allocation. I saw that when I was in the opposition benches, where we had time allocation over 100 times. It does not take a genius from within an opposition party to create a bit of frustration on the government benches where it has to look at using that tool. Look at how much time has been allocated to Bill C-26.

• (1235)

If the government and opposition were to come to a consensus, that is always the ideal. We have a government House leader who has reached out to the opposition party in a very real and tangible way. If the opposition wants to be accommodative, and we are accommodating, that is great, but let us not kid around. We know that at times, the official opposition members will not want to co-operate, because they will want to kill a bill. However, just because the official opposition wants to kill a bill, it does not mean the government would not pass the bill, as we will continue to do what we believe is in Canadians' best interests first and foremost.

If we look at the substance of Bill C-26 and what it would do, it is pretty straightforward. It is a historical agreement achieved by our national government demonstrating leadership, right from the Prime Minister's Office to different ministries and, indeed, to our caucus. Every member of the Liberal caucus has been able to participate in this great debate regarding pensions for our seniors, and the CPP is one of those fundamental pensions that Canadians truly believe in and want to see action on by our government.

We took it a step further by saying that we were going to demonstrate that leadership, and within the first year of being elected, we have an agreement with provinces in every region of our country and their different political parties. Even Progressive Conservative parties have agreed to what we have before us today. We have many different advocacy groups that recognize that, yes, this is the type of legislation they want to see.

This is not just about today's seniors, but the government has not ignored them. The best example is the guaranteed income supplement, which was substantially increased in this budget. That initiative is going to lift tens of thousands of Canada's most vulnerable and poorest seniors out of poverty. That is helping today's seniors.

However, let us not focus on and think that because this would not help today's seniors in a very real and tangible way, we do not need to have this bill before us today. If we talk to seniors, they care about their children and grandchildren. They want their children and grandchildren to retire in dignity. This bill is all about the future, and this means having vision. This is a government that has leadership and understands that.

If I were to take any bill presented so far, this would be the bill I would focus my attention in showing why the Conservatives are no longer in power. It is because they lost touch with Canadians. That is

the simple truth of it. They did not understand what Canadians really and truly wanted. They lost touch with them.

Contrast that with the attitude of the Prime Minister and this government. We have a Prime Minister who has consistently mandated his ministers, in fact, all of our caucus, to reach out to and better understand what Canadians want, and to bring that back to Ottawa so that the types of initiatives we take reflect what Canadians really want. This is really what Bill C-26 is all about.

I do not understand why the Conservative Party continues to oppose this legislation. This demonstrates that they still have not learned their lesson from the last election. They are ignoring what a vast majority of Canadians really want, and this is just one example of that.

I do not mind if the Conservatives want to stay out of touch with Canadians, but we will continue to move forward and will have to see what happens. However, we recognize what Bill C-26 is all about. Imagine a group of premiers, reflective of different political parties, meeting with the federal government, which is able to come to the table in such a way that we achieve an agreement.

• (1240)

It is an agreement that we believe is in the best interests of working people, not only in the short term, but also in the long term. The stakeholders, even businesses, in good part agree that this is legislation that all members of the House should be supporting.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have seen a trend recently in the hon. member's speeches. He seems to have gotten a lot more dour. He seems to be a little more negative, and I am not sure if it is all sunny ways on that side.

However, the member seems to say that he knows exactly what Canadians want and need. I represent a constituency similar to his, and there are lots of people who do not agree with the government, and lots of people who do. How does he try to say that the Conservative Party has not learned its lesson? That is really a question for the people. Would he not agree that by making such generalized statements, it really shows that if we are not willing to listen to other viewpoints in this chamber, there is no point in having the chamber?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the member makes reference to sunny ways. I am an optimist. Perhaps the Conservatives will change their position on this and vote in favour of it. That would be a wonderful thing to see.

I did not say every Canadian supports it. I said a vast majority of Canadians support it. If the member is doubting what I am saying, I would invite him to come to Winnipeg North, and if the opportunity were there for me to go to his riding, I could attempt to do that. However, I invite him to come to Winnipeg North and sit down with a group of seniors. He can pick the venue. We will put out an open invitation. I will put on the agenda what we have done for the seniors of today and tomorrow. I can talk about the reduction of the retirement age from 67 to 65 for the OAS. I can talk about the increase in the GIS. I can talk about how Bill C-26 would enrich future retirees.

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I believe a vast, solid majority of people would be very happy with what our government is doing. It seems to be only the Conservative Party that is not. Other parties and jurisdictions have recognized that this is the right thing. We are all collectively behind what a vast majority of Canadians want. Only the Conservatives seem to be out of touch.

However, I am an optimist. I believe in sunny ways. Maybe they will change their vote to yes and support the bill going to committee.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on that point. This is an incredibly important debate. We have had many days to discuss it, and yet it is a very focused matter. The reality is that the time in the House to debate the matter has been fulsome.

The member brings up a good point, which is the concern the government has about Canadians not having the resources to retire with dignity. This is but one part of a broader plan to make sure that Canadians have a safe and secure retirement in the future. The member was beginning to speak to that. It is such an important point. Could he illuminate how this fits into the broader picture of how we are trying to ensure that Canadians have the retirement they deserve?

• (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, it is something that is really important for us to recognize. When we think in terms of the whole pension issue and Canadians heading toward retirement, whether they are retired today, retiring tomorrow, or in 10 or 15 years from now, there is a genuine concern that we have these social pension programs. For me, it is the big three: the CPP, OAS, and GIS. On all three of these fronts, we have seen the Prime Minister and our government take substantial action. On the OAS, we have now reduced the age back to 65. Canada can afford that. There are people who are looking forward to retirement at age 65, so we reduced it from age 67 to 65. That is a big plus.

Here is another one. Think of Canada's poorest, most vulnerable seniors. We would see, through the budget, a substantial increase of over \$900 a year for some of the poorest. That would literally lift tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty. We are thinking not only about the seniors of today but the seniors of tomorrow. That is really what Bill C-26 is all about.

Ours is a government that is not only thinking about today, but also about tomorrow. Contrast that with the former Harper government: It is night and day. Hopefully, we will see sunny ways soon approaching as the vote on the bill will come today.

Mr. Mark Holland (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the bill that I think is so critical to the future of all Canadians.

The reality is that Canadians have not been saving enough for retirement. This has been a result of a changing workforce in which pensions are less prevalent, and where employers' retirement provisions are becoming more and more meagre. Oftentimes Canadians are working contract positions or working in self-employed situations where they do not have access to funds to help support their retirement ambitions.

I can say, having lived through my twenties, longer ago than perhaps I would like to admit, and having talked to friends in that period of their life, it was something they did not consider and were not saving appropriately for. Unfortunately, as they have families and their lives get busier, that trend continues, and they do not start saving adequately until it is often too late. That means that the retirement funds they have are insufficient to fund their needs.

The reality of that is that seniors are now left with low incomes and in situations in which they have limited opportunities to either expand their income or to meet their basic needs. We do not want that retirement future for anyone, and it is incumbent upon us as legislators to look at the policy mechanisms we can put in place to ensure that it is not the outcome that hardworking Canadians meet when they complete their careers and decide it is time to retire, or when they are in a position when work is no longer possible.

Frankly, not taking action in this regard is reckless, irresponsible, and in flagrant disregard of the future of those Canadians. It is a totally unacceptable position to say that we should not be making policy moves to try to ameliorate this situation.

What particularly concerns me about the position taken by the official opposition, the Conservatives, is that they put forward no alternative. It is, "You're on your own. Good luck. Hope you figure it out". That is not good enough. We ran very clearly on improving the Canada pension plan and ensuring that Canadians have that bedrock underneath them.

This plan will see Canadians having about one-quarter to a third of their retirement income from their pension. That is a very important change. It is an expansion of all the other things we are doing and not the only thing we are doing, but an important piece of the solution to where we need to go. If we do not do it, frankly, we will be in a lot of trouble.

I hear the Conservatives try to portray this as a taxation issue. The reality is, as I saw in my time leading various teams in different organizations, that an employer has a responsibility for the retirement of their employees, and an individual has a responsibility to plan and pay for their own retirement. This enables both of those things to happen. Savings are not a tax, but a prudent, intelligent plan for our future, and to characterize it otherwise is dishonest and disingenuous.

The bill is very clear. It is broadly supported by many provinces, by many people of different political stripes, but certainly, after six days of debate, after more than 36 interventions by the Conservative Party, there has been more than enough debate for us to move forward.

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Just to give people some context about what we have in the parliamentary calendar, there are 55 sitting days from September to December. That is all we have: 55 days. Seven of them are supply days, which the opposition can use as they see fit. There were three days of debate on the Paris agreement, one day mandated to debate the Standing Orders, one day lost to debate on procedural tactics from the Conservative Party. That only leaves 43 days for the rest of government business. We have given six days to this, including today, and the Conservative Party, rather than using the full day for debate, as they supposedly had other members who wanted to speak, had us engage in all kinds procedural tactics, including trying to shut down the House yesterday.

• (1250)

It is disrespectful of this place.

For the Conservative Party, which invoked time allocation more than 100 times, which stunted debate entirely and shut down the House from having an opportunity to have a say on the issues of the day, when it has been allocated this amount of time on a matter that is focused, that is clear, and that is simple, to cry that somehow its rights have been infringed upon is obscene.

The reality is that the government has many important items it must pass and get done on behalf of the Canadian people. This place, this Parliament, has an obligation to ensure that the business of the nation is done.

These procedural tactics and games do not do any justice to that, and they particularly do not do any justice when the matter in front of us is as substantive as this.

The debate we should have, and I would welcome it, is how we can do more. How can we make sure that this pending issue, this huge problem we have of Canadians not saving enough and not having the funds they need to have a safe and secure retirement, is something we can work on collectively in a bipartisan way?

I am encouraged that this issue of CPP across the country, by and large, has been bipartisan. We have heard from Conservatives, from New Democrats, from Greens, and from people of all stripes saying that this is something we can agree on.

I would have hoped that the debate would extend that further to say, what else can we do? What other policy mechanism can we bring to bear? We cannot afford to have our population come to a point where their retirement is not going to be able to fulfill their needs?

The bill we have in front of us today is an important step in the journey, but it is not the end of the road. Therefore, we are looking at other measures, which were identified just a few moments ago, such as reducing the retirement age from 67 to 65 and looking at the supplement mechanism for old age security and how much it is able to provide for folks who are in income-insecure positions. We have to look at some of the other elements of the social safety network.

We recognize, and anyone who is interested in fiscal prudence would recognize, that if we do not make the investments on the pension side of the equation to ensure that people have adequate income, the forces that will come to bear on the costs of those social

programs because Canadians do not have adequate income will be absolutely overwhelming.

If Canadians do not have the funds in retirement, we are not going to say to seniors, "Go sit on the street corner". We are not going to say to them, "Sorry, you are not eating tonight", and "Sorry, your heat is not going to be available". It is going to come to the doorstep of government. This problem is going to land on our laps one way or the other.

We can put our hands over our eyes, ignore the problem, and do nothing about it today, or we can pass on a debt to the next generation or have the terrible choice of either paying for it or having people be in these terrible situations.

What we are saying is that the imperative is to act now.

I would encourage us, in the spirit of trying to move this forward, to take the time remaining to us to have a dialogue on the basis of what more we can do, that we set aside the faux arguments and the faux indignation about this issue of time allocation and acknowledge that we have had more than sufficient time to debate this issue. What we need to do is look at what more we can do. What we need to do is get on to the rest of the important business this House has to undertake and recognize that we do not have that much time in which to do it.

I look forward to getting to the vote. I look forward to seeing these measures implemented and to making sure that Canadians are able to have the retirements that, after a lifetime of working, they so richly deserve.

• (1255)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be important, at this point, to clarify for the Canadian public how the government is selling what it calls the CPP expansion, which is a tax scheme, by all measures. Canadians must know that this is not going to solve any immediate issues. This is going to be 40 years down the road, when none of us will be there to witness the disaster that this tax scheme will leave for Canadian industries.

I would challenge the member opposite to tell Canadians how this is going to impact Canadian businesses now and 40 years down the road.

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I can say that every business in Canada has an obligation to ensure that its employees get a fair retirement. Businesses pay their fair share so that workers, at the end of a lifetime of working, get the retirement they deserve. That is an obligation.

Far from being a tax scheme, this is an opportunity to invest in the future of Canadians. It is an opportunity to ensure that we put bedrock under their feet. It is an opportunity to make sure that when they retire, they have the means to retire with dignity. Most Canadians get that. It is reflected in polls. That is why there is broad support for this. To characterize savings as a tax, when we know that those benefits will accrue to Canadians and they will get that money back and it will enable them to get the retirement they so richly deserve, is a gross mis-characterization of what is in front of us.

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If members opposite have another plan to deal with the incredible shortage of income that folks will have in retirement based on their current savings, I wish they would put it forward. They had the opportunity during the election campaign. They had an opportunity in six days of debate. Instead, all we have heard are smears and mis-characterizations of this bill, which is unfortunate. I hope they will turn the tone of the debate back to being positive in terms of what they can offer to help make the situation better.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats applaud the general direction of this bill. We agree that we need to do more to improve retirement security for young Canadians, and we applaud the government, and especially the labour movement for pushing long and hard for this change.

However, during the course of this curtailed debate, and it is unfortunate that the government invoked closure on debate on this bill, my colleague, the member for Hamilton Mountain, identified a flaw in the Liberal legislation.

It used to be that there was a child-rearing dropout provision in the CPP legislation. It was the same thing for persons with disabilities. People who received CPP disability benefits were protected so that their payments would not be clawed back.

These are two flaws in this legislation. I want to hear what the government is going to do. If New Democrats vote in favour of sending this bill to committee, will the government fix these two serious errors, which would interfere with pension benefits for both women and persons with disabilities?

•(1300)

Mr. Mark Holland: Mr. Speaker, I commend the New Democrats' support of the overall intent of the bill. They have some questions. I would say that it highlights yet another point, which is that there is still a huge amount of time to go on this bill. It will be sent to committee. There will be an opportunity for debate there. Then at third reading there will be yet more time for debate.

The member asked fair and good questions. There is every opportunity to examine them in committee and see if there is a way to provide restitution for those issues or get answers to those questions. The important thing is that we agree in principle with the direction of this bill. If there are remaining questions on how the rubber hits the road and how it will help Canadians get the retirement they deserve, that is precisely what the committee process is about. Then it will come back to the House for third reading.

I want to point out again that we are down to about 44 days, after all of this washes out, to complete the entire business of the government, including, by the way, finishing with this bill. The disruption that has been caused as a result of this happening has been incredibly problematic.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to join this debate on this piece of legislation. I would certainly like to go through not only some of the past and present issues but also some potential possibilities in the future. I hope my arguments will find ears that will listen and we can have a good debate about everything under the sun when it comes to the CPP.

I would first like to talk about the previous government. I know that there are fans of the previous government in this chamber, and I know that there are those who did not appreciate its approach. However, every government takes an approach for a reason. Sometimes it is built on the context of the ideology of the party. Sometimes it depends on the environment in which it operates. Sometimes it is about the long-term interests of the country.

This country is great, not just because of its political system but because often, as Canadians, we can set aside some of those differences to do what is right. I hope that in this Parliament, perhaps not on this issue but on others, we can find those points.

The previous government focused on the pooled registered pension plan, which was a way for individuals to put away money. It would have been fully portable across this great country, and the costs would have been low, because it was pooled together with other Canadians. The benefit of that approach was simply this. If people had extra money to contribute, instead of putting it against a mortgage, toward lowering debt, or toward saving for a new home, they would have a place to squirrel that money away for retirement. Because of its pooled nature, the cost of administering it would have been low. It would have had the benefit of the private sector running it. It would also have had the obvious benefit that if someone were to pass away, those benefits would instantly be passed on to a spouse or family member.

One of the great pitfalls of the Canada pension plan is that it is not fully transferable, and I will speak to that a bit further. While the government may say that it is not a tax but an investment, when I put money into a TFSA, if I were to get hit by a bus tomorrow, my wife would have full access to those funds. That is not the case with the Canada pension plan. It is the case with a registered savings plan, though.

Getting back to the pooled registered pension plan, even though every single province across this great country agreed with the concept that we would give more choice and allow people who wanted to save more, and it would have had lower costs and been fully portable, not every province followed through. I am happy to report that British Columbia did, and I appreciate the Government of British Columbia for doing so. However, many provinces, particularly Ontario, chose another path.

Although Ontario agreed, at the finance ministers' meeting, to the pooled registered pension plan, it instead decided to go on a crusade and create a totally separate pension plan solely for the province of Ontario.

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We have heard all the issues with respect to the administration fees. We have heard that it spent millions of dollars trying to scope out the plan, advertise, and whatnot. That was all for naught, because we all know what happened. Instead of producing a pooled registered plan that would have had immediate pickup, because it had a lot of support from the business community and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which was very supportive of the concept because an employer could add to an employee's pension on a voluntary basis, unlike with the Canada pension plan, it convinced the new Liberal government, which listened to it, to bail it out by instead pushing for an enhanced Canada pension plan.

I am not opposed to pensions, and anyone who tries to say otherwise I think is being disingenuous. We all benefit when we all play on the same level playing field of facts. To say that any Conservative is against pensions because he or she is raising legitimate concerns about the process by which the government is going about it I do not think benefits this place at all.

Getting back to Ontario, a deal was made, the government pushed this agenda, and the provinces signed on for a variety of reasons. I would not begrudge anyone for that. However, I think it is important that when members of this place, regardless of party, raise the legitimate concerns they hear from their residents, we owe them at least the admission that they may have a point. We have heard some members talk about our wanting to kill the bill. We just want to be heard.

● (1305)

In fact, I am just going to make the point that many members of the Liberal Party have stood up today and said that this should go to committee. It is already at the finance committee. We already engaged in a pre-study. We have studied it for the last few days.

Why deny members of Parliament the ability to raise their voices if they are not a member of that committee? The gentleman opposite said earlier that we only have so much time. I agree, but this is a big piece of legislation, and hopefully I am going to point out some improvements to it.

That takes us to here, right now. Again, we have a bill before us, and there are some shortcomings in the bill. I am going to start first with survivor's benefits. Unfortunately, the government has chosen not to make changes to the survivor's benefit. I have had many people my riding, who in the situation of their life, were quite fortunate that both the husband and wife, the team so to speak, were able to put away a fair bit of money and always maxed out on their payments.

Unfortunately, life had a different plan. Instead of living out the rest of their time in the sunny Okanagan, one died because of a disease or other reason. The spouse—and a funny thing in my riding is that I have heard from more men than women—as the remaining spouse would get no survivor benefit, because they were already receiving the maximum allowed under the Canada pension plan, because they had maxed out their contribution.

What does that mean? That means that, of all the money that is set aside and people believe would go toward their family, in terms of benefits, if their spouse has also maxed out, they would receive nothing. Some people may have varying circumstances. One person

I know had to sell the house in which they had planned to stay together. The reason they were able to keep up the house and were able to pay the taxes was that they both had a good income coming in, plus their CPP.

The government's new bill does not address this. I really hope we can find mechanisms so that this is evaluated by this place, and I think that would be suitable. Through a committee study might be optimal. I do think it should be done.

Second of all, we also heard from Prof. Tammy Schirle from Wilfrid Laurier University that there is an issue in terms of accountability and transparency with the working income tax benefit.

There is a provision in the CPP, this legislation, that allows someone who is a low-income earner a choice to be able to use the working income tax benefit as a way to offset their contributions. She has mentioned that perhaps that could be done by a different means. What happens is that it creates a bit of a gender inequity in how someone can apply for that, because only one spouse of a dual-income household can take advantage of that.

Therefore there has to be some negotiation. Instead of treating people on an individual basis, like all individuals who contribute to CPP—I make my own contributions and my wife, when she was working, would make her own—it actually treats them together, and there is some negotiating that goes on, which creates a gender inequity.

It also does not create the accountability, where the person can see clearly how much is going in and how much is going out. Perhaps, maybe like the GST rebate for low-income earners, which is given on a constant basis, that would be a better method to be able to give people their contributions back on a more regular basis, rather than once a year through the process right now.

Last, none of us—unless someone here can show it—expected that in 2008 there would be a financial crisis leading to a great recession. Economists, including our own government's economists, were not ready for that and had to make a lot of decisions on the fly. Fortunately, we had some fantastic leadership that understood how to weather the storm. As a country, we were able to come out of that recession quickly.

However, the past may not be the future. If we cannot predict these kinds of things, perhaps the finance minister should consider some method within the bill that, if enough provincial counterparts—along the lines of six out of 10 of the provinces and territories contributing, representing two-thirds of the population—ask for a deferment or even a pause to the schedule, perhaps that is something we should consider.

● (1310)

In the heat of the moment when there are difficulties it is better to know we have options and flexibility.

I hope I have been able to present not only some of the challenges here but some of the opportunities that members on both sides can consider, and hopefully that will make for a better debate.

Government Orders

Mr. Vance Badawey (Niagara Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned different methods, different flexibility, and other options that we may be able to consider within the bill in the process. I respect the comments that were made about the communication the member has with his constituents. I would even take it a step further. If those constituents have questions about why we are putting this legislation forward, and if my colleague would pass their names on to me, I would be more than happy to call them myself to help get that message out with respect to the value we are trying to give seniors, not only today but well into the future.

Going back to the methods, I would very much appreciate some input, to hear from the member some of those different methods or different options that we could consider, moving forward with the bill.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I will just go back to some of the things I pointed out.

First, as for the working income tax benefit, there could be a better method so there could be a better understanding by the public as to how that benefit is being used, so it is reported on by breaking it out by individuals. Right now, mixing it all into one particular tax benefit does not really give a clear picture for policy-makers, the public, or even the individuals who receive the benefit. Perhaps we could move to something like the GST rebate, which would allow people to receive their CPP contributions back on a regular basis, and also so that they understand that is what it is for. Unfortunately the way the tax code works right now and under the working income tax benefit, there will not be that clarity.

The second thing is the survivor's benefits. This government continues to call things something other than they are. For example, it is calling this payroll tax an investment, but an investment is something we put money into and we can get it out again. It is portable and can be passed on to one's spouse or family. However, there are rules and conditions that do not allow that. That is where I would just simply make the suggestion.

Lastly, the member opposite said I could just send him the names of my folks. We all know where the information is. There is a difference between people who have legitimate concerns about how they are going to pay for something and those people who want something. Sometimes they are at odds. While I appreciate that my colleague would be able to sing my constituents a song about how great and glorious this is, he does not recognize that even though some people think it is a great idea, they are also wondering if this is the time and how are we going to pay for it. That is the focus of my constituents' concerns.

• (1315)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to really focus my comments on the small businesses that would have a payroll tax increase. I also want to note that this would be in addition to the increase in their tax rate in general. We would be adding layers of increased competitiveness onto our small businesses.

One of the points I made earlier about cutting debate short on this was that we know there is a very different administration to the south of us that is going to have a different approach. Perhaps my

colleague could discuss what the challenges of our small businesses are going to be with respect to our very important trading partner.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, this has come up at finance committee. For example, many people may be unaware that, since federal government employees would need to increase their contributions, that would be up to \$900 million in the 2021-22 fiscal year. That is one level of government.

Another level of government is the provincial government.

Many of us have local municipalities in our ridings. Local authorities in most provinces cannot run deficits. The cost for RCMP, other police forces, fire personnel, or even local staff would also be increased. Guess who is going to pay more on a mill rate. It is going to be those same small businesses. In most municipalities in British Columbia, a small business would pay twice the mill rate of a residential homeowner. In some places in British Columbia it would be seven times as much.

Small businesses would pay for the CPP increase at the provincial level, at the federal level, at the local level, and then at the local level they would pay twice as much. This is a challenge. If we add on a carbon tax and all of the other things that the Liberal government is going to do, we may see less small business, and that is not good for our youth.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for allowing me this opportunity to speak. Quite frankly, since taking office about 12 years ago, I would have to say that this is close to the top, if not at the very top, when it comes to issues brought to my constituency offices. I have two in riding in Newfoundland and Labrador, one in Gander and the other in Grand Falls-Windsor. Formerly I had one in Bonavista, which was part of my old riding. Without a doubt, seniors' poverty is one of the greatest issues I have ever seen. Every year calls come in about how much the increase will be this particular year, how the formula works, what is going to be on their GIS, and how it affects their ability to receive the provincial drug card in order to receive medications, because medication is one of the largest expenses of any senior no matter where they are, as members know.

We engage in this debate and we talk about how we hope to bring seniors to a higher level of income security. To do that, we have talked to the provinces, because in shared jurisdiction we do this. On June 20 of this year, we were able to arrive at a compromise for the entire nation, which allows us to increase that level of support for our seniors. There are three main ways in which Canadians can save through tax measures and the like. One would be through CPP, which we are debating here today. We also have several tools available for tax deductions—for example, tax breaks when it comes to buying a home—and also through RRSPs, or RPPs, we are able to use tax incentives when we voluntarily put money into those. The third would be other tools that we use to save for retirement including home equity, business equity, and the like.

Government Orders

Now we look to what we are dealing with here today, and we are talking about the Canada pension plan and how the contributions will rise, as many people have said in the House. We acknowledge that, but think about the benefits that will ensue because of all this. In many cases, the numbers have been put through the machine, as it were, and it shows that when it comes to retirement, the ideal goal for any senior retiring is that they are able to replace their pre-retirement income at a rate of about 60%. This does not alleviate that for all seniors in this case, but it certainly goes a long way to alleviate the hardships suffered by many.

I mentioned all the calls I get in my office, and this is a big part of it. Many of them have to do with old age security and the guaranteed income supplement that also flows from that. We can save that for another day and another piece of legislation, but in the meantime what excites me about this is that now, over the seven-year period ahead, we would see an increase that I think is substantial for the average Canadian, the average impoverished Canadian, someone making less than \$30,000 per year, even less than \$20,000 when we take in the other aspects of this legislation. I will get to that in a moment.

Also in this case, it would affect a whole host of young people who are currently not thinking about retirement, and many of them are not at this stage in the game. Many millennials are not thinking about retirement, but they would know now that they would face an enhanced benefit once they retire, after we have the seven-year phase-in. I mentioned the phase-in of the first five years would look at the income replacements, the contribution rate, and it is substantial in the sense that, instead of now one-quarter of income replacement, it would raise it to one-third of income replacement. That is a substantial investment for all of us; for employers, employees, and for the government.

The upper earnings limit on the back end of that seven years, in the final two years, 2023-2025, would increase by about 14% and that too is substantial, especially when it comes to the middle class. That would put the rate up to about \$83,000 at that stage, and that is substantial considering that now it is in the lower \$50,000 range.

● (1320)

In essence, in the last 10 years prices have gone up substantially in many sectors. I think of the many sectors in Newfoundland and Labrador where seniors find the hardest struggle, such as energy prices, medications as I spoke about earlier. Travel expenses in rural areas are also a substantial expense. Many seniors live in their homes and the energy bills many of them face are incredible. With a small lowering of energy prices over the past little while, it is still a substantial part of their day-to-day lives. Many of them are forced to abandon their homes, not because they are unable to look after themselves but because they cannot afford it anymore.

Many of these people do not have workplace pensions on which to rely. Many people between the ages of 60 and 65 will have workplace pensions that they have accrued through defined benefit programs, which go a long way toward replacing income, certainly even above the 60% level. However, in this case, let me consider my family.

My father worked over 40 years in one mill. Through the good work of his union, he was able to attain a defined benefit package,

which meant he received the government old age security at 65. However, he was able to supplement that with a fairly large and generous defined benefit package from the company he worked for at the time. It was Abitibi-Consolidated, a mill in central Newfoundland. It no longer exists unfortunately. Through the work of his union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the employees were able to negotiate a generous pension package.

Let us take a look at the workforce today. Not a lot of young people are able to work in one place for more than 40 years. That pool is very small. What is so important here is that means they do not get the benefit from having a defined benefit package because they have moved around from place to place and job to job. In other words, my father's pension package was generous only because he was there for 40 years. If he moved around from job to job, he would not have had that, simply because that pension was not portable. Portability is going to be a major issue over the next 20 or 30 years.

What is key is the fact that the CPP is 100% portable no matter where we go in Canada. That is why we have to increase the benefit for those who need it to get even close to fulfilling their dream of replacing their pre-retirement income of 60%. We hope to get closer to that goal over this seven year period. Yes, contributions will rise for employees and employers, and we have all accepted that. Certainly I have. However, when it comes to the benefits we are talking about here, we are trying to put this in line for those who need it at the time they retire.

Going back to my example, a lot of people will be moving around from job to job and they may have private savings that are portable, such as a myriad of RRSPs, or RPPs or things of that nature, including RRIFs for that matter. However, a lot of people do not and this is a way for us to keep that base level of income for Canadians when they retire, not at 67 but at 65.

I look forward to this going to committee, and looking at amendments as it goes forward. I want to congratulate the provinces in this. They have come a long way in helping us create what we think will help alleviate poverty for seniors. Again, it is the number one issue in my riding and I am not alone in that. There are many people, especially rural ridings, for whom the price they have to pay on just basic goods has become quite crippling.

● (1325)

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I found it particularly interesting that my colleague's family was the beneficiary of a progressive pension system. Would that every Canadian had such an advantage and benefit.

My question is in regard to the fact that the current proposal would not be fully realized for another 49 years. In other words, young people of today, those who are 16 years old, would benefit.

Government Orders

However, we have an increasing number of seniors living in poverty. While we are waiting for these benefits and enhancements to take effect, what is the government proposing to do for those poor seniors who are suffering? Is there any effort or thought being given to ensuring that the GIS is not clawed back so seniors, even if they do get more federally, are still disadvantaged?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Young people of today, certainly those under 25, would be the principal beneficiaries of this legislation. To alleviate the situation, I highlighted in my speech several aspects that currently dealt with seniors. However, the member is right. I hope there will be more legislation coming, and even private members' bills, regarding the GIS and other tools by which we can help seniors get out of poverty.

I am focused on this right now. I see us becoming that much more progressive down the line when it comes to a Canadian pension plan system. My father was a principal beneficiary of a hard thought-out progressive pension plan between his union and the company for which he worked. Again, that was not portable. It was for him in that workplace. I would like to see something more generous for the population at large, and this would go a long way toward alleviating that.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I asked this question earlier of the minister, but I do not I got an answer, so I will try again.

We have a choice here between private savings and the private savings vehicles we strengthened as a previous Conservative government, and the current government's proposal to take away more of people's money essentially to save it for them.

We believe in the importance of savings, but one of the advantages of private savings is that individuals can save up for interim projects. It is not just retirement, but they can save money for a home, buy a home, and realize the value of that home in their retirement. They can save for education, put that money into an education, which then will give them increased earning potential in the future.

Our approach, which emphasis private savings, allows people to pull out of those savings for interim investments, which then will pay dividends in the long run. The government does not allow them to do that. It forces them to save for retirement and does not allow them to use those other savings vehicles for important interim projects.

Recognizing the advantage of private savings and of incentives for private savings over this model, would the member not agree with us that a better approach would be the changes we brought in, which the Liberals reversed, such as the tax-free savings accounts and perhaps further reforms to RRSPs to make the home buyers plan more flexible? Would that not be a better way to go rather than the direction the government has gone?

• (1330)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, it is not better. It is good, but it is not better.

I understand what the member is saying about the tools he is putting forward, such as RRSPs and the investments. However, I go

back to the point that these are good measures, but I do not think they are better, and here is why.

In many cases, one has to take on a large element of risk as an investor and that does not always unfold the way it should. Even though it may be low risk, it still is risk at that point. What we are doing today is giving a base for seniors to rely on 100%. This is what I want to enhance in this. It is not just this, as my other hon. colleague pointed out, but it is together with the old age security, and by extension, the guaranteed income supplement.

Again, the tools the member described are good ones. I take advantage of them myself. As an investor, I am a low-risk investor, but I do that with a risk. They are good, but they are just not better.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to talk about a very important bill, Bill C-26, and the security of people in Canada when they retire.

I have a few introductory comments. I echo the comments of my colleague from Vancouver East who arrived in the House as a brand new member of Parliament, looking forward to a new spirit of collaboration and co-operation. Our hopes were very high that things would be different. I therefore want to register my disappointment around the government's choice to move forward with time allocation. I share that disappointment with the colleagues on my side who, unlike me, will be unable to share their points of view and comments with our colleagues today.

As I said, I am honoured to be speaking to Bill C-26, which will amend the Canada Pension Plan Act and incorporate recent agreements the government has been able to reach with the provinces to enhance the Canada pension plan.

Although the effect of the changes will not be felt for many years, 49 years, this enhancement is a very important first step in improving retirement for young Canadians. I want to acknowledge and offer my congratulations to the many citizen groups, in particular, unions that have really been fighting long and hard and laid the important groundwork so we were able to get to an agreement on these enhancements.

When this is fully implemented many years from now, but still important, the CPP will replace 33% of pre-retirement income, which is up from its current 25%. The New Democrats have long worked hard for improvements to many aspects of our social safety net, including the Canada pension plan, fighting for better old age security, and increasing guaranteed income supplement benefits.

As I mentioned in some of my questions, retirement security for many Canadians has reached a new crisis level. It really has been increasing and made worse under some of the policies of the previous government, which really saw the crisis come to a head with many people being unable to look toward a retirement. A golden retirement, as people used to say, will not be there.

Government Orders

A large part of that problem is that six in 10 working Canadians no longer have a workplace pension. I will do what a lot of people do not do usually and reveal my age. I am 53 years old. My dad would have been one of the first groups of workers who worked for a very large multinational corporation and had a workplace pension. Closer to the end of his tenure in the corporation, during a large corporate takeover, he lost that defined benefit pension plan. My parents, along with many others, have had to look forward to retirement, but, as my colleague on the opposite side said in his previous comments, have had to take on a lot more risk when it comes to pensions, more risks than his parents had and many before him. Younger generations are looking forward to an even more precarious work environment and retirement, one that may not provide them with the things they need to have a safe and healthy retirement.

During the election, the Liberals promised to enhance CPP, and we are glad to see that has come forward. I have a couple of comments on this.

• (1335)

I want to acknowledge my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. As any good MP would, he did some digging and studying up on the bill so we could speak about it as it was coming forward. He found some flaws with it. I thought the government would be very eager to hear about this and do a quick fix. It is one of the reasons we want to continue to debate this, because we would like to hear a response from the government that it does plan to fix this. Just saying that going to committee somehow that will make everything better does not reassure me or people in my constituency, in particular, women and those living with disabilities, that their retirement is going to be as secure as they thought it was.

Of course, what I am talking about is that the proposed changes to enhance the Canada pension plan would actually not afford women and those with a disability the same increases. Although we know this was brought in under a previous prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, it was not included in this particular enhancement to the Canada pension plan. I know members on this side and my colleagues have been asking the government over and over, both in question period and in debate, to tell us if this was a mistake. We have asked if it is going to fix it, or if it was not a mistake, why it was not included.

Of course, if it was not a mistake then I question its claims about being sincere in addressing some of the inequities and issues, particularly when it comes to retirement for those two groups of people who would be most vulnerable. They are those living on some type of CPP disability and women who had to leave the workforce who were the primary caregivers of children and were therefore not contributing to the Canada pension plan. From what we can see, from what we know, and from the research from my colleague, these folks are not going to see the increase, as others would. It is one reason to continue debate.

I understand the government has just recently, within a month, done some great work and brought our provinces together and got agreement. However, sometimes in haste, things get overlooked. This is one aspect I hope the Liberals just overlooked, and I hope they are going to try to fix it, because it is extremely important to me.

When I was campaigning to be the member of Parliament for my riding of Saskatoon West, one of the key issues in my riding was income and affordability. For seniors, it was being able to afford housing, and if they were lucky enough to scrape together enough to afford housing, they were not able to afford medication.

Retirement income, particularly for women and those who have lived on a more limited income because of a disability, is extremely important to me. Therefore, I rise today to speak about this and to draw it to the government's attention again. It would be nice to hear, definitively, from the government that it does plan to not allow this inequity to move forward, that it does plan to fix it, and not just say that everything will be all right, that we will talk about it in committee, to just get going with this, and keep talking—or not keep talking, I guess—so that we can address this.

I feel honoured to stand up and speak about this issue. I want to congratulate my colleague for bringing forward these two key pieces of inequity in the legislation.

• (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in order to come up with the bill we have today, there was a great deal of dialogue and discussion among the different provinces and territories in Canada. As a result, we have this piece of legislation. I was not sitting at the table and so I do not know if the points that have been raised by the New Democrats were issues actually raised at the table. I do know that New Democratic governments, Conservative governments, and Liberal governments all participated in that discussion. Hopefully, the bill will go to committee soon and the NDP can continue to raise those issues.

At the beginning of her speech, the member referenced why we had to move the time allocation motion. Recognizing that the government would like this bill to ultimately pass and given that the Conservative opposition wants to kill the bill, would it be the NDP's approach to allow the bill to die on the Order Paper? Of course, the Conservatives would applaud.

If the Conservatives continue to move amendments and choose to debate the bill indefinitely, for literally hundreds of hours, something an opposition party could do unless the government used some mechanism, does the NDP not think that the government looking at what Canadians want is a high enough priority to move it forward, and that now is a good time to do so?

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke of two issues that I raised in my comments, one was putting time allocation on the debate of this bill and the second, what I feel is the most important point, was that the inequities built into the enhancement to the CPP would not help women who have left the workforce to raise children or people with disabilities get the same enhancements.

Government Orders

I would like to hear definitively from the government if it is going to fix it, and I have not heard that. I do not think suggesting that it might have been missed in very high-level conversations with very smart people is sufficient. It is, ultimately, the federal government that brought forward the CPP enhancements and regime that they are asking the provinces to sign on to, so our due diligence at this level and the due diligence of those at the table from the federal government should have realized this and made changes then.

I will leave my comments there, hoping that the government will give a definitive answer yes or no to that question.

•(1345)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that my party has a very different view of these issues in terms of the level of control that individuals should have over their own lives. Certainly when it comes to people's financial decisions, the government and the NDP are clearly very anti-choice. Their view seems to be that caring means controlling, that if we care about people's retirement, it means we have to control it for them.

I will ask the hon. member this. Is there not a way that we can care very much about people having strong and well-cared-for retirements, while still believing that people can have control over their own retirements? We can enhance savings vehicles, whether it be the tax-free savings accounts, RRSPs, or make changes to RRIFs that I know my colleague proposed, to give people more control over their own retirements while also ensuring they have the resources to retire well.

Ms. Sheri Benson: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is sincere in believing that the efforts of the previous government, such as the tax-free savings accounts and pooled registered pension plans, were attempts to help people with retirement. Unfortunately, they did not work. That is why we are in this crisis and why we need to be part of something larger in order for people to look forward to retirements that can sustain their quality of life.

Mr. Raj Grewal (Brampton East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, I want to thank the Government of Canada for taking on this initiative of expanding the CPP. It is no small task to get the provinces, which represent two-thirds of the Canadian population, to sign on to CPP enhancements. These provincial governments represent all parties, the Liberal Party, the NDP, and the Conservative Party, so the expansion of the Canada pension plan is very much a Canadian solution that is not only important but very much needed.

We know that, today, one in four families, or 1.1 million people, nearing retirement risk not saving enough for retirement. In particular, middle-class families without workplace pension plans are at a greater risk of under-saving for retirement, and a third of those families are at risk.

To address this, this historic agreement was reached with the provinces in June to make meaningful changes to the CPP. These enhancements would be phased in over a seven-year-period, starting in 2019. Once fully in place, the CPP enhancement would increase the maximum retirement benefit by about 50%. Enhanced benefits would accumulate gradually as individuals pay into the enhanced

CPP, and to fund these enhanced benefits, annual CPP contributions would increase modestly over seven years, starting in 2019.

I would like to remind the House that our contribution rates in Canada are much lower than those in other countries with public pension plans. In fact, the CPP contribution rate is about half the average rate among the 25 countries in the OECD that have such public pension plans. This remains true even with our CPP enhancement.

What would this mean to Canadians, at the end of the day?

Young workers in their twenties or workers nearing retirement would all benefit from the enhanced CPP. For the young workers in their early twenties just starting out in their career, this would be a great benefit when they retire. By paying their portion of the CPP contributions, which are then matched by their employers, they would be building toward a safe, secure retirement for their own future.

The modest increases in contributions would be phased in over seven years. Someone working with constant earnings of \$50,000 would contribute an additional \$70 per year, or \$6 a month, in 2019. By the end of the phase-in period, that same person would be contributing \$475 per year, or \$40 per month. By strengthening the Canada pension plan, workers would receive more money from their pension, an increase from one-quarter of the eligible earnings to one-third. For example, people who make \$50,000 a year for their working life would receive about \$16,000 each year in retirement instead of today's \$12,000. That is \$4,000 more a year in their pockets.

In addition, the enhancement would increase the point at which a person stops making contributions by about 14% in 2025.

I know that some people are concerned about the increased contributions and what they would mean to their bottom line: their paycheque. We thought about this and designed a gradual phase-in, so that contributions would increase modestly over the seven-year implementation period. We also thought about employers, in designing this enhanced CPP. We specifically designed a slow phase-in process with the express purpose of minimizing the impact and giving employees and employers time to adjust to these changes.

The great news is that our young workers would receive the largest increase in their retirement benefits. In fact, we know that young people, in general, find it difficult to save. Many are working in jobs that do not have company pension plans, which makes them have to save for their retirement on their own.

The other fact is that a tax deduction, instead of a tax credit, would be provided to the employee contribution portion of the enhanced CPP. This would avoid the new CPP contributions increasing the cost of saving.

Workers in the middle of their career or nearing retirement would still benefit from an enhanced CPP as the increased contributions that are made in 2019 and later would go toward an enhanced retirement pension.

Government Orders

• (1350)

What about the low-income worker worried about the effect of increased CPP contributions on his paycheque? How will the enhanced CPP help him or her? I want to assure my colleagues and low-income workers all across this country that an enhanced CPP will benefit all workers, including those with low incomes.

To make sure that eligible low-income workers are not financially burdened as a result of the extra contributions, the government will also enhance the working income tax benefit. The proposed enhancement to the working income tax benefit is designed to provide additional benefits to roughly offset the incremental CPP contributions for eligible low-income workers.

With this enhancement, there will be no impact on disposable income. When he or she retires, they will also get a larger retirement benefit payment. The bottom line is that people who are working in Canada, paying into the CPP, and planning to retire after 2019 will have more money in their pocket from their CPP retirement pension benefit.

In my riding of Brampton East, day in and day out, I speak to constituents who call me personally about the issues they or their families are facing. I often hear that young Canadians have a hard time finding permanent, stable employment with reliable pension plan. That is often way out of reach. I hear from young families and established families alike who are thinking of retirement and realizing they do not have adequate savings. This concerns me, and it should concern every member of the House.

The Canadian Association of Retired Persons estimates there are roughly 600,000 seniors living in poverty in Canada. That is more than the population of Brampton. Frankly, that is unacceptable.

Our government is doing its part to ensure that in the future no seniors live in poverty. We started by reducing the age of eligibility for old age security back to 65, and boosting the GIS by 10% to provide almost \$1,000 per year per GIS recipient, aimed especially at helping low-income seniors who live alone.

However, that is not enough. Associations like CARP have been calling for an expansion of the CPP for years, and it is about time we delivered. We feel this is a win-win. I urge my hon. colleagues to support an enhanced CPP that will further help Canadians contribute to a safe and secure retirement.

• (1355)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do know that this member is very concerned about small businesses in my riding, whether they be olive importers or others.

I want to ask him specifically about the impact the proposal will have on small business. We have heard of studies done and concerns raised by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. We do know that a survey was done in Ontario relating to the ORPP and the negative impact it would have on small business.

This proposal leads to a loss of jobs, fewer jobs created, and wage cuts. Would it not be better to use a private savings model in which individuals could earn just as much but save more of their money? Would that not be better for small businesses in my riding and his?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Before we go to the member for Brampton East, I want to remind everyone in the House that debate is taking place. It is nice to see a friendly conversation amongst you, but if you do not mind, keep it down or whisper, as opposed to talking loudly, so we can hear the debate, which is very fulsome.

The hon. member for Brampton East.

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague across the aisle is a great guy, even though I mostly disagree with him completely on almost every issue. However, he is a personal friend and that is what makes democracy so great.

The single biggest reason why enhancement of the CPP is needed is the dire state of the private pension system. Anyone can look to statistics. The member opposite mentioned a study done by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which has a 109,000 members. It testified at the finance committee.

The devil is in the details of their research. It was relying on responses from 651 members. A survey was sent to 10,000 of their members. It said members were against our proposal, when among its 109,000 members, only 651 members said that the enhancement of the CPP was a bad idea.

I urge the member opposite to talk to small businesses in his riding, because small businesses all across this country know that if their employees are taken care of, if their employees can look forward to a safe and secure retirement, that will benefit their bottom line in the short and long terms.

I encourage my hon. colleague across the way, who is a great guy, a smart guy, to support the CPP enhancement

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech by the member for Brampton East. We certainly agree with him that we need an enhancement to the CPP. However, there is an important part missing in this, and that is the child rearing and disabilities drop-out period that is in the existing CPP, but for some reason has been omitted in the enhancement by the government. As the member and I have heard from many stakeholders and organizations, this is a critical part. We need to know the answer. Has the government made a mistake and is it going to fix it by putting the drop-out periods into the enhancement, and will it support that?

Mr. Raj Grewal: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague has recently been substituting on the finance committee and I welcome him to the committee. He does really good work on the committee.

Statements by members

The fact of the matter is this. If people retire in Canada after 2019, they are going to have more money and all Canadians should be proud of that. We said at the beginning that the single reason that an enhancement of the CPP was needed is that in 1971, 48% of Canadians had a defined pension benefit plan provided by their employers, but that by 2011, it was 25%, and still declining. Employers are not providing employees and Canadians with defined benefit plans anymore. Canadians are struggling to save for retirement and enhancement of the CPP is critical.

The most telling part of this is that all the provinces agree with this, whether NDP, Conservative, or Liberal. This is something that all members in the House should agree with because Canadians deserve safe and secure retirement. I encourage the member and his party to support the bill.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

GISÈLE CHRÉTIEN

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, do you know one of those rare gems who transform their community with their leadership? In Sudbury, Gisèle Chrétien's commitment to our community has made it a great place to live.

A tireless volunteer, Gisèle supports causes in the fields of health, education, economic development, and French-language services. She was the driving force behind the establishment of Collège Boréal and was its president for almost a decade. Gisèle has also served as the chair of the board of directors for TFO and Health Sciences North. She founded support groups for children living with diabetes, sat on the boards of the Children's Aid Society and Chamber of Commerce, and even published a book about leadership.

Just recently, she was awarded the 2016 Prix de la francophonie de l'ACFO du grand Sudbury, in recognition of her work. Gisèle is living proof that one person's commitment can enrich an entire community.

Congratulations and thank you, Gisèle.

* * *

• (1400)

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month, the Senate passed Bill S-217 by a wide margin with the support of Liberal and Conservative senators alike.

The criminal history of an accused seeking bail is relevant and material to the proper determination of a bail application hearing, yet under the Criminal Code, it is discretionary whether the crown leads such evidence. This loophole proved fatal to Constable David Wynn, who was shot and killed in the line of duty by someone who was out on bail, notwithstanding the fact he had an extensive criminal history. None of that information was brought forward to the attention of the judge.

Bill S-217 is common sense legislation that seeks to enhance public safety by ensuring that what happened to Constable Wynn never happens again. I urge the government to join its Liberal colleagues in the Senate and support Bill S-217.

* * *

2016 BREAKTHROUGH JUNIOR CHALLENGE

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate, Davina Potkidis, a grade 12 student from Holy Cross Catholic Academy in Woodbridge, for reaching the top 15 in the 2016 Breakthrough Junior Challenge. Founded by Facebook creators Mark Zuckerberg and Sergey Brin, the challenge is an annual global competition celebrating excellence in science.

Davina's achievement is highlighted, as the 2016 challenge drew 6,000 applications from over 100 countries. A superb student, piano teacher, athlete, and a member of her school's student council, Davina still found time to produce a video explaining what gravitational waves are and what happens when they hit earth.

The winner of the challenge will be selected on December 4 and will receive a \$250,000 scholarship.

Let us wish Davina success as she represents Canada on the global stage. We are proud of this remarkable young woman.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, just on the other side of the river here, the Prime Minister told the chiefs at the Assembly of First Nations the following:

We will support the work of reconciliation and continue the necessary process of truth telling and healing, we will work with [you] to enact the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, starting with the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Prime Minister promised real change, yet unfortunately we have yet to see the real or the change in this case.

We are heading towards the 150th anniversary of this place we now call Canada. The first peoples of this country should not have to wait another 150 years to see their fundamental human rights protected, respected, and fulfilled.

I invite the Prime Minister to respect that promise of reconciliation with the first peoples of this country.

* * *

WINEMAKER

Mr. Neil Ellis (Bay of Quinte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I share with you another remarkable accomplishment from my riding.

Statements by members

Norman Hardie, a winemaker in Prince Edward County, has received global recognition for his county chardonnay. These accolades are a reflection of Norman's winemaking expertise and artistry, as well as the rich agricultural land that is home to Ontario's newest wine region.

His 2013 county chardonnay has been placed in categories that include "Matt Kramer's Most Exciting Wines of the 21st Century (so far)" and the 2016 WinAlign National Wine Awards of Canada platinum category. This year, his county chard ranked as the top chardonnay on the list.

I send my sincere congratulations to Norman Hardie for his passion and dedication to his craft. The international attention he is receiving is further raising the profile of the county, and inspiring budding winemakers in the area.

I encourage all of my colleagues to look for Norman's critically acclaimed wine, or tour the many wineries in Prince Edward County for a truly memorable experience.

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SHARE AGRICULTURE FOUNDATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to recognize SHARE Agriculture Foundation, an organization founded by Peel farmers, which has had an immense impact on improving the quality of life in impoverished agricultural-based communities in the developing world. This organization has touched the lives of thousands in countries such as Honduras, El Salvador, Brazil, Belize, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Haiti, Bolivia, and Cambodia, to name a few. SHARE has achieved this success through its unwavering commitment to the "pass on" principle, where individuals are provided with the necessary tools to improve their lives through their own efforts.

Earlier this month, I had the honour of congratulating SHARE on the 40th anniversary of its founding in 1976.

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, I would like to thank SHARE's extraordinary volunteers and donors, and wish this phenomenal organization another 40 years of continued success and excellence in creating healthy communities in the developing world.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL CHILD DAY

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, National Child Day in Canada is November 20.

I had the pleasure of celebrating National Child Day by talking with members of the Académie Ste-Thérèse student representative council at the instigation of UNICEF Canada. I was impressed to find that these young people are involved, informed, and able to think critically about school and community issues that matter to them.

I would like to congratulate prime minister Julien Lavergne Roberge, vice prime minister Philippe Tremblay, moderator Anthony

Nasrallah, their 33 student council colleagues, and their teacher, Tollof Nelson, for his work. They are an example to us all.

I invite my colleagues to celebrate National Child Day and to continue listening to young people's concerns and interests. Our children are the future of our society and the leaders of tomorrow.

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LEONARD COHEN AND BOB WALSH

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we lost two great artists from the Canadian music scene in the past couple of weeks.

The music of these two great icons, Leonard Cohen and Bob Walsh, provided the soundtrack of my youth and soothed my heart and soul.

Leonard Cohen and his brilliance treated us to over 20 albums, and many of his songs became timeless classics that will remain forever etched in our hearts and minds. Mr. Cohen won numerous honours and awards, and showcased our country all around the world.

With his own unique passion, Bob Walsh, the king of Quebec blues, thrilled us throughout his brilliant, exciting career and he, too, earned a number of recognitions. He left an indelible mark on our musical landscape.

I wish to extend my deepest condolences to the families of Mr. Cohen and Mr. Walsh.

* * *

[*English*]

NEW BRUNSWICK SOUTHWEST

Ms. Karen Ludwig (New Brunswick Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is entrepreneur week, I am pleased to rise in the House and share a few of the many attractions brought to us by the good people of New Brunswick Southwest—the gateway to the Atlantic experience. At Roosevelt Campobello International Park, one can stroll around the summer home of president Theodore Roosevelt in one of Canada's few international parks. At Ministers Island, one can drive over the ocean floor, but if people plan poorly their car will be 15 feet under the full tide. We have whales just as Toronto has squirrels. Grand Manan is the dulce capital of Canada; those who do not know what dulce is should google it. If people like golf, they should visit St. Andrews-by-the-Sea, but be careful not to hit the par three too hard at hole 12 or it will end up in the Atlantic Ocean, and its next stop is Ireland.

There are hundreds more amazing got-to-see sights in the riding of New Brunswick Southwest, but one will never know if one never goes.

* * *

TRANSGENDER AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is Transgender Awareness Week. Individuals and organizations across Canada will raise the visibility of transgender and gender non-conforming persons and the problems they face daily.

[Translation]

Trans youth face extreme bullying and violence in school. They have high dropout rates, mental health problems, and increasing levels of suicidal ideation. According to one Ontario study, 77% have had suicidal thoughts.

● (1410)

[English]

The Vancouver Police Department, in response to the hate and violence among trans persons, is leading the way in police response with a video called *Walk With Me*; and in partnership with Starbucks and B.C. businesses, created a safe-place sticker so trans persons can find a haven when threatened.

[Translation]

On November 20, we will observe Transgender Day of Remembrance to commemorate those whose lives were lost due to bigotry, violence, and suicide. On that day—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has refused to answer a very simple question I submitted about whether taxpayer-funded nanny services he receives qualify as a taxable benefit. The current government promises transparency but has delivered the exact opposite. Canadians have a right to know about the benefits that elected officials receive. When it comes to these benefits, whether a benefit is taxable is not a matter of discretion; it is a matter of law and the Prime Minister has to follow the law, just like anyone else. If he receives a taxable benefit from his employer, in this case from the taxpayer, then he has to pay tax on it.

The Liberal talking point on these nannies is that the Prime Minister has different needs because he has a young family. Well I would say to him that he is not the only person in this House or in this country with a young family. When most people need outside child care, they pay for it.

The Prime Minister should be prepared to answer simple questions about the benefits he receives, the Prime Minister should not expect to receive free child care at taxpayers' expense, the Prime Minister should follow the law, and the Prime Minister should pay his taxes.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP, REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the most significant issues that I have had to deal with over the last number of years has been that of trying to assist in getting families reunited here in Canada, in particular in Winnipeg North.

It is with pleasure that I rise to acknowledge and commend the Minister of Immigration for doing a fantastic job at assisting in getting more and more families processed in a much speedier

Statements by members

fashion. It is really all about that when we talk about immigration in many different ways under the family sponsorships. Reuniting families is a positive thing, and this is something that this government has established as a very important priority. I appreciate the efforts of the Minister of Immigration for all he has done in reuniting families through immigration.

* * *

MICHAEL O'NEILL

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I stand to honour my friend and long-term employee on the Hill, Michael O'Neill, who passed away recently.

Mike's career began in 1981, first with MP Dave Rooney; then the NDP research bureau; and as luck would have it, in my office for the last 23 years.

Saying Mike was unique would be an understatement. His corporate memory, his research and analysis, and his passionate approach to political issues were one of a kind. He did not seek credit or enjoy the spotlight. He was a sounding board, a quick and insightful thinker with so much filed away in his brilliant brain, and always ready to help such that even during his illness he provided wise counsel. Mike was probably most happy doing a critical analysis of the government, even when we were the government.

To his wife Anne and daughter Eryn, we send our heartfelt sympathies. Michael O'Neill made this place a better place. His efforts improved the decisions for Canada; his loyalty was absolute. Our thanks go to Mike and his family.

* * *

[Translation]

OPERATION RED NOSE

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to say that the weekend of November 25 and 26 marks the start of the 33rd annual Operation Red Nose ride program in the greater Drummond area.

I want to congratulate Éric Stejskal, general manager of Boire & Frères, for his involvement in this program. He has been named honorary president for 2016.

I also want to congratulate Julie Dubois, coordinator of the Drummondville Operation Red Nose, as well as Dominic Villeneuve from the Fondation du Cégep de Drummondville.

All profits will go to the Fondation du Cégep de Drummondville in support of the student athletes on the intercollegiate sports teams at the Cégep de Drummondville, Les Voltigeurs.

I urge everyone in the greater Drummond area to get actively involved in this 33rd annual Operation Red Nose. People should not hesitate to call Red Nose if they have had one too many.

*Oral Questions**[English]***MEDICINE HAT—CARDSTON—WARNER**

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to thank the great people of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner for their support, trust, and hard work to bring us here.

I thank my amazing campaign team and the hundreds of volunteers for their commitment and tireless efforts.

I thank my wife, Sue, and our family for the sacrifices they have made and will continue to make.

As their elected MP, I look forward to holding the Liberal government to account on issues facing my riding, including the economy, job creation, pipelines, and keeping taxes low in support of families.

Residents of my riding also expect the government to ensure that our agricultural community remains strong and competitive.

On October 24, the residents of Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner sent a very strong message to the Liberal government that its policies are failing Alberta and Canada, and I am here to deliver that message.

* * *

● (1415)

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we continue to be shocked and dismayed to learn of anti-Semitic incidents across the country. These incidents remind us that we must remain vigilant, we must speak out, and we must actively work together to stop anti-Semitism in Canada. This kind of discrimination is totally unacceptable and we cannot let it go unchallenged.

All Members of this House are proud to represent every Canadian, no matter the race, the religion, or the community. Our differences ought to unite us, not divide us.

All of us in the House and indeed Canadians from coast to coast must make it clear that religiously motivated attacks are contrary to Canadian values and principles. I ask all members of this House to stand together and condemn these shameful incidents.

ORAL QUESTIONS*[Translation]***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not a single job has been created in the past year, the first year of the government's term, and things are liable to get worse. Unprompted, the Prime Minister decided to publicly explain his attitude toward NAFTA and his negotiating style with the Americans.

Since the Prime Minister was naive enough to show his hand to the Americans, how can he assure Canadians that he will be able to protect jobs here in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister has been very clear from day one that he will advance Canada's national interests. The North American Free Trade Agreement is important to Canada, but it is also important to the United States. As I mentioned yesterday, nine million U.S. jobs are directly connected to the Canadian economy, and 35 U.S. states depend on Canada as their number one customer.

We recognize the importance of NAFTA. We will focus on good quality Canadian jobs. We will engage with the U.S. in a manner that will advance our national interests.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the Prime Minister has failed to create a single additional full-time job in his first year. Now, without being asked, he has offered to renegotiate NAFTA with the new U.S. president-elect, putting thousands more Canadian jobs at risk.

Now that the Prime Minister has naively shown his cards to the Americans, how does he plan to protect and save Canadian jobs, not the nine million American jobs?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the leadership of our Prime Minister, GM Canada has brought 1,000 engineers to Canada. These are engineering jobs that will create more jobs in Canada.

With respect to NAFTA, the member opposite should know that when it came into effect, our collective economies were around \$8 trillion. Today our collective economies stand at \$20.6 trillion.

We recognize the importance of trade. We will engage with the United States. We will work with it to ensure we advance Canada's interests that will create good quality jobs in Canada and grow the economy.

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and the Conservative Party signed this agreement because we knew it would be good for the country. That is what happened.

[Translation]

The Americans' shift on NAFTA obviously has people deeply concerned about the softwood lumber agreement. A surge of American protectionism would cause greater uncertainty and risks for forestry jobs in Canada.

How are they going to deal with this protectionist movement? We hope the government will be able to fully assert the rights of Canadian workers.

[English]

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has engaged and worked very closely with the U.S. on the softwood lumber file. The softwood lumber agreement expired with the previous government. Our government is absolutely engaged with the current administration. We will work with the new president-elect and congress to address and advance this issue.

Our government understands the importance of good quality jobs in the forestry sector. We will advance this and beef and other contentious issues as well.

Our Prime Minister has been clear. We are open to ideas, open to people, and open to trade. That is how we will grow our economy.

• (1420)

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada needs NAFTA. It has created millions of jobs and attracted billions of dollars in investments. Although president-elect Trump has promised to tear up this important agreement, everybody knows that his issues are with Mexico, not Canada.

Why would the Prime Minister so foolishly wave the white flag, say that he would open up this agreement and put so many jobs at jeopardy? Why was he so foolish to do this?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister has consistently advanced Canada's interests. He knows that in order to do that, we have to be open and candid with our allies, including our most important friends, partner, and ally. That was why we proactively said that we understood the importance of trade, not only to Canada but also to the United States. Nine million jobs in the U.S. depend upon Canada. Thirty-five states in the U.S. depend on Canada as their number one customer.

It is important to remember the mutual benefits associated with trade. That is why we had an open, candid, and honest conversation. That is what Canadians expect and that is exactly what we will do.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was an incredibly foolish and naive move on the part of the Prime Minister.

TPP is an agreement that is also at risk and it is also an agreement that Canadians need. The upcoming U.S. administration has indicated that it will not move forward on TPP, but that does not mean Canada does not have to and should not move forward with TPP.

Will the Prime Minister commit to standing up for Canada's economic interests, and at this weekend's APEC summit aggressively and persistently act to keep the TPP moving forward, or is he going to do something foolish again?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the government opposite that negotiated TPP in secret. It is our government that has been very open and transparent with Canadians. That is why we are engaging with all sectors of the economy, all Canadians on this very important issue.

It is important that we bring people in. If we do not, we see the challenges of protectionism on the rise. That is because when governments do things in secret, it really undermines the trust that Canadians have. We have been very clear. We will engage with them to gain their trust, to advance our national interests, to promote trade. When it comes to TPP or NAFTA, we will always make sure Canada's interests are first and foremost.

Oral Questions

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in their campaign platform, in the throne speech, and dozens of times in the House of Commons, the Liberals have said it is time to get rid of the out-of-date and unfair first past the post voting system. However, today under the guise of consultation, we see the Liberals engaging in decision-based evidence making apparently designed to maintain the status quo.

Here is a bit of real evidence for the government. Almost 90% of those who testified in front of the multi-party electoral reform committee said that it was time for proportional representation. Canadians want their voices to be heard. They want their votes to count.

Will the government respect Canadians and keep its promise to make 2015 the last election under first past the post?

[Translation]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to stand here on traditional Algonquin land.

[English]

I want to thank the members of the committee who have worked so hard and so diligently to hear from Canadians, and have worked together to provide the House with a report. I look forward to receiving that report on December 1, and coming back to the House with a thoughtful plan forward.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats are doing everything in our power to achieve one of the hardest things in Canadian politics, actually have Liberals keep Liberal promises.

Almost 70% of MP town hall reports, 88% of expert witnesses, and 87% of Canadians who testified at the committee want a fair, proportional voting system. Apparently that is not enough for the government. A report out today says that the Liberals are actually spending \$2 million on a pop psych survey to argue against electoral reform.

Will the minister at least agree that the facts are overwhelmingly in support of a proportional voting system, yes or no?

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his commitment to this file and I want to thank him for bringing up something that we have been working on for months.

We want to find as many ways as possible to hear from as many Canadians as possible on the topic of electoral reform. We want to hear about the values that matter most to them. To that end, we are working with Vox Pop Labs on a new initiative. The member opposite understands full well that standard procedures require testing and pre-testing. We will have more information on this initiative in the coming days.

Oral Questions

● (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all of us have heard people say that they will not vote because it will not make a difference. They are not completely wrong.

In the last election, nine million votes did not count at all because our old voting system is completely unfair. Across the country, Canadians, civil society, and experts are calling for the introduction of a proportional voting system.

Will the government listen and ensure that every vote counts so that we have a voting system that truly respects the will of the people?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we listened to Canadians when we proposed the special committee to go out and hear from Canadians. We listened to Canadians and the members of the House when we changed the composition of that committee so the majority would be with the opposition. We will listen to Canadians in new and innovative ways.

I look forward to receiving the committee's report on its recommendations on how we can best move forward. We will present the House with a thoughtful plan once we receive its report.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they will listen until they hear what they want.

During the election campaign, the Liberal leader promised, with his hand on his heart, that the 2015 election would be the last under the current voting system. He promised and swore that he would make it happen, that he was serious about it. Confidence, integrity, and respect; it was all there.

However, since the Liberals took office, things are not as clear. They are qualifying their remarks, looking for a way out, and producing phoney surveys. The people want change, as do the opposition parties.

Do members believe it was a real promise or a joke?

[English]

Hon. Maryam Monsef (Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that we have been committed to this file since we began our mandate. The member opposite knows full well that there is a committee in place right now deliberating the outcomes that it would like to present to the House. The member opposite knows full well that from the very beginning we were clear that we would not move forward on reform without the broad support of Canadians. I look forward to receiving that report on December 1.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government is sending mixed messages to the Canadian business community. Yesterday, Canada's ambassador to the U.S. said that Canada needed to work harder to educate Americans on the

benefits of NAFTA. I could not agree more. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister served up NAFTA to president-elect Trump on a silver platter.

Why are the Prime Minister and his ambassador not on the same page on Canada's most important trade deal?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work on the trade file.

The benefits of NAFTA are clear for Canada and the United States. In 2015, trilateral merchandise trade amounted to over \$1 trillion. That is a growth of 3.6 times since 1993. The U.S. is our largest and most important trading partner. We are always going to look at ways to strengthen that relationship.

Trading agreements are important. We are always going to look at ways to better those, too, and that we will do in good faith. We are open to potential improvements, and that we will do.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for over a year, the Liberals have claimed that the relationship between the Prime Minister and the president of the U.S. has been unprecedented. As a matter of fact, the Minister of International Trade stood in the House and said that the president of the U.S. was absolutely giddy over this new relationship.

Well, this unprecedented new relationship has brought absolutely nothing to Canada, no new softwood lumber agreement. Within hours of the U.S. election results, the Prime Minister was on bended knee offering to renegotiate NAFTA. This will have a hugely negative impact on the 400,000 Canadians who depend on the forestry industry.

Why is the government so against Canadian jobs?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the forestry file, we have worked since day one, taking over from a previous government that had not worked on it at all, that had not opened renegotiations. We have done that. We have consulted across the country. We have, at a number of different levels, continued to pursue negotiations with our American partner.

As regards NAFTA, we know we have an important relationship with the United States. We know how important NAFTA is. We plan to continue to work with our partners to improve that relationship and that treaty over time.

* * *

● (1430)

*[Translation]***FINANCE**

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on page 3 of the report that he issued today, the parliamentary budget officer wrote, "the performance measurement framework for some aspects of federal spending has been uneven."

In other words, we have no clue where we are going and there is a major lack of transparency.

Oral Questions

I am reaching out to the Minister of Finance for the eighth time. Does he have any idea when Canada will return to a balanced budget?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know that it is very important to invest in the future of Canadians and the middle class. There is no doubt that these investments will improve our situation in the future by generating growth for the middle class and for people who want good jobs in the future.

That is our plan for Canada. It is a good plan for a future that is better than things have been these past 10 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the eighth time in a row, the minister does not have a single idea when we will get back to zero deficit, but I have a cue for the minister. Zero deficit will be achieved under the next Conservative government.

[*Translation*]

Until then, we will have to live with this government for three years.

What is the government going to do to help Canadians and business owners? Will imposing a carbon tax, increasing pension plan contributions, and failing to lower taxes for companies that create wealth in Canada help them? No, it will not.

[*English*]

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason we are acting now is because Canadians cannot wait. They need jobs today and tomorrow.

It is particularly ironic that the party that has focused on the wealthiest Canadians, the party that is playing games with the Canada pension plan, which would help the middle class, the party that has voted against the middle-class tax cut, the party that has voted against the Canada child benefit, helping nine out of 10 families, is talking about how we can help the middle class. We are focusing on how we can help Canadians to do better, today and tomorrow.

The Speaker: I had no trouble hearing the question. I had some trouble hearing the answer. Let us all listen.

The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock has the floor.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian communities have lost \$15 billion in infrastructure funding in order to finance the Liberals' new bank. Less than 1% of the promised infrastructure projects are actually under construction, and zero full-time jobs have been created since the Liberals took office.

The minister has stated that he still has lots of questions about the design of this bank. Why are the Liberals focusing their efforts on selling infrastructure to foreign interests instead of creating jobs for out of work Canadians here at home?

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have committed to investing even

more in infrastructure than we committed to in the 2016 budget. We have added billions more to our initial commitment. Also, as of today, we have approved more than 983 projects, with a combined value of almost \$12 billion in all provinces and territories from coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the government prepares to invest \$15 billion previously earmarked for cities in its new infrastructure bank, the Standing Committee on Finance learned that the people calling the shots on the proposal feel that projects valued in excess of \$100 million are not profitable enough for them, so they want \$500-million projects. That is even worse.

If that is how things turn out, none of the projects our small and medium-sized regional municipalities put forward will ever see the light of day.

I invite the members across the aisle, especially the 40 members from Quebec, to take a stand, find the courage to talk to the minister, and make him see that the government is on the wrong track.

[*English*]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member would actually talk to our mayors and reeves throughout the country.

This is what the mayor of Surrey has to say about our program:

The City of Surrey applauds the Federal Government's commitment to providing stable grants funding and also looks forward to the additional opportunities the newly announced Infrastructure Bank will offer.

This is what the mayor of Vancouver had to say about our program:

The new \$35 billion Infrastructure Development Bank, and more trade and transportation infrastructure funding to help cities maximize their borrowing capacity is good news—

● (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for North Island—Powell River.

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Spadina—Fort York, who claims to be the architect of privatization infrastructure banks, says anyone who criticizes it is “stupid”. Canadians who are concerned about tolls and user fees in their communities, he is calling stupid. Canadians who understand that private investors who will only invest if they see a return, he is calling stupid.

Will the Liberal government denounce these disrespectful statements, or is it stupid of me to ask?

Oral Questions

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will make historic investments in infrastructure, more than \$180 billion over 12 years. We are doing that in partnership with the provinces, municipalities, and territories. As well, we will engage the private sector to build more infrastructure, which our communities need; to build more transit systems; to build more affordable housing; to build more wastewater and water facilities, so that the Canadian people have safe drinking water to drink from coast to coast to coast. That is our goal. That is the commitment we made, and that is the commitment we are delivering on.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is really making like he just does not get it.

Here is what the Liberal platform said: “We will establish the Canadian Infrastructure Bank to provide low-cost financing for new infrastructure projects.”

However, instead of borrowing at 1.3%, which they can do at this point in time, the Liberals are choosing to fill their Bay Street buddies' coffers with a promised return of 7% to 9%.

Is that really what the Liberals want to do, make Canadians pay five times more than necessary and hand over more control to their BlackRock pals?

[English]

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member actually listens to what the mayors and reeves across the country are saying about our historic commitment to invest in infrastructure, as well as the creation of the infrastructure bank to build more infrastructure. They are excited about this plan. We are excited about this plan, because we understand that infrastructure is the foundation of strong communities, to grow the economy, to create jobs for the middle class, and to create opportunities for Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

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TRANSPORT

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the transport minister did not have a clue about the need to approve the required export permits for Woodfibre LNG, so he sat in his chair rather than answer my question.

The fact is that it is Transport Canada and not Environment Canada that is holding up this LNG project and the jobs that go with it. The Liberals keep saying “maybe” to resource development, but hope these questions will just go away.

When will the transport minister do his job and approve the export permits for Woodfibre LNG?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I did not want to embarrass my colleague when she asked her question.

What she needs to know is that the way the process works is that Woodfibre LNG needs to submit an application to the government, at

which time we will look at it and decide whether a permit will be issued.

That application has not been submitted.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is LNG is an economic driver in the province of British Columbia and will benefit the entire country. If Woodfibre does not get export permits from Transport Canada, it cannot proceed, regardless of whether it receives the environment minister's approval. There is no point in building this facility if it cannot export its product.

We know the Liberal talking points about working to grow our economy and create jobs. So, when will the transport minister get out of the way, sign the export permits, and get this job-creating project under way?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talk about rubbing it in here. My answer has not changed. I think my hon. colleague needs to do her homework before she asks a question that shows she is clearly ill-informed.

When Woodfibre LNG submits its application, we will review it under the Navigation Protection Act, and we will then make a decision. That is the way the process works.

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• (1440)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the natural resources minister has said that Keystone XL pipeline is not that important, that the Liberals are more focused on getting oil to Asian markets. I guess his Liberal colleagues did not get the memo. Two of his own MPs from British Columbia have now said that the government should not support Kinder Morgan pipeline, no matter what.

The minister's advisory panel delayed the decision on the pipeline by seven months, which was supposedly done to foster social licence.

If the minister's panel did not even convince Liberal MPs to accept the science, how is it anything but a complete waste of time and money?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, actually, we have said repeatedly all week that we do support the Keystone XL pipeline.

We also gave Canadians an opportunity to express themselves on the Trans Mountain expansion, and they expressed themselves in 35,000 opinions that were sent to a website. Those opinions came from Canadians from coast to coast who have a real interest in this national project.

We, unlike governments that came before us, will take those opinions seriously.

Oral Questions

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Hope, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister's panel had no real powers and delayed the decision on this job-creating project by months. In the end, it made no recommendations; the minister will not respond to it; and, surprise, surprise, it found out that some people support the project and others oppose it. I am glad we waited for that.

If the minister's new and improved panel process cannot even convince Liberal MPs to support an independent, scientific, evidence-based process on pipelines, was this public relations exercise not just a huge waste of time and money?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the reason that more than 35,000 Canadians responded to our request to hear their opinions is that for 10 years no one asked them.

Now, it is the job of the Government of Canada to take in all of that opinion from coast to coast to coast, to look at the work of the ministerial panel, to take very seriously accommodation and conversation with indigenous groups, which was so insufficient by the previous government that courts of appeal had to throw its cases out. We think we are going to learn from the mistakes of others and do a better job.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday we asked the Liberals to take real action to prevent violence against indigenous women. Seventy percent of Inuit communities have no access to shelters.

Amnesty International says “The scale and severity of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada...constitutes a national human rights crisis.” Yesterday, the Native Women's Association called the government inaction “a breach of human rights”.

Will the government take responsibility, so no woman is ever turned away from a domestic violence shelter?

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Minister of Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we have been working this past summer to listen to people. We have heard those same concerns. Women are fleeing without a place to go.

That is why I am so proud to be working on a federal gender-based violence strategy that will take into account the many and diverse needs of the communities across our country, including for shelter spaces.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's own ministers agree that the government is not investing enough to help young indigenous people.

In committee yesterday, the Minister of Health said that federal health infrastructure investments were merely “a drop in a bucket” compared to the pressing needs.

My question is very simple. When will the minister finally provide adequate funding for the infrastructure and services that communities need?

[*English*]

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian, it grieves me to look at the realities of the state of indigenous health in this country, to see that indigenous peoples have a life expectancy that is about a decade shorter than non-indigenous Canadians, to see the rates of diabetes, the rates of tuberculosis, the rates of suicide in indigenous communities.

We are determined to work with our indigenous leaders in this country, to work with the people on the ground in communities to find solutions to support them. We will make sure that we build a new relationship, and that every Canadian in this country enjoys good access—

● (1445)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Oakville.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is a health crisis in Canada. The number of opioid-related deaths is skyrocketing across the country.

This is not just a mental health and addictions issue. From our children experimenting at parties, to addiction to prescription opioids for pain control, all Canadians are at risk. In my home province of Ontario, 663 people died in 2014 from opioid overdoses, and over 800 are projected to die in British Columbia this year.

It is a national issue. We need to act now. What will the government do to address this crisis?

Hon. Jane Philpott (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this country we are facing a public health crisis. It is a crisis of opioid overdoses and deaths. People die every day as a result.

That is one of the reasons I am co-hosting a conference tomorrow and the following day, bringing together stakeholders from across the country, people with lived experience, health experts, governments, regulators, and educators. We are going to make progress on this when we work collectively, when we develop a comprehensive plan, and I look forward to taking further steps on that.

*Oral Questions***INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada must not forget Palestinian refugees. We should also not forget the Palestinian leadership that is keeping them refugees, holding them hostage, refusing to peacefully co-exist with Israel.

There is abundant evidence that misdirected UNRWA aid is part of the problem. Our Conservative government successfully delivered more than \$70 million in aid to Palestinians by other means than UNRWA.

Why will the Liberals not guarantee that all aid gets to the refugees?

Ms. Karina Gould (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Palestinian refugees, especially women and children, are amongst the poorest and the most vulnerable.

After extensive study and consideration, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie announced \$25 million in funding for UNRWA, putting Canada in line with all of our G7 partners. We have put in place strong oversight provisions and robust mechanisms for this funding. This will not only support the 5.5 million Palestinian refugees to access basic services, but is crucial for the peace and security of the region.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians wonder why Canada's foreign policy initiatives with Russia must be discovered not from the minister but from the foreign affairs website of the Russian Federation. It took a diligent journalist to discover, by scouring that website, that a Canadian assistant deputy minister has just been in Moscow to discuss the situation in Ukraine.

Can the minister assure Canadians and freedom-loving Ukrainians that Canada will not waver in its sanctions against Russia for its invasion and occupation of Crimea and its continuing sponsorship of terrorist activities in eastern Ukraine?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I absolutely can assure the member opposite that this government is unequivocal about our support for Ukraine and our condemnation of Russian aggression.

It was this government that increased sanctions against Russia beyond those of the other government. That means there are more sanctions now under this government.

This government has given more support to Ukraine than the former government. Most recently, the minister announced \$8.1 million in new funding to support the national police of Ukraine.

Canada has stood, and always will stand, steadfast with Ukraine, and we will continue to hold Russia to account.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Liberals will not do it, we thank our troops for neutralizing ISIS terrorists in combat.

In February, the Prime Minister told this House that we do not have any troops on the ground at the front lines, but yesterday we learned Canadians are exchanging fire with ISIS on a daily basis.

Why are the Liberals trying to hide the fact that our troops are on the front lines and are using lethal force to eliminate ISIS terrorists?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all of us are incredibly proud of the work that our troops are doing to eliminate the threat of Daesh in that region.

Our troops are equipped with robust rules of engagement that allow them to protect themselves, our partners, and civilians from emerging and immediate threat.

I can say it no better than General Rouleau, who said, "My forces continue to advise and assist Iraqi security forces in their fight through the provision of training, advice, and planning, and the conduct of those operations is in accordance with our mandate with the CDS orders and the rules of engagement."

● (1450)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised to end Canada's combat mission in Iraq. Now the Liberal Minister of Transport once defined a combat mission as the following:

It says that a "combat operation" is:

A military operation where the use or threatened use of force, including lethal force, is essential to impose will on an armed opponent or to accomplish a mission. The actual level of force used will be in accordance with specified rules of engagement.

That definition sounds like a perfect description of what our troops are engaged in today, and possibly could even be engaged in tomorrow in Mali.

Will the Prime Minister start telling the truth that he broke his promise and admit that Canadian troops are in direct combat with ISIS?

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I were in the same committee meeting on Tuesday morning with the chief of the defence staff.

At that time he made the distinction between a training, advise, and assist mission and a training, advise, assist, and accompany mission. He was abundantly clear. He said clearly we are in a training, advise, and assist mission.

As General Rouleau has said many times, "to assist the security forces of the sovereign state of Iraq". The chief of the defence staff has himself made this point unequivocally.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, veterans' families struggle every day. They are not receiving sufficient support from Veterans Affairs, and as we all know, it is not just the veteran who signs up to serve, but the whole family.

Natasha, a widow from Nova Scotia, shared with me that she is struggling to access benefits that her husband, a veteran of 22 years, should have received long before his death.

Will the minister start listening to families, fix the gaps, and affirm the government's sacred obligation to veterans and their families?

Hon. Kent Hehr (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more that when a man or woman serves, their entire family serves along with them.

That is why it is very important that any individual who needs help and assistance reach out to our department and go through the processes. We will work diligently to process those claims.

If there is an issue with Veterans Affairs Canada, we also have a robust appeal process that is an arm's-length appeal where people can get their claims rectified in that manner.

I encourage them to continue to reach out to Veterans Affairs Canada to get the help they need where and when they need it. We are here to listen.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has provided very little information about the selection criteria for Canada's next peacekeeping missions. So far the government is refusing to include the opposition parties in this discussion.

Can the minister tell us when this matter will be debated in Parliament, and can he confirm whether the Central African Republic is one of the possible deployment options for a peacekeeping mission?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with our allies and multilateral organizations in the fight against terrorism and in meeting today's security challenges.

The minister, as the member will know, has been to Africa twice. He took with him General Dallaire and Justice Louise, who are both experts on conflict. As he has taken advice, he is going into these missions with his eyes wide open—

The Speaker: The member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

* * *

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we look at the history of the Liberal Party, it paid little attention to grassroots indigenous community

Oral Questions

members. The Liberals did not support protecting women and children through matrimonial real property rights, and they refused to ensure that basic financial information is easily available. This is a track record of paternalism. We now have band members being forced to go to court.

Why is the minister refusing to empower community members who just want to know how their money is being spent?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is appropriate to remind the member, as she seems to forget, that the Kelowna accord was developed in true partnership with indigenous people. There was a first nations auditor general to have been created.

The member is also forgetting how her government tore up the accord when it took office. Then, after years of doing nothing, the Conservatives pushed through an ill-conceived law; made in Ottawa, and top down.

On this side of the House, we are committed to working in partnership toward real measures that will increase transparency and accountability, and we will get that done.

● (1455)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are hearing the minister defending that band members have to go to the basement of her department or go to a secret website to get information.

This reality was described by Loretta Burnstick, who said:

you take those concerns to Indian Affairs. Indian Affairs says you have to go back to the chief and council.

You bring it back to chief and council it gets swept under the rug. You go to the RCMP, you've got to have proof. So they spin our people around.

How can the minister justify creating this runaround for community members?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that the chief and council are duly elected, and that they are elected on a two-year basis. This is absolutely the ultimate accountability for every one of us in this room.

We insist that chief and council report to their members and to my department. That is the way it is, and we will review any additions or reviews with first nations as we go forward.

Mr. Glen Motz (Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our previous Conservative government introduced an act that empowered first nations communities by giving them tools that they need to hold their leadership to account.

Oral Questions

In my riding, the minister's blatant disregard of the First Nations Financial Transparency Act has made it nearly impossible for members of the Blood Tribe reserve to access the most basic information. Community members are in the dark and have no clue if funds are being distributed properly for health care, housing, and other essential needs.

When will the minister stop enabling this lack of transparency and start enforcing the law?

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take all allegations of fraud very seriously.

Under the previous government, work on the audit for the Kainai reserve was stopped in July 2015 while the department sought a legal opinion on the jurisdiction of the matter, particularly with own-source revenue in that reserve. It was determined that the department does not have jurisdiction to investigate own-source revenue. As a result, the audit was not completed and there is no report.

In accordance with the department's usual practice—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. T.J. Harvey (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in August, I held a stakeholder round table on rural economic development in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac with business leaders from across the riding from various sectors and have just presented the report to the minister.

As one of 32 Atlantic MPs who believe strongly in this government's approach to rural economic development and the Atlantic first strategy, could the minister please update us on the good work the government is doing to move the rural economic development agenda forward?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Tobique—Mactaquac for his question and his report highlighting issues faced by small and medium-sized enterprises in his riding. Of course, we welcome these issues raised in his report around immigration, skills development, and technology adoption. This is very consistent with the work that we are doing around the Atlantic growth strategy. The Minister of Immigration put forward a pilot project to advance the immigration challenges in that region.

I look forward to working with the member and all 32 MPs from Atlantic Canada to advance the Atlantic growth strategy.

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IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals' attack on rural Canada is insulting. The immigration minister's edict on Vegreville could be just the start. If it is done in Alberta, who is to say it will not be done to the exact same office in Sydney, Nova Scotia, or to the pay processing centre in Miramichi, New Brunswick, where towns and hundreds of workers depend on those jobs?

These are the kind of federal public service jobs that are sustainable in rural towns. Removing these 280 jobs from Vegreville is like cutting 55,000 jobs out of Edmonton.

Why is the minister against rural Canadians and against rural jobs?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand people in Vegreville are upset, but I am saying that the business case for a move was very strong; that our first commitment is to have better standards in service and processing times in immigration; that every individual currently working for my department, whether part-time or full-time, in Vegreville will have work in Edmonton; and indeed, that there will be a net increase in total jobs in Alberta.

* * *

● (1500)

HEALTH

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are diagnosed with cancer every year due to exposure to asbestos, and every single day that action is delayed more lives are put at risk.

Yesterday, I tabled a bill for a complete ban on asbestos. The Canadian Cancer Society, labour groups, and millions of Canadians are calling for a ban now. The minister has said the science is clear, so what is the holdup?

Hon. Kirsty Duncan (Minister of Science, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ensuring the health and safety of Canadians is the top priority for our government. When it comes to asbestos, the science is clear. That is why our government has committed to a ban on asbestos. I will be announcing additional details on how we will fulfill this commitment, including timelines, by the end of the year. Our government has already taken important steps to reach this important goal, including a ban on the use of asbestos in new government construction and a national asbestos inventory.

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[Translation]

PENSIONS

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, and yet many of them are worried that they have not saved enough for their retirement.

Can the minister responsible explain what he intends to do to deal with this situation? What does he plan to do with the Canada pension plan in order to help Canadians reach their goal of a comfortable retirement?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Madawaska—Restigouche for his question.

Business of the House

One in four Canadian families is not saving enough for retirement. This situation is unacceptable, and we are determined to do something about it. The historic agreement in principle to strengthen the Canada pension plan will help Canadians by increasing their retirement benefits by up to 50%. We are proud to be helping Canadians improve their lives, and we will continue to make that a priority.

* * *

[English]

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it's been almost a month since the Minister of Public Services and Procurement told Canadians that there is no end in sight to the Liberal Phoenix pay fiasco. Since blowing off her deadline, the minister has misled Canadians on the scope, depth, and severity of the backlog. Yesterday, her officials would not even provide a timeline to resolve the outstanding 18,000 cases, and more than 200,000 transactions that still need to be processed. The minister will not commit to a deadline and she will not tell us the full number of backlog cases. What else is the minister hiding from us about the Phoenix pay fiasco?

Hon. Judy Foote (Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we take the issues of public service pay problems very seriously. That is why we have taken so many additional measures to deal with these ongoing problems. In fact, the measures that we have put in place have resulted in our now being able to deal with an additional 100,000 cases a month. We have done that on top of making sure that 300,000 employees get paid every two weeks.

* * *

[Translation]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is too broke to pay back the \$266 million it owes the federal government, the Canadian government is increasing its debt capacity by saying that since it is broke, it will let it go into more debt. The government, with taxpayers' money, including that of Quebeckers, is going to let Newfoundland and Labrador incur more debt in order to compete with Hydro-Québec. If it cannot pay, Ottawa will pay for it, no problem.

Will this government let parliamentarians debate the Muskrat Falls loan guarantee before signing the contract with Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, working with the provinces and territories is the basis of our government's approach.

It is very positive that Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec are having a constructive dialogue on the energy issue. Developing clean and renewable sources of electricity will help us meet our greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, guaranteeing a \$9.3-billion loan for 500,000 people is like guaranteeing a \$144-billion loan for Quebec. That is too much money, and

Newfoundland and Labrador will not be able to repay it. We will be left to deal with this debt.

An hon. member: Ouch.

Mrs. Marilène Gill: Exactly, Mr. Speaker. Ouch.

Furthermore, this money, Quebeckers' money, will fund unfair competition with Hydro-Québec.

Will this government allow a debate in the House on increasing the loan guarantee for Newfoundland and Labrador's Muskrat Falls project, yes or no?

● (1505)

[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are very encouraged to learn that the Government of Quebec has determined that it would be a good idea to engage in conversation with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is a very good example of two provinces working together in common cause. When provinces work together with the support of the national government, only good things can happen.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In answer to the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, I misidentified Madam Justice Arbour, and I would like the record to reflect her name.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you know that I have had enormous respect for you in the House in the 12 years I have been here. I come into the House to get engaged in spirited debates, and I am very pleased that the Speaker pointed out that my spirited debate with the member for Spadina—Fort York was actually interfering with other spirited debates in the House.

I very much appreciate that, and I am very sorry. We were so spirited that I forgot we were in question period. I thank you very much for your role, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his gracious apology.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government what plans it has in the way of business next week.

[Translation]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, we will continue our debate at second reading of Bill C-26 on the Canada pension plan.

Tomorrow, we will resume debate on Bill C-16 on gender identity. If time permits, we will also examine Bill C-25, the business framework bill.

*Government Orders**[English]*

On Monday, I will call Bill C-30, the CETA implementation legislation, for consideration at second reading. The bill will be on the agenda for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. It is my hope that this bill will be referred to committee on Wednesday evening.

On Thursday, we will consider second reading of Bill C-23 respecting pre-clearance.

Next Friday, I will call Bill C-18, the Rouge national park legislation, for second reading debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[Translation]***CANADA PENSION PLAN**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was the mayor of Thetford Mines, there was a tactic I often used at board meetings. A little “shh” is very effective, particularly when it comes from a member and not the Speaker. People seem to pay more attention.

I am pleased to have my colleague's attention as I speak to Bill C-26. I planned to speak about it, but this morning the government moved a time allocation motion regarding this bill. This means that many of my colleagues will not have the opportunity to speak to this bill, which, as the Minister of Finance said himself, is very important for Canadians.

At the beginning of question period, I was surprised to hear the Minister of Finance answer a question from my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent and say the following about the official opposition:

- (1510)

[English]

We were “the party that is playing games with the Canada pension plan”.

[Translation]

I think the government is the one playing games with Bill C-26 right now. The government is the one playing games with Canadians with Bill C-26.

During the election campaign, I remember a number of Liberal candidates who were running and knocking on doors, telling people in their riding that they wanted constituents to know that their party was going to improve the Canada pension plan. When seniors are told that the Canada pension plan is going to be improved, they do not expect that it will take 40 years for that to happen. However, that is precisely what is going to happen with Bill C-26.

I think Bill C-26 misleads Canadians. Again, this government's strategy is to keep making commitments and then expecting others to

be forced to follow through on them later. The CPP commitments will not be met for 40 years, and investments in infrastructure will be made in 10 years. There is nothing on the books for the next three years.

Passing a bill that will not kick in for another 40 years is so pressing that a time allocation motion was moved today. My question is about an issue that I have raised over and over again: time allocation. This practice illustrates the government's contempt for the democratic process.

The words I am about to say are not my own. They were spoken by the member for Winnipeg North on April 30, 2015, when he was talking about time allocation motions:

Why does the government House leader feel that the only way [to] get legislation through the House of Commons is through time allocation? By doing that, they are really saying that they do not have the ability to negotiate in good faith with opposition parties, which is not healthy for democracy inside the House.

The government claims to be open and transparent and got itself elected on a promise to do things differently. However, with bills like Bill C-26 for seniors, we find ourselves in the eighth time allocation scenario in less than a year. We have been here for less than a year, and there have already been eight time allocation motions.

[English]

An hon. member: Eight motions.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Eight motions, Mr. Speaker.

I have begun to speak in English. Soon everyone will hear me more and more in English, but not now. I will continue in French, because my speech is in French.

[Translation]

On October 27, 2011, the member for Winnipeg North said:

In recognition of the importance and respect of the chamber, in which we all want to represent our constituents, by not allowing ample opportunity for members of the opposition, even government backbenchers, to provide comment on bills is not a healthy environment. The government House leader has the responsibility to work with and negotiate with House leaders. Time allocation should only be brought in when the government has failed to negotiate with opposition House leaders.

Has the government House leader given up negotiating in good faith with House leaders to the degree to which the government now feels obligated to bring in time allocation as a standard procedure nowadays in the House?

Is this what it means to do things differently? The members opposite were the ones tearing their hair out to oppose time allocation motions. They kept telling Canadians that they were going to do things differently.

By moving yet another time allocation motion to pass its legislative agenda, this government is showing its incompetence. It is also showing a genuine lack of respect for parliamentary procedure and, ultimately, a lack of respect for Canadians.

The government is still trying to prevent members from participating in the proceedings of the House of Commons and representing their constituents. Once again, I refer to the comments made by the member for Winnipeg North on June 3, 2015. I have the right to do so because the government was elected under false pretenses. It claimed to want to do things differently.

Government Orders

However, at the rate the government is going, Canadians will soon realize that it will have moved more time allocation motions than the previous government. The Liberal Party has been in power for less than a year, the session is not yet over, and it has already used time allocation eight times, even though only about fifteen bills have been passed. About half the bills introduced have been subject to time allocation. That is unbelievable.

Let us return to the Canada pension plan. The first time I spoke about it, I said that the government had misled Canadians during the last election campaign. After Bill C-26 was introduced, I had the chance to speak to people in my riding. I asked them what they thought it meant when a campaign platform stated that the Canada pension plan would be enhanced and they would have more money in their pockets. They told me that they expected to have more money soon, in six months, a year or two years. They understand that things do not happen as quickly as we would like in Parliament. However, it is going to take 40 years.

People over 75 will reap the benefit of these measures in 40 years. Let us do some simple math: $75 + 40$. Forty equals 4×10 . Thus, $75 + 10 = 85$; $85 + 10 = 95$; $95 + 10 = 105$; $105 + 10 = 115$. People in my riding who are 75 years old today will be 115 years old when the plan enhancements take effect. However, SMEs will have to start paying higher contributions soon as a result of the Canada pension plan enhancement. That will hurt businesses.

Last week, something happened in North America, with our American neighbours, that many of us were not expecting. Something happened—

An hon. member: Something huge.

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, something huge happened, as my colleague said. I love it when my colleagues help me speak English. By the end of the session, I should be perfectly bilingual thanks to my excellent colleagues. I will try to help them when they speak French.

Today, the government should use this opportunity to take a step back and reflect on what just happened in North America and the adverse effects these new taxes will have on our small businesses and on jobs here at home. This government has not had much success creating jobs in the past year, but it is never too late to start.

I am sure that the government did not want to hear members from my party saying the same thing over and over again, but allow me to reiterate that the government has to take its time and pay attention. It cannot impose new taxes on our businesses because the businesses do not have the means.

• (1515)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleague from Mégantic—L'Érable that for 10 years, the middle class felt forgotten by the Government of Canada, and that this change will ensure that people will no longer be forgotten, that the government will help them and it will plan for the future.

I have a question specifically for the hon. member for Mégantic—L'Érable. If he is so concerned that his colleagues will not have the chance to speak to Bill C-26, then why is he speaking to it for the

second time? He already spoke to it on October 21. Why is he speaking for the second time if he is concerned that the others will not have the opportunity to speak?

• (1520)

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I am shocked that my colleagues are questioning why I am rising to speak. I thought I was elected by the people of Mégantic—L'Érable to speak as often as necessary to defend them. That is what I am doing, and that is what I will continue to do whenever necessary.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I might think about moving to my colleague's riding if people there really live to 115. All that to say that we agree on one thing: waiting for 40 years for the system to improve is ridiculous to say the least, and this measure does not respond to immediate needs.

However, in the previous Parliament, the Conservatives were proposing pooled registered pension plans, which also favour people with high or even extremely high incomes.

What solution does my colleague propose for people with low incomes who need to improve their retirement income in the very short term?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question.

I come from a region where, for years, we lived off the asbestos industry. I like to say that I am living proof that asbestos kills. In my riding, people live to a ripe old age because we have learned to use asbestos safely, and I think that my NDP colleagues should understand and defend that approach, while working to protect the health and safety of Canadians working in the asbestos industry.

To conclude, I also understand that my esteemed colleague misses the days when the Conservative government was in power and was making good decisions for Canadians.

Mr. Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his English, which has improved considerably since he was elected. Congratulations.

My question is about the example he gave of a 75-year-old retired man who will see no increase to his Canada pension plan benefits. To me, that says we should do something about the Canada pension plan faster. However, that will cost money.

If he does not like the idea of increasing benefits gradually, how does he think we will find the money to help that 75-year-old right away?

[English]

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, if it is not possible to pay for something, do not promise it.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

The government should not give false hope to the people it is making promises to. That is my answer to my colleague's question. It is the right answer. If the government cannot pay for it, it should not give people false hope.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the end of his speech, my colleague praised what the Conservatives did. However, the creation of pooled registered pension plans did not lead to the expected outcome of Canadians saving more for retirement.

I am very concerned. When the member is in his riding, I am sure that, like me, he meets with seniors living in poverty. The latest numbers show that 30% of single senior women live below the poverty line, and that number has tripled in the last 20 years.

What are the member's thoughts on that? What does he think we can do to lift those women out of poverty?

Mr. Luc Berthold: Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate my colleague's commitment when it comes to talking about poverty. She was personally involved in community organizations for a very long time. She has seen poverty first-hand. She has had the opportunity to help women living in poverty.

I think this matter deserves a lot more attention than just a simple CPP enhancement. Honestly, all Canadians should be concerned about the level of poverty that some women and Canadians in general are facing.

One of the solutions proposed by the Conservatives would be to ensure that everyone has access to employment, first and foremost, whether it be young people, seniors, women, or poor people. The first step is to ensure that everyone can earn a living. There are some situations where this is impossible, and if the member would like to work with me to come up with solutions, I am always available.

• (1525)

[*English*]

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to talk to Bill C-26. However, I want to take a few moments to talk procedurally about what is going on today.

My friend opposite had some concerns, but let us ensure we look at the facts. Today would have been the sixth day of debate on Bill C-26, a bill that would help Canadians achieve a secure, safe and dignified retirement.

The Conservative Party had requested more time for debate on the bill. Its members could have debated the bill today as scheduled, but instead resorted to procedural tactics to obstruct debate and attempt to shut down the House of Commons and go home.

Disappointingly, it has become abundantly clear that the Conservatives would rather focus on these types of tactics than substantive debate on this important issue. This kind of behaviour is exactly what Canadians rejected when they voted for real change a year ago. As a result, the Conservatives have left us with few options on how to proceed with this bill. We have an obligation to ensure the legislation is sent to committee for further study, and we will do what it takes to ensure that occurs.

Therefore, it is a pleasure to speak to the enhancements to the CPP found in Bill C-26. Today, middle-class Canadians are working harder than ever, but many are worried they will not have enough money for their retirement.

[*Translation*]

Each year fewer and fewer Canadians have private pension plans to fall back on.

[*English*]

To address this, we made a commitment to Canadians to strengthen the Canada pension plan in order to help them achieve their goal of a strong, secure, and stable retirement. Earlier this year, Canada's finance ministers reached a historic agreement to make meaningful changes to the CPP, an example of federalism at its best. The more than one-quarter of Canadian families nearing retirement, 1.1 million families, who are facing a drop in their standard of living would be able to retire in dignity as a result of this enhancement. The deal would boost how much Canadians would get from their pension, from one-quarter of their earnings now, to fully one-third. To make sure these changes are affordable, we would phase them in slowly over seven years, from 2019 to 2025, so the impact would be small and gradual.

Every Canadian deserves a secure and dignified retirement after a lifetime of hard work. Through these enhancements, we have taken a powerful step to help make that happen.

It is worthwhile to look back at the CPP and its history. The CPP was first established by the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson in 1965. It was a minority government. At its creation, there were six and a half workers for every retiree. By the 1990s, projections indicated that there would only be two workers per retiree very soon. By 1996, for these demographic reasons, the CPP payouts were higher than the contributions coming in. Obviously, this was not a sustainable model, and change was required. In 1997, the Canadian government acted to address these demographic changes and created the CPP investment board, the CPPIB.

Responsible governments react to the realities and challenges of the day. Earlier this year, agreement was reached between eight provincial governments and the federal government to enhance the Canada pension plan. The result of that agreement is what is before us in Bill C-26.

Changing demographics is not the only factor that necessitated these enhancements, however. The greatest factor is the effective disappearance of company pension plans. There was a time when nearly half of Canadians could look forward to a regular monthly pension for a defined amount fully supported by their employer.

• (1530)

Unfortunately, these defined benefit pension plans are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. According to Statistics Canada, back in 1971 around 48% of people were covered by a defined benefits plan. By 2011, that number had fallen to nearly half that rate.

Government Orders

These enhancements are designed to address the disappearance of corporate pensions. An aging population, coupled with the evaporation of company pensions, makes enhancements vitally important at this time. Quite frankly, Canada and Canada's economy cannot afford to not make these changes. Importantly, these changes would proceed at a gradual, reasonable pace beginning in 2019 and taking seven years to complete. Additionally, tax breaks would help employees absorb these adjusted pension contribution rates.

All Canadians deserve a strong, secure, and stable retirement. I think all members can agree on this. The new measures, importantly, would help young Canadians. Young Canadians today, like all Canadians, hope to retire with dignity, hope to retire with money to live on, and hope to retire in a stable economic environment. It is these young Canadians whom we must not lose sight of when we consider and debate this bill.

This bill would have long-reaching effects into the mid term and long term. It is important, not just from a social perspective—which it certainly is—to make sure Canadians have a dignified, secure, and stable retirement, but it is equally important from an economic standpoint. Canadians are living longer. There is no doubt about this. Canadians are going to live longer in their retirement years. This trend will continue.

To keep Canada's economy sound, viable, and strong, we need people who have money to afford retirement. People with money, of course, buy things. This consumption is what drives economic growth. As our population ages, if there were a corresponding decrease in the amount of income that they had, thereby resulting in a corresponding decrease in the amount of disposable income, our economy would screech to a halt.

We cannot let this happen. Responsible governments ought not to let this happen. We need to ensure that our economy remains viable well into the future. Of course the CPP has a well-managed, professionally run investment board. Any payouts have to be met with contributions. This is a reasonable amount of contribution that will result in payouts to Canadians.

The CPP will be around for generations to come. If we do not act now, that reality will deteriorate. People will be living on less and less money as they retire. We need to increase the retirement income of Canadians to make sure they have a secure retirement, to make sure they can pay their bills, but also to make sure they can enjoy the retirement they have earned after a lifetime of hard work, after a lifetime of contributing to the great Canadian economy, after a lifetime of raising children, working hard, perhaps putting their kids through school or paying for trade skills training, and after a lifetime of growing our great country.

We look at the CPP and we think of retired people, of course, but I want us to take a step back and also think of the young people this would definitely help well into their future, maybe some of us in this very chamber, maybe our children. We need to make sure Canada and Canadians will be able to retire in dignity, not only today, not only tomorrow, but well into the future.

I can think of no better way to make sure that happens than through these enhancements found in Bill C-26. I urge all my

colleagues, for those social reasons and for the economic reasons, to support these changes to the CPP.

• (1535)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the hon. member.

First, I would like to know why he does not think we should instead empower people to save for their own retirement by enhancing savings vehicles, things from which the government has pulled back.

Second, this may seem like a fine point, but the government's talking points continually refer to this issue of dignity. We are talking about a quarter to a third here. I am just curious about what the word "dignity" means in this context. Maybe we could think about a secure retirement or a financially stable retirement, and we would disagree about how to get there. However, I have concerns about the use of this word, just because I see human dignity as immutable, not something that is sort of an issue of the difference between 25% and 33%. I would be curious to hear the member's thoughts on what he means by that word in that context.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, the questions from my friend from Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan are normally informed questions, and this is no exception, and he really wants answers to these questions. I do appreciate it.

The first part involved how we can empower Canadians to perhaps privately invest into their retirement. There is nothing in this bill that would take away from Canadians' ability to invest in other instruments and in other retirement plans. I encourage all Canadians, who have the wherewithal, to diversify their portfolios and to make sure they are in portfolios whose risk they can tolerate.

This is why I think the CPP is different from some private investment strategies; it is because the risk is zero. The CPP, of course, is fully funded and fully backed by the Canadian government. There is no risk to Canadians who invest in the CPP, whereas even a GIC carries a small amount of risk. That is why I think the CPP is so important. On the other hand, there are Canadians who cannot afford things such as TFSAs and RRSPs, so CPP is a way of making sure they are saving for their retirement.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague that the CPP does need to be changed. It has gone on too long. We are caught in this little retirement problem because no changes were made to it previously, so it is good news to hear. However, it does not go far enough. It would not do anything for people now, but it would do something for people in the future. It might help my daughters, or it could help my grandchildren, for sure.

The problem is the child-rearing dropouts and the disability dropouts, which are provisions that we have now in the existing CPP. They are still there. However, the enhancements that the Liberals are so proud are going to help people would be omitted in the enhancements part. That would penalize women and people on disability.

Government Orders

I keep asking this every day, and nobody is answering me. I need an answer, and so do Canadians. On that mistake, are the Liberals going to put it back in and make sure people are not penalized? That way we can all go on, married happily ever after, and say we got a good deal on the CPP.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question is a good one. I also want to let the member know that obviously I cannot speak for the government, as he is fully aware. I also cannot guarantee that he will stay happily married if the CPP changes come into force.

I want to make sure the CPP is fair, that it is there for everybody, and that everyone who is entitled to the payouts gets them. I hope that, if any errors were made, they are corrected. I of course cannot speak for the government, but we want to make sure that the CPP is fair, as we do with all of our legislation, and we want to make sure that any changes we make are fair to all Canadians. I do share my hon. colleague's concern about that.

• (1540)

Mr. Dan Ruimy (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to share my enthusiasm for Bill C-26 and the updates being proposed for the Canada pension plan. The ability to have a safe and secure retirement is something that is incredibly important not just to Canadians broadly but to the folks in my riding of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge and to me. They are rightly concerned about what retirement will look like for the young people in our communities. This is an issue I hear about from constituents, and there is a wide Canadian consensus that this is a very real issue for millions of Canadians. By taking action now, we are securing a future Canadians can count on.

When the CPP was introduced in 1965 by then Prime Minister Pearson, it took both courage and fortitude to introduce a program that had a long-term, not just a short-term, vision for this nation and its workers. Millions of Canadians today benefit from the Liberal government's bold action at that time. Today we are witnessing the same courage and commitment to the long-term economic prosperity of Canadians by the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and all those in this House who are thinking about Canadians not three or four years from now but in 50 years. I know that the generations to come will look upon this Parliament for its strength and willingness to do the right thing.

Families and workers across this nation have had an overwhelming desire to look to the federal government for national leadership on this issue. For far too long, this leadership has been lacking, and I am proud to stand in this chamber and be part of a government that is listening and responding, not just to the short-term needs of Canadians but for the long-term success of our nation.

Canadians today are working harder than ever to keep up with the financial demands of today's economy and to save for the future. The enhancements to the CPP are part of a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach our government is taking to invest in Canadians today and for the future. The improvements to the CPP in Bill C-26 will be an investment economically. Perhaps more importantly, when it comes time for Canadians to retire, they can do so with dignity.

I have heard a lot over the last few days about how 85% of Canadians are supposedly ready for retirement. I do not see that in my community. When I talk to seniors in my community, they are struggling. Even with the CPP, the GIS, and the OAS, they are struggling. It is not enough for them today.

Today we are looking to the future. We are looking to make sure that our youth are in a good position. When I knock on doors and meet people in my riding, it is no secret that hard-working families are worried that they and their children will not have enough money set aside for retirement. I have had countless conversations with a wide variety of constituents, and it is clear that this concern is present across all demographics.

Youth in my community are facing many challenges in ensuring that they are saving enough for retirement. Young people understand the reality they face today and in the future. They know that fewer of them will work in jobs that will guarantee a workplace pension, like perhaps most of their parents had. There are a lot of factors, including a shifting economy, a change in culture, and a boost in entrepreneurial spirit.

The reality is that fewer young Canadians in this era can expect to have a single employer throughout their careers, as many once did decades ago. In addition, fewer employers are providing opportunities to save. Studies have found that in 2011, only 11.1% of the workforce was covered by private workplace pension plans, which is down from 28.6% in 1982. At that time, only a quarter of Canadians who earned between \$40,000 and \$60,000 contributed to RRSPs.

The CPP was established in 1965. I know that members opposite like to joke about what year it is, but it is 2016, and the labour market simply is not what it once was.

• (1545)

The CPP needs to be enhanced to reflect the realities of today and the anticipated changes of tomorrow. It is the responsible thing to do in response to a big challenge facing Canadians today. The enhancements to the CPP are well thought out and responsible. CPP contributions will increase modestly over seven years, starting in 2019, and when fully implemented will significantly reduce the number of families at risk of not saving enough money for retirement.

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In my riding, when I talk to my constituents, I ask if they are saving money. From age 20 to age 50-plus, everyone is struggling to save money. Without the CPP we have today, where would our seniors be? It is a struggle already. The enhancements will boost how much Canadians will get from their CPP by increasing the earning range covered by the plan, resulting in an increase of up to 50% in benefits. As a result, these enhancements will increase the maximum CPP benefit by about 50%. The current maximum benefit is \$13,110. In 2016 terms, the enhanced CPP represents an increase of nearly \$7,000, to a maximum benefit of nearly \$20,000. If we look at the children this is going to affect, are they really going to be able to survive on \$13,000? Is that where we want to put our children, struggling at that point? We need to do this today for the future.

Numbers aside, there is a reason there is support on both sides of the House and across the nation for enhancement. All the provinces have agreed to do this. It is because it is what Canadians have been calling for. Canadians know that a secure retirement means secure access to healthy food, an ability to afford adequate housing, and the capacity to travel to see their children and grandchildren if need be.

I would also like to emphasize that as a small-business owner myself, all politics aside, I support the enhancements to the CPP outlined in Bill C-26 because it is the right thing to do. Bill C-26 will ensure the financial security of many employees down the line. It will help those who each and every day put their hard work into the success of my business and all businesses. The enhancements to the CPP are being slowly introduced over seven years to reduce the impact on small business.

This is smart policy-making that has rightfully gained the support of many small-business owners like me. When seniors and middle-class families have money, they can spend that money in the local economy. As a small-business owner, and as a member of Parliament and a member of my community, I do not wish to see any seniors living in poverty and without the dignity they deserve. The much-needed enhancements to the CPP proposed in Bill C-26 are something I can be proud of having voted in favour of and something I know will ensure that millions of Canadians have a retirement they deserve down the line.

I want to conclude by acknowledging the leadership our government has shown in making the tough decisions that will benefit Canadians not only today but for generations to come. I think this demonstrates a sincere willingness to think beyond the next election cycle, something the previous Conservative government put before the best interests of Canadians. The enhancements to the CPP are something Canadians have been demanding for years, something the provinces and territories, organizations, think tanks, and workers' representatives have been advocating for.

The time is upon us. I welcome all members to reflect on what it would be like to work an entire lifetime, a lifetime in which every extra dollar has gone to putting healthy food on our family's table, and to wake up in retirement and have to go back to work to put food into our own mouths.

•(1550)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have seen pretty clearly today that the government thinks that the only way to care is to control, that if we

care about people's retirement, we have to take their money away and save it for them instead of giving them the means to do so themselves.

In response to my question earlier, another member said that there is nothing here that takes away people's ability to save for themselves, but the reality is that this means more money off people's paycheques. The cost to employers will make it much harder to hire people and to raise wages. The government has also cut back on tax-free savings accounts, which we know are disproportionately used by people with relatively modest incomes simply because of their relative value a savings vehicle compared to RRSPs.

Why is the government cutting back on savings opportunities specifically for Canadians of relatively modest means? Why is it taking money away from Canadians? Why does it think the only way to help Canadians save for retirement is to take away their ability to save for retirement?

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the opposition say that we look at it only that way. If there was a better way, then our seniors right now would not be in the situation they are in. What would the member have us say when seniors get CPP, OAS, and GIS and are still struggling? This is not how it is supposed to be. If we do not act now for the future, what does that say to our young people? This does not stop the people who are in a better situation from saving money. It is the unfortunate ones. How do we help them down the line?

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy about the proposed changes to the CPP, because it is the right thing to do. I agree with my colleague.

However, in the existing plan, there is what is called a dropout period for people raising children and for people living with disabilities. When they are collecting their disability benefit, they are not penalized, and when they average their pension, they are not penalized for that time. That is their protection. However, in the enhancement we are talking about, it has been omitted. This will penalize women and people with disabilities even further down the road.

I have heard other members say that they are not going to speak for the government. They have been silent on this. I would like the member's comments on making sure that the dropout period is put in with the enhancement, because it is the right thing to do.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Ruimy: Mr. Speaker, I am going to be one of those who says I cannot speak for the government, but I can say that it takes courage to get to where we are. If, back in 1965, the government had not done this, where would our seniors be today? What kind of economy, what kind of environment, would our seniors be living in? They are struggling today. We as a government will have to figure out how we can continue to help them today. One thing we can do is move forward and make sure that our children, down the line, are taken care of, and this is a great way to make that happen.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act,

I must say that the bill proposes drastic intervention in the form of increased payroll taxes on every working Canadian in our nation. It is not just Canadian workers who would pay for the bill, but Canadian employers would likewise be required to increase their CPP contributions for each and every employee.

At a time when there are already clouds of uncertainty over our economy and employment insecurity for too many Canadian workers, the Liberal government proposes to take more cash from the pockets and books of Canadian workers and employers.

Why?

Canadian economists, Canadian business owners, and even the Department of Finance have told the Liberal government that this proposed tax hike would hurt Canadians. Analyses from Finance Canada show that this proposed tax hike would reduce employment, which is a nice way of saying it would kill jobs; reduce our national GDP; reduce business investment; reduce Canadians' disposable income; and reduce Canadians' private savings.

The Liberal government's own Department of Finance has warned the government of the harms this bill would inflict upon Canadian workers, Canadian employers, and Canada's economy. Yet, the Liberals want to steamroll this bill through Parliament.

Again, I would ask, why? What is the impetus driving this tax hike? Where is the crisis?

Finance Canada has reported that the median Canadian senior earns 91% as much as the median Canadian, which is well above the OECD average of 84%. A study by McKinsey & Company found that 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their living standards into retirement. It seems that Canadians are saving for their retirement already. The Liberal government could take a lesson from Canadians who are saving at a rate of 14.1% of their pay, which is a marked increase from the 1990 rate of 7.7%.

Canadians understand the importance of personal responsibility, of living within one's means, and of fiscal prudence. It is too bad the Liberal government cannot achieve these same understandings.

It is my belief that the people are best served by government policy when such policy supports and provides incentives for Canadians to make sound decisions, such as saving for their future.

This is why Conservatives introduced tax-free savings accounts, TFSA's, to support and provide incentives for Canadians to save for

their future. Unfortunately, the Liberal government has chosen to reduce the amount that Canadians can save in TFSA's.

This is also why our Conservatives expanded the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, as a means of reducing the poverty rate among seniors, those who need it the most. It was a logical policy that actually worked.

I do congratulate the Liberal government for following our lead by increasing the GIS rate by a further 10% in budget 2016. I hope I can stand in this House one day and congratulate them for also restoring the contribution limits to TFSA's.

Today, the poverty rate among seniors is reported to be 3.7%, which is a significant decrease from the rate of 29%, in 1970.

As Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre of the Fraser Institute wrote in the *Financial Post* on June 22:

Instead of expending political energy on debating CPP expansion in the misguided belief that many middle- and upper-income Canadians are not saving enough for retirement, the focus of public debate should be on how best to help financially vulnerable seniors.

• (1555)

I say, do it today. While savings are up and the poverty rate among seniors is down, I believe that governments ought to concern themselves with the responsibility of supporting our seniors who need support today, especially the 3.7% who remain in poverty. Unfortunately, this bill would do little to support these seniors this year, next year, or the year after that.

This bill proposes an increase in CPP benefits and that Canadians wait and wait a little longer, and wait a little longer yet, for the next 40 years. If the prevailing trend is that Canadians are saving more and investing and doing their own planning and strategizing for their futures, why is the government not supporting those responsible decisions? Canadians are speaking with their actions when it comes to planning for their retirement, and this bill before us today would undermine Canadians' ability to plan for their future by saving. The finance department's own analysis projects a 7% reduction in private savings over the long run if higher CPP contributions are imposed upon Canadians.

In 1964, the Liberal minister who was tasked with establishing the CPP, the Hon. Judy LaMarsh, stated that the CPP "is not intended to provide all the retirement income which many Canadians wish to have. This is a matter of individual choice and, in the government's view, should properly be left to personal savings and private pension plans." Who in this House can disagree with that logic?

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Allowing Canadians their individual choices seems a natural conclusion, but not for the current Liberal government. The Liberal government remains bent on steamrolling this bill through Parliament and right across every paycheque, every Canadian worker, and the bottom line of every Canadian employer. Canadians are not comfortable with the proposals in this bill. Seventy per cent of employed Canadians oppose a CPP expansion if it means a wage freeze. This begs the question of whether wage freezes could result from this tax hike. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, “Two thirds of small firms say they will have to freeze or cut salaries and over a third say they will have to reduce hours or jobs in their business in response to a CPP/QPP hike”. Also, according to the CFIB, a full 70% of small-business owners disagree with the notion that the proposed CPP increase is modest and would have a limited impact on their businesses. The CFIB also found that 90% of small business owners think it is important to have public consultations before any deal is finalized.

The C.D. Howe Institute has also issued a report showing that the Liberals' CPP proposal would not benefit low-income workers. Low-income workers would see their premiums go up, but the net increase in their retirement benefits would remain low. This is because higher CPP payments would be offset by clawbacks in GIS benefits.

Surveys have shown that over one-third of employed Canadians say that the proposed tax increases are unaffordable. Canadians know that the proposed Liberal hike would hurt them. Moreover, over 80% of Canadians want the government to further consult before making its decision, according to another public survey.

Canadians deserve to be trusted. They deserve the freedom to make their own choices on where and how they will save their hard-earned money for their retirement. Canadians also deserve to be heard on this matter. The current Liberal government seems motivated to launch consultations on everything under their paper sun. Why not consult Canadians on this tax hike?

• (1600)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in listening to my colleague's speech, I am reminded of the work that we have had to do in the past year to fix and improve the retirement system for Canadians, who were abandoned by the Conservatives over the past decade. In the first months, we had to restore the age of retirement from 67 back to 65, where it rightfully belongs; we had to increase the GIS by 10% for those who need it the most; and now we are trying to fix the CPP, which is a long-term plan. We need to fix it.

The Conservatives have opposed this with more vigour than anything else we have brought forward. What could the Conservatives have against retired people?

• (1605)

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government did many things to assist seniors. The number one thing we did was to create jobs that kept people working in good-paying jobs so they could afford to retire.

The Liberal government has done nothing in one year to create one solid job.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I travel through my riding and meet with my constituents, most of them simply cannot max out their RRSPs every year. As one can imagine, putting money into a TFSA becomes “mission impossible”.

What are we doing to protect those folks' pension incomes? The Conservatives' solution was the pooled registered pension plan. If I cannot contribute to my RRSP or my TFSA, that plan would be nowhere near within my reach.

Does the member not think that, for people with modest incomes, enhancing the Canada pension plan is essential?

[*English*]

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, the challenge with this bill before us today is that people today will not see any benefit from it. As I said in my speech, the proposed benefits from this will only be seen 40 years down the road, long after the people who need work, who need jobs, and who need help in their retirement have passed, unfortunately.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it laughable, listening to the debate. The members opposite in the government are asking what we have against seniors.

Under our government, we had the largest increase to the GIS in 25 years. We also introduced income-splitting for seniors. We introduced the tax-free savings account, which, I might add, 11 million Canadians participated in, mostly low to middle-income earners.

We had a minister of seniors, which we have yet to see the government even focus on. We took 380,000 seniors off the tax roll, completely.

What the government is proposing with the CPP and also with the carbon tax is going to hurt the job creators of Canada. We are already seeing a deficit in jobs. We have hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of work.

Does my hon. colleague feels the same as us, that the government is clearly out of touch, has no idea what it is doing, and is making it up as it goes along?

Mr. Mel Arnold: Mr. Speaker, I have to agree that the government is out of touch with small business.

I came here with a background in small business. I understood what it took to meet payroll every two weeks, every month, and to worry if there would be jobs for my employees next months, six months down the road, and so on.

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The last thing I needed as a business owner was more taxes, more payroll taxes, and higher costs for my business. Everything I have seen promised by the government for small business has been chopped, and everything else it is doing is attacking small business.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-26, which seeks to improve the Canada pension plan. This plan is a recognized and effective part of Canada's public retirement income system. Since its inception and implementation in 1965, under the Liberal government of Lester B. Pearson, it has provided contributors who reach the age of eligibility regular retirement income payments in order to help them cover living expenses during retirement, and to guarantee the financial security of hard-working Canadians.

Together with old age security, the CPP provides the foundation for our publicly funded system for retired Canadians that allows people and their families to hold on to their savings while living comfortably, without the insecurity that comes with financial instability.

As all hon. members may know, the Government of Quebec manages its own retirement plan, the Régime de rentes du Québec, which is akin to the Canada pension plan. The improvements that Bill C-26 makes to the Canada pension plan are an investment in the future.

The bill presents a comprehensive plan that will provide an appropriate and realistic increase in benefits for contributors when they become eligible. This will have a positive and lasting impact on the financial security of Canadian retirees in the coming decades.

The proposed enhancement, which will be implemented gradually and through the creation of a new separate account to manage additional funds for retirees, will guarantee a stable and smooth transition, without imposing a financial burden arising from unmanageable financial expectations.

As indicated in the bill, the changes will be administered by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board, which will have the authority to prepare financial statements concerning the amounts managed, which consist of the additional contributions and increased benefits.

Last year, Statistics Canada announced that the number of seniors in Canada, people aged 65 years and older, had exceeded the number of children aged 0 to 14 years. In fact, on July 1, 2015, seniors represented 16.1% of Canada's population, compared to 16% for young children. There are now about six million seniors in Canada and this number is expected to grow by 50% in the next 21 years.

In my riding of Vimy, which is located in the heart of Laval, Quebec, there is already a large population of seniors. Since the population is aging, it is vital that we improve the existing mechanisms that, to our knowledge, effectively provide the necessary financial assistance in retirement.

We have the data in front of us, and we know which way the wind is blowing. Bill C-26 will gradually improve the existing system to help meet the needs of our aging population.

Some opposition members believe that this is just another tax hike and that there are better retirement savings options available to individuals. To say that this is a tax hike is completely absurd, and while it may not be completely false to say that there are better retirement savings options, that is true only within reasonable limits and under very specific circumstances.

Members of the official opposition talk up the tax-free savings account, saying that it could and should be the main means by which low-income and middle-class Canadian workers save for retirement. According to the Conservatives, the higher the annual TFSA contribution limit, the more low-income and middle-class Canadians will benefit.

Let us be realistic. The previous government increased the TFSA limit to \$10,000. Does anyone really believe that low-income or even many middle-class Canadians can afford to contribute that much to their TFSA?

The TFSA is a mechanism that can be used effectively to invest and save depending on a person's income threshold, but make no mistake, the \$10,000 limit benefited only Canadians with very high incomes who were able to use their TFSAs to get a tax exemption. The public purse paid the price of that measure.

• (1610)

The people that TFSAs were supposed to help are the very same ones who were forgotten when that ill-considered increase was introduced. It would have been better to properly address income inequality by optimizing and using other mechanisms enabling low- and middle-income Canadians to keep more money in their pockets and enjoy a comfortable retirement.

We have heard people say that low-income taxpayers are able to contribute the maximum to their TFSAs. Does anyone really believe that low-income workers and certain middle-class workers who support themselves can pay all of their bills, eat reasonably well, pay off their debts, and splurge on something every now and then and still deposit \$10,000 per year into a savings account? That would be really disingenuous, and it would be a pretty mean thing to do to the people we are trying to help.

[*English*]

There is also the criticism that this would do nothing to help seniors now. This argument is not only missing the point of the legislation entirely, but fails to recognize what the government has already done for seniors, both through enhancements to existing programs and fixing the mistakes from the previous government. The first budget made provisions to restore the age of eligibility to the OAS and enhance the GIS for low-income seniors, again, putting money directly in the pockets of those who need it most.

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This legislation does not do anything immediately, because that is not its purpose. We have already made changes for the interim to help offset the rising cost of living for our most vulnerable seniors. Therefore, to say that Bill C-26 would do nothing for seniors now, has very little to do with the nature of this debate to begin with. This is a long-term project that would ensure financial security of our seniors for decades and has nothing to do with other adjustments to social security we have already made. The reality is a significant decline for a large percentage of employees in Canada who had access to a registered pension plan through their jobs. It is the shortfall in middle-income retirement planning that is opening up as a result of disappearing corporate pensions.

CPP reform is designed to address these shortcomings. The current maximum amount of income covered by the CPP is \$54,900. An enhanced CPP would see that maximum raised to \$82,700 by 2025. It would also raise the annual payout target from 25% of pre-retirement earnings to 33%. For retired Canadians, this could represent thousands of dollars in take home pension income.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

With Bill C-26, we are planning for the future. We are ensuring the well-being of retirees whose other savings options were curtailed by the elimination of private employer-sponsored pension plans. We are offsetting the rising cost of living by increasing the pension benefits that Canadians receive from a quarter of their income to a third.

We are preserving a certain standard of living for all families so that everyone can live with dignity in retirement. Most importantly, our affordable and sustainable approach will ensure that today's prosperity lasts.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that there has to be a change to the Canada pension plan. I certainly support that. However, on the last couple of questions I have asked, it seems as if the members over there are saying that they cannot speak on behalf of the government. I have a news flash. They are the government.

What really bothers me is that we agree with them that the enhancements need to be done for our future, for our children. However, there is a drop-out clause in the existing CPP and it affects women who are raising their children people with disabilities so they are not penalized. We call that a "drop-out rate". However, it is omitted in the enhancements. That would cause a penalty for something we have always looked after. It is either an honest mistake, or it is omitted purposely.

Therefore, will the member solely support our amendment that will come forward at committee, bringing those drop-out periods into the enhancements? It is a simple yes or no. It is not "I can't speak on behalf of the government". I would appreciate that.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from across the way.

In my riding, Vimy, more than 21% of the population is aging and most people live in poverty. We are doing something that the previous government did not do in 10 years in power. It never consulted the then minister of finance or considered improving the Canada pension plan, which has been around since 1965.

What we are doing now is truly forward-thinking. We are thinking about our seniors and our young people and how they are going to live with dignity in retirement.

I invite the members across the way to support this bill and to propose changes in committee.

•(1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I sense a passion on a very important issue, and in representing her constituents. I applaud my colleague on her efforts.

Could the member provide further thoughts on the significance of what is indeed a historic agreement? The Prime Minister and the government have entered into a wonderful agreement with the provinces and territories of all political stripes. They have been able to deliver on something that Canadians truly want. I wonder if she might want to provide some further comment on how good it is to see that strong national leadership working with the provinces.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Eva Nassif: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, his thoughts, and his great enthusiasm during the debates in the House.

Our approach to improving the Canada pension plan is truly an historic one. Canadians elected us on the basis of these consultations and the purpose of this program is to consult and listen to Canadians, to always think that we are truly proud and can always do better, as our Prime Minister says.

There is always room for improvement. This bill is certainly not perfect. However, we consulted all the provinces, which is something the other government never tried or managed to do for 10 years.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am especially pleased to speak again to an issue that is so important to the future of our seniors, our country, and retirees.

I am referring to Bill C-26, an act to amend the Canada Pension Plan, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act and the Income Tax Act. There are several reasons for that. This bill is the promise of a better future. It also reflects the government's commitment to help Canadians achieve their dream of a more secure retirement.

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It is a project for the future and for young people who are currently preparing to enter the labour force. This next generation will also be assured of a dignified retirement. We are acting for a future that goes beyond any election cycle to help those who will come after us.

We are building on what was accomplished by the decision-makers of the 1960s who created the Canada pension plan, enhanced old age security by creating the guaranteed income supplement, and implemented measures that, in the long term, would significantly reduce poverty among seniors. What is more, we are here in a true spirit of federalism because the agreement to enhance the Canada pension plan, or CPP, comes from a real spirit of co-operation with the provinces, who approved the approach.

Do we need to enhance the CPP? Absolutely. It is essential and I will explain why. Middle-class Canadians work hard, but they still do not feel as though they are getting ahead. One in four families who are approaching the age of retirement, or about 1.1 million families, may not be able to save enough money to maintain their current lifestyle when they retire. We have to take action.

We also have to accept the fact that fewer companies are offering defined benefit pension plans and that fewer Canadians have such a plan. It is a major challenge for Canadian families and it is time we dealt with this. The agreement we reached with the provinces will increase the retirement income of Canadians who are in this difficult situation, and also promote economic growth and create jobs.

How will the CPP expansion work? There are two key things to keep in mind. First, the CPP currently replaces a quarter of Canadians' average annual earnings. The new CPP will replace a third. Future retirees will therefore have more money in their pockets. Take Mila for example. She is a mother who has earned on average \$50,000 a year during her working life. Under the current plan, she will get \$12,000 when she retires. Under the new plan, Mila could get a little more than \$16,000.

Second, there is a limit on pensionable earnings. The maximum level of pensionable earnings will go up 14% by 2025. That means that the maximum annual CPP benefit, which is currently \$13,110, would go up to \$20,000 in today's dollars. Under the enhanced CPP, the maximum benefit will go up by almost 50%. It is clear that these changes to the CPP will make life better for retired Canadian workers and will help them achieve their goal of a strong, secure, and stable retirement.

How much will this cost? For most Canadians, the contribution rate will rise by just 1%. Take Kevin, for example, who earns about \$55,000 a year. His contributions will increase by \$6 per month in 2019. Once the progressive implementation is complete in 2025, Kevin's contribution will have gone up by about \$43 per month.

That minor increase will be largely offset by his higher retirement income. With the enhancement, Kevin will collect approximately \$17,500 per year in today's dollars in CPP benefits, which is about \$4,400 more than under the current plan.

I should also mention that contributions to the enhanced portion of the CPP for wage earners like Kevin will be tax deductible and that a tax credit will continue to apply to employees' current CPP contributions.

We can therefore proudly say that Canadians will have more money in retirement thanks to the new CPP. Furthermore, the budgets of low-income workers will not be affected, because the working income tax benefit will also be increased to offset the premium increases.

• (1625)

I would like to add that our government has decided to give everyone time to prepare for the new provisions. The changes will be implemented gradually over seven years, from 2019 to 2025. This is the responsible way to go, to make sure that businesses and workers have time to adapt. We are taking into account the problems that exist at the provincial and national levels. We have engaged with each province to discuss their particular situation, and we will continue to do so.

We took steps to ensure that we could implement these measures in a way that will not hurt businesses, because we want the owners of businesses of all sizes to be assured that the government will implement these changes to the CPP without harming the functioning of the Canadian economy.

As I said in my introduction, the government is creating a better future for Canadians, especially the middle class. This will have a much broader impact on all Canadians, because it is important to have a long-term vision. Higher CPP benefits will lead to greater domestic demand, which will stimulate the Canadian economy.

Since savings will grow, more money will be available for investment, also thanks to the new CPP. As a result, we expect the gross domestic product to increase by 0.05% to 0.09%, which represents approximately 6,000 to 11,000 new jobs. Quite simply, an enhanced CPP means more savings and a better retirement.

Middle-class Canadians will then be able to focus on what matters most, such as spending quality time with their family and friends, rather than worrying about not being able to make ends meet.

Proportionally, my riding, Laurentides—Labelle, has more seniors than almost every other riding in this country. In 2011, the average age was 49.5 years. Seniors' issues are therefore extremely important in my riding. I am acutely aware of retirees' needs. People think my riding is rich because of Mont-Tremblant, but it is not. Workers in my region do not have much money. We need every tool in the toolbox so we can help seniors and future generations and plan for the long term, not just up to the next election.

Personally, I am sick of the government doing all the planning for future generations in just four years. Life does not end in four years. Life goes on. The country and society continue to advance. We will never fix our problems by always thinking only about the next four years. As the indigenous peoples say, we must think of the next seven generations. If we do not, then society will never improve.

I strongly support Bill C-26, because it is an important step in the right direction. It is not a solution to all the problems. A lot of work remains to be done. However, this is one aspect of a plan for the future, for our seniors, and for society in general.

• (1630)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to ask my colleague an important question about the TFSA's.

As everyone knows, when our government introduced TFSA's, more than 11 million Canadians decided to use this vehicle. Most of them were not wealthy people. However, this allowed them to shelter their savings from taxes. They were able to save on their own terms. No one forced them to invest in this type of savings plan.

The solution my colleague is proposing is far from being the solution to all our problems. As a business owner, I can tell you that if I have to invest \$1,000 per employee, per year, in my business, I might be forced to cut some positions in order to afford this premium.

Can my colleague explain why they lowered the TFSA ceiling to \$5,000, when we know that millions of Canadians saved money through this important savings vehicle?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, we did not eliminate the program. We rolled it back to where it was shortly before the election.

The Conservatives increased the contribution ceiling in order to help those who had too much money and needed a place to park it. The program is available to anyone who needs it. It increases every year. It is cumulative. The maximum contribution of \$5,500 is the annual not the lifetime amount. It is a tool that is available to retirees. However, it is not the only savings vehicle. It is of no benefit to society when those who have the means to save \$10,000 a year can do so tax-free. In fact, TFSA's only help those who have an extra \$10,000 every year.

Personally, I believe that it is very important to focus on programs that help all members of society and not just those with the most resources.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the NDP believes that enhancing public pensions is a good thing. It is a necessary step.

However, an oversight by the government is very embarrassing. A provision of the CPP ensured that parents who took one or two years' parental leave would not be penalized. This provision was put in place by Pierre Elliott Trudeau. All the government had to do was cut and paste it. It forgot to do so.

How did the Liberals forget this? They are going to penalize those people who were previously protected.

Will the Liberals correct this mistake, yes or no?

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

I am not a member of the committee that will decide what amendments to make. I would not discourage that, and I think it is

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important to look at all questions raised in committee to ensure that the best possible bill is introduced at third reading. That is what we will work towards.

[*English*]

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague that the CPP has to be enhanced. There have to be changes for our future, for our children and our grandchildren. It is much needed.

However, the member mentioned in his speech that he was so proud that a person by the name of Kevin could really be proud and the enhancement would help him going forward. However, he eliminated Susie, Jane, and Margaret who could be penalized if they raise their children. They will not have the same benefit.

It is a bad mistake and we have to fix it. The Liberals omitted it, and I am not sure if they did it on purpose, but it has to be fixed.

I am asking the member if he will support this going in to the enhancement part so that the people with disabilities and people who are raising their children will not be penalized, like Kevin will not be.

• (1635)

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's support for this very important bill. I am also pleased to note that the Speaker himself wrote the bill, I am very impressed with the Speaker's ability.

I would in turn encourage the member to take this up at committee. That is the best place to take it up, at committee. It is too late for here. I think it is really important that we study every aspect of the bill, and the best possible bill comes out of it.

[*Translation*]

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Health; the hon. member for Abbotsford, The Environment; the hon. member for North Island—Powell River, Public Services and Procurement.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address what has transpired in this House over today and yesterday.

Today would have been the sixth day of debate on Bill C-26, a bill that would help Canadians achieve a secure, safe, and dignified retirement.

The Conservatives have requested more time for debate on the bill. They could have debated the bill today, as scheduled, but instead, they resorted to procedural tactics to obstruct debate and attempt to shut down the House of Commons and go home.

I had hoped for a negotiated consensus, but now we will respond to political manoeuvring from the other side in the Conservative Party, so that such important financial measures that affect all Canadians are brought to a vote.

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Disappointingly, it has become clear that the Conservatives would rather focus on these type of tactics than debate substantive issues. As a result of Conservative tactics, six committees were disrupted or cancelled, including the appearance of five ministers and important witnesses scheduled to testify on issues of relevance to Canadians.

This kind of behaviour is exactly what Canadians rejected when they voted for real change a year ago.

[*Translation*]

Consequently, the Conservatives have left us with very few options in terms of how—

[*English*]

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With respect to the member, I think if a member is quoting the government House leader, he should attribute that quotation to the House leader.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I believe that is debate. I will let the hon. parliamentary secretary continue.

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, returning to the matter at hand, when we are talking about the Canada pension plan, what does the agreement in principle mean for Canadians? As my hon. colleagues may not like to understand but is true now that so many provinces have agreed, once fully in place, the CPP enhancement would increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by about 50%. The current maximum benefit is \$13,110 and in today's dollar terms the enhanced CPP would represent an increase of nearly \$7,000 to a maximum benefit of nearly \$20,000.

What do my hon. colleagues across the way have against making sure that Canadians have a more secure retirement? Enhanced benefits would accumulate gradually as individuals pay into the enhanced CPP, and young Canadians just entering the workforce would see the largest increase in benefits.

To fund these enhanced benefits, annual CPP contributions would increase modestly over seven years starting in 2019. For example, an individual with earnings of \$54,900 would contribute about an extra \$6 a month in 2019. By the end of the seven-year phase-in period, contributions for that individual would be about an additional \$43 per month. This would make the CPP more relevant and more effective and would ensure that we are lifting millions of Canadians out of precarious financial positions and out of poverty.

To ensure that eligible low-income workers are not financially burdened as a result of the extra contributions, the Government of Canada would enhance the working income tax benefit, an existing benefit that is designed to help keep people in the workforce and encourage others to join it. One of the advantages of this CPP agreement is that it would significantly reduce the share of families at risk of not saving enough for retirement and the degree of under-saving that is prevalent in Canadian society.

The Canada pension plan will always be there for Canadians. It helps to fill the gap for those who do not have a workplace pension plan, and it is portable across jobs and provinces.

It is important also to make a comment on survivor benefits, which are monthly benefits that are provided to the surviving spouse or common law partner of a deceased contributor and a monthly benefit to their dependent children. It is also important to mention

the death benefit, a one-time lump sum benefit usually paid to the estate of the deceased.

I must congratulate my colleagues in the government benches and their colleagues in the provinces, as stewards of the CPP. These changes are important for the future of Canada and for Canadians.

It is also important to share with the House why it is important for us to take these bold moves to enhance the CPP. Some 1.1 million families approaching retirement are not saving enough. My mother recently turned 65, and she is fortunate enough to have saved enough with my father over time, and the CPP adds to that income. However, we know from Statistics Canada data that 1.1 million families approaching retirement are not saving enough, and that will put them in a precarious financial position.

It is important for us to respond so that the CPP will not simply drift into irrelevance over time. Middle-class Canadians, as we know, are working harder than ever, and many are worried that they will not have set aside enough money for their retirement. Young Canadians in particular are facing the unique challenge of securing adequate retirement savings at a time when fewer can expect to work in jobs that historically would have paid pensions over time. The question remains as to how to close that gap, though, and that is what the Minister of Finance and colleagues in government and provincial colleagues have come to agree to with this agreement.

The Department of Finance has examined whether families near retirement are adequately preparing for retirement. Based on household income and wealth data from the 2012 survey of financial security, families are considered to be at risk of under-saving if their projected after-tax income at retirement does not replace 60% of their pre-retirement after-tax family income.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Some 1.1 million Canadians are approaching retirement without having saved enough for a secure retirement.

I must congratulate the Minister of Finance, his parliamentary secretary, and his provincial counterparts for having made predictions and examined demographic and statistical data in an effort to ensure that retired Canadians can retire with dignity.

[*English*]

Middle-class families without workplace pensions are at greater risk of under-saving for retirement, and I know what this is like. I grew up in a middle-class family in Morinville, Alberta. When my dad had his first heart attack at 39, I was 16, and we felt immediately the effects of that kind of hardship on a family. If that happens later in life and people do not have enough money to save, the CPP, in many cases, is a life and family saver.

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It is estimated that 33% of families nearing retirement age who have no workplace pension plan assets may be at risk of under-saving for retirement, compared to 17% of families who have workplace pension benefits. Overall, families in the lowest income group were found to have the lowest risk of under-saving, as OAS and CPP benefits provide relatively high income replacement at this income range. At the same time, lower-income families are likely to require a higher level of income replacement than other income groups to maintain their pre-retirement living standard.

This is the kind of foresight and the kind of planning that Canadians elected us to provide. The Minister of Finance and his colleagues, the ministers of finance of the provincial and territorial governments, also understood that this was a critical time for Canadians.

We are living longer and healthier lives. Longer life expectancies increase the level of savings required at retirement to maintain comparable living standards. At some time in our past, at 46 years old, I would be considered already an old man, but I feel very young. Statistics say that I will live well into my 80s if I maintain a healthy lifestyle and understand the consequences of other behaviours. I want to be able to live a long life, and Canadians are living longer lives, and so we have to make sure that our social programs, like the Canada pension plan, provide for this longer life expectancy.

Overall participation in private sector RPPs has declined since the 1970s, and there has been an ongoing shift in defined benefit contributions. These trends of declining workplace pension plans mean that Canadians on the verge of retiring have fewer options to plan as they live into their 80s and 90s, and we know historically that more Canadians are living to 100 than ever before.

Economic conditions since the 2008-09 recession pose a particular risk that young Canadians may be moving from job to job and may not have the kind of safety net that other Canadians in past generations enjoyed. This agreement in principle to enhance the CPP is smart public policy. The income replacement level would be increased to one-third of eligible earnings, and there would be a gradual seven-year phase-in beginning on January 1. We would increase the working income tax benefit, and tax deductibility has also been factored in.

This is why Canadians voted for real change. This is the kind of work that, within the first year of our mandate, we can all be proud of, because we have ensured dignity and retirement savings for millions of Canadians. I am proud to represent the residents of Edmonton Centre and to stick up for this kind of smart public policy.

• (1645)

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his speech. I know he comes from the greater Sherwood Park area, as do I.

I want to ask the member a process question, because he talked at the beginning about some of the back and forth that has happened.

I think the Liberals recognize and we recognize that this is an important debate. The fact that we would significantly increase payroll taxes for Canadians, for Canadian businesses, would have a major impact on our economy, which is why I think it is important

that every member who wants to address this vital debate have an opportunity to do so.

The government has pointed out that one-third of Conservative MPs have spoken to the bill, as if that is enough. Clearly, there are still government members who want to speak to the bill, yet the Liberals are shutting down debate. This is what we have been working to oppose. We have been working to oppose their effort to shut down debate on something that is vital and so fundamental to this country.

I would ask the member to maybe just correct the record, because he claimed that we were trying to shut down the House. In fact, it was the government that shut down routine proceedings. It was the government that called two votes today. We did not call any votes today. He may want to at least correct what he said to some extent, because I know it is exactly the same statement that other members, including the House leader, have read out, but it simply is not factual.

This is an important issue. This is going to have very negative impacts on job creators and employees in my riding, and I know in his riding, which is a riding that very much is hurting as a result of the policies of the current government, as are many of Alberta's ridings.

Could the member clarify that, recognize the importance of this debate, and explain why the government is shutting down debate on this important measure?

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note the important and smart math that is in the plan to make the Canada pension plan more robust.

By my math, 60 MPs have already spoken to this bill, including almost 35 Conservatives, one-third of their caucus, and we have had a robust debate on this matter. Procedural tactics are not going to stop this government from getting work done on behalf of Canadians.

We are talking about 1.1 million Canadians, many of whom live in Strathcona County, Morinville, and Edmonton. This is important work that we need to do now. We cannot wait for endless debate on a matter that is so important when we have to get work done on behalf of Canadians.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that the CPP has to be changed. It is time. We have to make sure our children are looked after. There was a flaw in the CPP legislation, and it was changed, I believe, in the 1970s. Women were being penalized for leaving the labour market to raise their children, and when it came time to collect their pensions, that was used against them because they were not paying into it during those years.

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At that time, the Liberal government, under Pierre Trudeau, fixed it by adding a dropout provision to make sure they would not be penalized, and it has been working ever since. He did the same thing for people with disabilities. They were out of the workforce through no fault of their own. They could not work, but were also penalized. The fix has been working well. For the last three days, we have been asking why this was omitted in the enhancement.

I will ask the hon. member this. Why are the Liberals so proud of bringing forward a bill that proposes an enhancement to the CPP that would help a lot of people in the future, but takes a step back on the rights of women and people with disabilities? It is a step backward.

• (1650)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his clear interest in this important set of amendments to the Canada pension plan and what it would do for workers, people with disabilities, and working women and men.

What is important to note is that the Minister of Finance, after negotiating with his colleagues across the country, has the NDP government in the province of Alberta on board. As a member of the House, I would like to see robust discussion of this plan at committee. That is the opportunity for us to take a look at these kinds of issues, so they can be on the official record and we can advise colleagues from coast to coast on the changes that could be made in further agreements.

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to speak to Bill C-26. If I am one of the 36 on this side, I am privileged to extend the debate here today in the House.

The Liberal government continues its assault on hard-working Canadian families. If it is not the carbon tax, it is the CPP tax hike from 9.9% to 11.9%.

What does this mean for hard-working Canadian families? It means they will have less money in their pockets today. They will have less money in their pockets to maybe purchase their first home. They will have less money in their pockets to maybe go on a trip this winter. The economy will suffer because of this. This increase, as we all know, could put thousands of jobs at risk.

I will go further on that. It is another tax on small businesses. The Liberals have broken their clear promise to small businesses to proceed with their reduction in the small business tax rate to 9% in 2019. This decision will cost small firms over \$900 million per year as of 2019, according to the CFIB. Now businesses will have to pick up the increase in these CPP premiums. Premiums will rise up to \$2,200 per worker, split between the employer and the employee. Seventy per cent of small business owners totally disagree that the proposed CPP increase is “modest”, as the government calls it. Ninety per cent of small businesses think it is important to have public consultations before any deal at all is finalized.

The Liberal government talks about being engaged with Canadians. Then why does it not sit down with the business community of this country first before going ahead with this? Yes, it has said before that it has consulted with the territories and the provinces, but perhaps it should first talk to the businesses that will be most affected by this CPP increase.

Even with the low Canadian dollar, the Liberals have generated 20,000 fewer manufacturing jobs in the country. In my province of Saskatchewan alone, we lost 4,000 jobs this August from the same period last year. The trend continued. Six thousand fewer people are working in my province this year than they did the year before. The October numbers are out, and they do not paint a pretty picture. Ten thousand fewer people are working in my province today than they did in 2015.

Our previous government led the way for Canadians to save for their future. Canada's savings rate has climbed, as we all know, from 7.7% of pay back in 1990 to almost double that today, at 14.1%. According to Statistics Canada, the share of Canadian seniors living on low income has dropped from 29% in 1970 to 3.7% today. That is still too high. We would all love to see it at zero. However, that is still among the lowest rates in the world today. Eighty-three per cent of Canadian households are on track to maintain their current living standards for retirement.

Let us be honest that each and every family has different views on retirement and that this, too, is up to the family.

The TFSA, put in by our previous government, was simply a fantastic tool for investing for retirement, or even for someone today who is one of the 10,000 in my province who were laid off. Many Canadians are enjoying these benefits. We wanted to increase the contribution limit to \$10,000, knowing that it would give Canadians an incentive to save for the future, but the Liberal government, as we all know, rejected that idea.

I believe that the CPP tax hike is really an insult to hard-working Canadian families. Our previous Conservative government believed that Canadian families were able to manage their own money. We had confidence. Obviously, the Liberal government does not trust the Canadian family.

• (1655)

What is concerning to me is that in my province of Saskatchewan, since we have had downturn, more than half of the people are on the verge of not paying their bills. A report by Meyers Norris Penny shows that 64% of people in my province are now living within \$200 a month of not being able to pay their bills or their debts. The Liberals can talk about the CPP increase starting at \$6 a month and increasing to \$33 or \$43 a month, but think about these families who today are within \$200 a month of not meeting their bills. Thirty-four per cent of people in my province say they already do not make enough money to cover their bills and 57% of people are concerned about their current level of debt—again a jump of 14%.

May I remind the Liberals of laid-off workers. Their families are not the only ones hurting. The slowdown has trickled down to everyone in my province, including the retailers, the restaurants, and virtually every business and every sector. This is why the CPP tax would have a major effect on everyone in my province, the 1.2 million who live there.

Government Orders

We all know that the small- and medium-sized businesses drive the healthy economy, but the additional CPP tax on them could have major impacts on their hiring decisions. We have already seen that. In the past year, the Liberals have not created one full-time job in this country. We wonder about this. The millennials in this country are now upset, as they should be, about the sunny ways of the finance minister, who was recently talking about the job turn and saying not to expect any long-term employment at all. We have witnessed massive increases in part-time jobs at the expense of full-time employment. This will further erode the middle class in our country.

Employees have four avenues of retirement. We have pensions, the current CPP, the improved GIS, and the OAS. Plus, let us not forget that we have other assets like inheritance, life insurance, and other financial assets along with the TFSAs. The value of housing has certainly gone up over the last 10 years, more so in Vancouver and Toronto markets, so that when the baby boomers die, their bequests will give many millennials a healthy financial backing.

We have talked about the CPP tax increase. I am going to discuss the carbon tax now because it is another tax on employees and employers.

In my province of Saskatchewan, we have been very vocal about this carbon tax. I am going to invite the politicians in this House to fly over my province, and especially over Buleya, Saskatchewan. On the field, farmers have created circles with the letters c-a-r-b-o-n t-a-x. These farmers have gotten together in their fields and have drawn a circle around those letters and a line through them, saying no to a carbon tax.

I hope all of the farmers in our province do the same for the CPP tax increase. We do not need it in our country at this time. We all want to have money for retirement, and increasing the CPP premium rate from 9.9% to 11.9% starting in 2019 would have a big effect, not only in my city and in my province but also in the entire country.

• (1700)

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy a sportscaster's view of the world and topics as they are, but I wanted to focus on putting a price on carbon.

As the member may know, that fine old socialist Gordon Campbell brought in a price on carbon in British Columbia in 2007. Cleverly, he said that they would take the revenue and give it back to the people via tax cuts. What that did was provide a couple of incentives. First, if people wanted to avoid paying more in taxes, they could just simply put out less carbon, such as by having a smaller car or by taking public transit more. He also exempted the agriculture sector so that there was flexibility and would not be an impact on the cost of food. Today, British Columbia has the lowest tax rate in the country and the best growth record. Can the member not see that applied properly, a price on carbon could produce very good results for Saskatchewan?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, the premier of my province has been the most vocal premier of any province or territory in this country. He does not want this carbon tax. He does not want it for several reasons. It will cost 1.2 million citizens in my province money, up to \$2,600 per family. That is not revenue neutral. I have a brother in British Columbia where gas prices continue to go up

because of the carbon tax. Therefore, I think this is very bad news for the province of Saskatchewan, as we have heard that from our premier on down.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, through you, I would like to seek some clarification on the comments made by the member regarding the efficacy of the TFSA. He mentioned quite passionately the number of families in his area who are living very close to the poverty line and who are within only \$200 of being unable to pay their bills each month, which I also think is a concern across Canada. By my simple calculation, it would take such families nearly 50 years to raise the money to make the maximum contribution to the TFSA.

We have also heard from other speakers today that almost 11 million Canadians use the TFSA. It has been my experience in the House that sometimes statistics are used not unlike a drunk uses a lamp post—more for support than illumination. However, I would like to take this opportunity to add a few more statistics so that we might have greater clarity around the use of the TFSA. There are 28 million Canadians who were eligible to make a contribution to it, but only 1.9 million Canadians made the maximum contribution. That is less than 7%. Therefore, I would ask the member opposite this. What about the other 93% of Canadians who were unable to take advantage of the maximum contribution to the TFSA that he has proposed?

Mr. Kevin Waugh: Mr. Speaker, seniors will not benefit at all from the CPP increase right now. The Liberals will bring this in over 40 years, as we have heard.

Seniors in my riding have taken advantage of income splitting and the TFSAs. We increased the GIS. That government has followed through. The report I have here shows that from 1970 to today, poverty levels have really come down in this country. We increased the withdrawal limit up to \$10,000 for workers who get laid off, allowing them to withdraw that amount at any time. Now, because of the current government's decision to scale that back, others are standing in line for EI benefits instead.

Mr. Pat Finnigan (Miramichi—Grand Lake, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a country built upon optimism, often in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges. However, the promise of a better life has been eroded in recent decades and the reality is that many middle-class Canadians have had their confidence shaken.

While our economy continues to grow, middle-class Canadians are struggling. Many Canadians are working harder and longer as the cost of living continues to rise. Middle-class families do not feel they are getting ahead. It is time to recapture the hope and optimism for the future that existed in previous generations.

Government Orders

We must embrace the spirit of those early founders and build upon their legacy by providing the same opportunities for advancement and mobility that they once unlocked. We need to take the next steps to help Canada harness the tremendous growth potential that we have in our great country.

A strong economy starts with a strong middle class. Canadians understand this and so do we. That is why building an economy that works for middle-class Canadians and their families is our top priority.

A strengthened middle class means hard-working Canadians can look forward to a good standard of living and better prospects for their children. When the middle class thrives, we all thrive.

Investments are needed today that will strengthen and grow the middle class. We know Canadians, and in particular younger Canadians, are concerned about whether they will be able to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement. That is why our government committed to working with all provinces and territories to enhance the CPP to ensure that future generations of Canadians could count on a stronger public pension system in their retirement years.

In June, the Minister of Finance met in Vancouver with provincial and territorial finance ministers and they reached an agreement to strengthen the Canada pension plan.

First, the agreed upon plan will increase the share of their annual eligible earnings Canadians will receive in retirement through CPP from one-quarter to one-third. For example, if they make \$50,000 per year over their working life, they will receive under this agreement about \$16,000 per year in retirement instead of \$12,000.

Second, it will increase the point at which this new one-third replacement rate maxes out by 14% in 2025. For most Canadians, these significant increases in the Canada pension plan retirement benefit will come from only a 1% increase in their premium.

For those higher income Canadians with earnings above the current maximum pensionable earnings level, a separate contribution rate of about 4% will be introduced, starting in 2024, that will provide them with the opportunity to save at a rate more in line with their higher income.

The agreement will also provide a tax deduction for employees' new Canada pension plan contributions. Providing a tax deduction, as opposed to a tax credit, will avoid new Canada pension contributions increasing the cost of saving for Canadians.

Under this agreement, increases to the working income tax benefit to roughly offset incremental CPP enhancements will mean eligible low-income workers see little to no change in their household budget, while still ensuring these workers see higher benefits in retirement.

In addition, we have ensured that the proposed changes are affordable for business by introducing a long and gradual phase-in starting in 2019, which will allow more time for business to adjust. This is the responsible way to ensure that business and workers have time to adjust to the additional contribution associated with the enhanced program.

The moderate and phased-in approach agreed upon by Canada's finance ministers will have a net positive impact in the long term and that is what is important about our plan. Saving for retirement has always been a challenge and unfortunately those numbers are not improving.

● (1705)

In 1977, 43% of Canadians were covered by a secured defined benefit workplace pension. By 2012, that figure had fallen to 27%. The situation in the private sector is even more stark, with the level of defined benefit coverage down to a mere 11%. This means that only a few Canadians with workplace pension plans will retire with the security of knowing exactly how much retirement income they will be getting each month. Everyone else's workplace pension is dependent on market performance. That was why it was so important for our government to work with the provinces to enhance the CPP.

The CPP enhancement is about helping today's young people and future generations of Canadians, and it complements a solid set of voluntary private retirement savings options available to Canadians through tax-assisted vehicles, such as the registered pension plans, registered retirement savings plans, pooled registered pension plans, and tax-free savings accounts.

In addition to our co-operation to enhance the CPP, our government is working with our provincial partners to support low costs for Canadian financial consumers who choose to make PRPPs a part of their retirement savings plans through our recent multilateral agreement on PRPP.

By making these changes, we wanted to complement private savings and pensions in a way that would make our retirement savings system even healthier and more effective.

These changes to the CPP are about hope and optimism. They are about middle-class Canadians, and those working hard to join them. They are about taking a fundamentally new approach and charting a new course for Canada. We are ensuring that investments needed to support the economy will lead to long-term growth that strengthens the middle class.

Canadians are the real drivers of change, and their voices will continue to guide the government as we work together to build the Canada of the 21st century.

● (1710)

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government and the member opposite never mentioned the payroll tax as a result of the bill. It would negatively affect Canadian businesses across the country.

My question is twofold. Does the member opposite know how many full-time employees there are in Canada right now? If yes, has he made the calculation on how much money would be collected on an annual basis as a result of what the Liberals call the expansion and what is in fact a tax?

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Mr. Speaker, as a small business operator, when my staff members retire, I can see the income they will be getting for the next few years will not be sufficient. I really welcome this. It is going to be an even, spread out contribution by not only the employee but also the employer, and that is a fair way to do it.

Government Orders

Our forefathers had the vision 40 years ago, so we can retire now today. We need to plan ahead. I am confident that most employers will see a benefit of both the employee and employer contributions for the secure retirement of our future pensioners.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that changes have to be made to the CPP for all the reasons that most of his members have expressed. However, we have a slight problem when it comes down to the existing plan that has a drop-out period to assist women raising their children and people with disabilities.

The Liberals talk about the enhancement, what it will do, and how it will help all Canadians. However, by omitting this piece of the language in the enhancement, it only gives one group of Canadians the full benefit, while penalizing the other.

Therefore, why would the Liberals have this type of legislation instead of having all Canadians treated the same?

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Mr. Speaker, again, this legislation will go to committee at this stage. That is where we consult our parliamentary colleagues and all of the nation to ensure we do not leave anybody out. I think that has been said by our minister in the past. I am sure we will come up with a viable solution that will take care of everyone in his or her retirement years.

• (1715)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to hear the hon. colleague from Miramichi—Grand Lake say that Canadians and the voices of Canadians are the driving force of the government. However, what we have seen over the last week, and indeed earlier this spring, is that it has silenced the voices of Canadians, and the voices of the 338 members of Parliament. Indeed over 50% of our Conservative colleagues have not had a chance to speak to this.

Does my hon. colleague, who is a small business owner, as am I, not see that with the proposed hike of CPP and the carbon tax, his government is failing the job creators of our country? It is putting the jobs of Canadians at risk with these types of measures that will make it harder for Canadian companies to compete.

Mr. Pat Finnigan: Mr. Speaker, if we look at what the former Conservative government did, its plan to solve this problem of a shortcoming in the pension fund was to increase the pension age to 67. If Canadians had not shown it the door, we would probably see the age limit raised to 70. That was the former government's solution to resolve this problem. On being transparent, that plan was announced in Europe.

We will be debating this issue fully in committee. This government is very transparent. We will have a system that all Canadians can support. In fact, they do support it. I am very proud that future generations will be able to retire with respect and dignity.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be here this evening to discuss this bill.

[*English*]

One of the main reasons I got involved in politics was to fight poverty. As anyone in Parliament can imagine, I am delighted with a number of the provisions in the last budget, and with the provision

we are talking about today, to reduce poverty. We have had provisions that I might bring up in answers to questions related to students, families, and other vulnerable groups, such as the disabled. However, today we are talking about a bill in relation to seniors.

It may be hard for those who are not close to retirement age to think about this, but I think everyone can understand how much the cost of everything is going up when they pay their monthly bills and wonder if they can pay off their credit cards, oil bills, electricity bills, cable bills, and telephone bills. It is increasingly difficult for everyone, but it is hard for those who have not retired to imagine what stress this brings to seniors who can no longer work. They get to a certain age and their bodies start deteriorating, and they have to compete against a younger, stronger, healthier generation that has the up-to-date education needed to get a job.

Job prospects for many are very limited. We can imagine what kind of stress that causes when seniors do not know how they will pay their heating bills, buy food or clothing, or keep the lights on. I am totally sympathetic to suggestions in the House on helping that group of impoverished seniors. I am delighted that we increased some of the programs for seniors in general. It gets them out with community groups. It helps them remain happy and healthy.

I am happy with, as the Conservatives mentioned, the increase to the guaranteed income supplement, because it goes to the poorest of seniors. For seniors who have middle-class incomes, there was the middle-class tax cut. There are other provisions that will indirectly help seniors as they come into play. The biggest social infrastructure fund in Canadian history will allow for things like affordable housing.

There is an increase in homelessness. It is sad for all of us in the House to think of seniors, of all people, being homeless. One only has to go by the Tim Hortons at Queen and Kent, which I pass on the way home from my office, often at two or three o'clock in the morning. There are always three or four homeless people there who have nowhere else to go, and some are seniors.

The elements we will put into renewable resources will decrease the cost of energy. There is a fund for storage. There are ways of storing energy so that people can use energy at cheaper times of the day or at night. All of these things are pieces of the bigger picture to help people who are really in need. I cannot imagine anyone in the House who does not want to help seniors in need.

Government Orders

For that reason, I consider the increase in the Canada pension plan another part of the puzzle. This is a significant change. It is not as big as the Canada child benefit, which is huge, but this is big. Instead of people getting one-quarter of their incomes in retirement, they would receive up to one-third. People who are critical of this change would say that this is a massive increase, but I want all of us to imagine how we would live if tomorrow we got only one-quarter or even one-third of our current incomes. I do not think there are many Canadians who could live on that. There may be people who ask for other increases, but this, in itself, is a major change.

So that it will not be too disruptive financially, it will be phased in over seven years, from 2019 to 2025.

• (1720)

It affects at least three acts. Nothing is easy legislatively.

First, it affects the Canada Pension Plan act. That will increase the pension a person is allowed from one-quarter to one-third of income. It increases the survivor benefits too. As we can imagine, survivors are sometimes in an even more desperate situation. Imagine an elderly woman who is left as a survivor if she cannot work. She has spent most of her life caregiving, taking care of family. She does not have the skills and may not have the health. Obviously, with today's costs going up, she needs increased funding, so this will increase the survivor benefits. It would be the same for people with disabilities. Some of them have limited opportunity, so they will get this increase as well.

The Canada Pension Plan act also has to change the maximum level of pensionable earnings. It will also allow for the required additional contributions beginning in 2019.

I am sure that all of us have heard people say that they would like to donate more to their pensions, but there is a limit. This will increase to 14% as of 2025. The bill will also set up, for the purpose of implementing this change, an additional Canada pension plan account and the accounting required to manage that account.

In the act there are also financial provisions for reviewing the act, so we have to make adjustments to those and to the Governor in Council regulations that relate to them.

The second act we have to deal with is the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act. Once again, a lot of these are just administrative changes for the simple goal of having higher contributions and salaries. The investment board that invests these funds comes under an act, and adjustments have to be made so that it can take into account these new funds and provide them to the Canada pension plan.

Finally, there are a couple of changes to the Income Tax Act. First is increasing the working tax benefit. I think most people understand the benefit of a working tax benefit. We do not want to be penalized for going to work. People who are in desperate situations who are not at work are getting some assistance. Of course, it is barely enough to live on. The working income tax benefit, I think everyone here probably agrees, is a big incentive that allows people to work and still keep some of their benefits. That has to be changed in the Income Tax Act. Then there is a deduction for an additional employee contribution.

It is a momentous agreement the premiers came to. I am sure all of us here understand how difficult it is to get all the provinces together to agree to a change like this. It is a shared provincial and federal responsibility, so none of us can do it alone. We have to have an agreement.

I think it is a good grassroots type of feeling that all the premiers are on side and the federal government is on side. That is what will lead to greater prosperity for the seniors we see who are otherwise having to make decisions about whether to buy nutritious food, keep their heat on, or have cable television, when they are home much of the day because they have health problems and are not able to work.

For that reason, I support the bill.

• (1725)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right that the changes have to be made. I thought it was interesting that he commented on how people are living in poverty today. Unfortunately, this legislation would not do anything for those people. It would only do something for their future. The people of today are living in such hardship. Whatever CPP people in Ontario receive on a monthly basis does not even pay their hydro bills. We want to make sure that does not go forward in the future.

I would like to ask the member a question about the drop-out period in the existing legislation for women who leave the workforce to raise their children and for people on disability because they cannot work. With all the little enhancements the government says will be good for our future, the drop-out period has been omitted from the legislation. Will the member support making sure that it is in the legislation? I do not want him to say that he is not speaking on behalf of the government, and I certainly do not want to hear another answer about sending the bill to committee—

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

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, that question has been raised and answered a number of times, so I will not get into the technical details.

I am glad the member raised the child tax benefit and various other programs.

My colleague was right in mentioning that this legislation would not help today's seniors. That is why I started my speech with seven items that will directly or indirectly help today's seniors.

Government Orders

I am sure the member supports the huge increase for families with children, especially families with low incomes, often single mothers, who will be getting a massive increase. Not only that, it is not taxable. Last year a single mother, a journalist, living in my constituency told me that she was shocked because she had a \$2,000 or \$3,000 bill for her child tax credit. She did not realize that it was taxable. We have made it non-taxable to help people like her and those families who are really struggling.

• (1730)

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague touched on some important topics. He also talked about himself, his family, and how his community is extremely important.

I really liked the part of his speech when he mentioned how our government was successful in collaborating with all the provinces to make this happen. This does not just happen out of the air. This happened because of hard work by our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance. It is impressive how they pushed forward, did not waver, and got it done.

Then I heard my colleague from Saskatoon—Grasswood, who I like very much, talk about inheritances. I do not know what that means, because I did not get one. This is about pensions and young people.

Could my colleague share a bit of information about the young people today who get jobs. There is no pension for them. This is about investing in the future. Could my colleague expand on that, please?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague used the word “investment”, because I was astonished to hear some people suggest that this is a tax. If I put money in my savings account, I do not call it a tax. This is an investment in the future when people become seniors. I, and I am sure many other people, did not have the discipline when I was young to put away the money I should have. I bought a boat, canoes, and kayaks and did not set aside money for my old age.

To help our youth, we increased the student grant program to help them afford what they are doing. At the same time, when they get into the work world, they will be able to contribute to their Canada pension plan when they are young and healthy so they can have at least one-third of their salary when they retire and can try to come up with other ways to supplement that and survive, because as someone mentioned, that is not nearly enough.

This will be a help to people really in need who are elderly.

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have all heard the stories that middle-class Canadians are trying to work harder than ever, but they are worried that they will not have enough to put away for this month's bills much less their retirement. Our whole economy, in fact, over the last 15 to 20 years, has been based on consumer spending, and we have run up the credit cards. Therefore, putting that little bit away each month or even in the course of a year for retirement is becoming extremely difficult.

I have to admit that I am not one of the 20% of Canadian families who get 46% of the wealth. The rest of us are left to basically fight over the scraps, and that does not bode well for the future.

We have one in four families approaching retirement, and about 1.1 million families at risk of not having enough. We have heard this loud and clear in our meetings with the constituents, in town halls, and on the doorsteps right across the country. I certainly heard it, and mine is a relatively prosperous riding.

This is why the Government of Canada committed to helping Canadians achieve that goal of a safe, secure, and dignified retirement. It is why we made it a core component of our commitment to work with the provinces and territories to strengthen the CPP, and on June 20, in Vancouver, we delivered. It was a historic occasion. Canada's governments, plural, agreed to enhance the CPP to give Canadians a more generous public pension that would help them retire in dignity.

The definition of dignity came up. What does that mean? Well, it means not having to split one's medications in half or go without. It means not having to choose between keeping the house warm or keeping a good meal on the table.

On behalf of hard-working Canadians, I would like to once again thank our hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, for his tremendous efforts in advancing this dialogue. The credit also goes to his counterparts in the provinces right across the country who also saw the need, had the vision, and agreed with us that it needed to be done.

Today, we as parliamentarians have a chance to support these quintessentially Canadian values and join their efforts to provide Canadians with a stronger CPP. Canadians have made it clear that they support an enhanced CPP. They did that by an overwhelming majority about a year and a couple of months ago.

The Minister of Finance did a tremendous job, when he introduced the legislation last week in the House, of articulating Canadians' concerns and spelling out precisely how this bill would give them a more generous public pension that would help them retire well. Today, I would like to build on this momentum for a stronger CPP by kind of taking a look under the hood at the enhancements that the CPP changes would bring. When we do this, we are going to see in even greater detail why this agreement is going to be so effective in meeting its objectives and why it merits support.

First, it is a balanced approach on a rock-solid foundation. One of the greatest strengths of this government and this agreement is that it is based on extensive, professional, and rock-solid economic analysis. Central among its assumptions is the premise that families need to have enough in savings set aside to replace about 60% of their pre-retirement income.

Government Orders

This 60% income replacement threshold is fully consistent with the considerable range of empirical literature suggesting an appropriate adequate income replacement rate should be between 50% and 70%, depending on family circumstances. At the top of the range, some suggest that 70% is sufficient to keep the consumption of an average Canadian family in line with that seen over their working years. However, the 70% target is a benchmark typically used in defined benefit pension plans, which are a pretty rare breed these days. It is also often used by retirement planners in providing advice to their clients.

However, we know that retirees typically spend less in their older ages, because they generally buy fewer durable goods like cars, or because of physical limitations. Many households also downsize their homes in retirement and use those proceeds to finance consumption. This implicitly means that a lower pension income replacement rate would be appropriate.

In view of these considerations, the Department of Finance, as well as many academics engaged in studying these issues, believe that using the 60% replacement rate is more appropriate, as it is generally regarded as sufficient to avoid a material drop in the standard of living. Therefore, this carefully targeted, balanced approach is reflected in the legislation we have before us today.

Now, had finance ministers tried to make the enhancements more dramatic, they would have, as the fears expressed by the other side, placed too much of a burden on workers and their employers as a result of the correspondingly higher increases in contributions that a dramatic enhancement would have entailed.

● (1735)

Had the finance ministers not been ambitious enough in targeting the enhancement, the resulting increase in benefits would have been too marginal to effectively support Canadians in reaching their retirement income goals.

As it stands, today's legislation would have a comprehensive package of enhancements that would increase CPP benefits while striking an appropriate balance between short-term economic considerations, long-term gains, and the provision of flexibility in retirement income decision-making.

Let us talk about the balanced approach and the benefits it would bring.

The balanced CPP enhancement contained in Bill C-26 would increase the maximum CPP retirement benefit by almost 50%. To put this in dollar terms, the current maximum benefit is, give or take, \$13,000 in today's dollar terms, but the enhanced CPP benefit would represent an increase of nearly \$7,000, to a maximum of around \$20,000 a year. With this increase, it would meaningfully reduce the share of families at risk of not saving enough for retirement, as well as the degree of under-saving.

The Department of Finance has estimated that the enhancements would reduce the share of families at risk of not having adequate retirement savings by about a quarter. It would take it from 24% to about 18%, when considering income from the three pillars of the retirement income system and savings from other financial and non-financial assets.

For most Canadians, all these increased CPP benefits would come from only a 1% increase in contribution rates.

Moreover, as the finance minister explained last week, it would also include provisions that would help ensure that low-income Canadians are not financially burdened as the result of the extra contributions and, because of its balanced and targeted approach, it would achieve this while also supporting a stronger economy over the long term.

However, above all else, it would mean there would be more money from the CPP waiting for Canadians when they retire, so they would be able to focus on the things that matter, like spending time with their families, rather than worrying about making ends meet.

This outcome is precisely what we had in mind when we began engaging with the provinces to enhance the CPP. With Bill C-26, we are delivering on this promise.

However, how we have achieved this is just as important as what we have achieved.

We have done it by basing our decisions on rock-solid economic analyses and research that draws on the best elements of independent academic literature on retirement savings.

Equipped with this knowledge, we have taken a carefully targeted and balanced approach that would give Canadians more money in retirement without burdening them or the economy. We have given Canadians the flexibility to invest in other discretionary retirement savings as they see fit and, as important, as they are able. We have accomplished all this by working in common purpose with our provincial and territorial governments.

By doing all this, we have shown the power of the fundamental principles of commonwealth and co-operation upon which this country was built.

Today, we have the historic opportunity to act on these principles to build an even stronger country for future generations. With Bill C-26, we have the chance to support the implementation of the agreement that Canada's governments came to on June 20 of this year to enhance the CPP, to give Canadians a more generous public pension that would help them retire in dignity.

I invite members to become part of this history by giving this bill their full support.

● (1740)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ability to stand to pose a question of the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, but I really wanted to pose a question of the previous speaker, the member for Yukon. I wanted to ask him what his constituents think about this additional tax, along with an additional carbon tax, along with tax credits that have been cut. It is going to be tax upon tax upon tax from the present government.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells would say if he has had consultation with the member for Yukon, whose riding is going to be severely impacted by these increased taxes, about what he is hearing from these northern communities, these remote communities, that are going to be incredibly impacted by the increased taxes.

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my friend's question. As a resident of British Columbia, he knows we have had a price on carbon for almost 10 years now. It was used to reduce personal income tax rates to the point that we have the lowest rates in the country and the strongest economy.

The amount being phased in, in the CPP enhancements, is not going to have the catastrophic effect that we would hear about from groups like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which relied on 615 of their 100,000 members to come up with that statement.

The fact is we were elected by people who saw what we were proposing and agreed with us. That is why we are here.

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a short question. The member mentioned that by doing what they are doing with the CPP, the Liberals are keeping their promise to make sure that generation X will have a better pension plan.

Was it also a Liberal promise to eliminate the dropout period in the enhancements? I never understood that promise. Many other people did not either. Could the member just comment on that?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the hon. member's question, and I cannot help but say that I agree with him.

I would like to see that remedied. I think that is the value of having debate in the House, where people can bring it up and say, "Hey, we should do something about that." This is second reading. It is going to go to committee. There is a really good opportunity for your member on that committee to recommend the kind of changes necessary to close that gap.

● (1745)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague just gave an excellent speech about the CPP and the Liberal government making changes.

In my riding, I have constituent after constituent coming into my office to thank me and thank our Liberal government for the foresight of the changes we are making to CPP. They thank us because we are making the necessary changes that are going to ensure people in the future have a safe and fair retirement. It will lift people out of poverty.

Does my colleague also have constituents and many members in his riding complimenting him on the great changes our Liberal government is making on the CPP?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes.

It brings to mind, actually, that old story about when the best time to plant an apple tree is. The first best time is 20 years ago. The second best time is now.

Had we taken this measure 20 years ago, we would not have people in desperate shape today. We are doing it now so that the future is indeed friendly.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Liberal members are talking about the CPP plan as if it is the panacea for everything, when it is an 8% increase 40 years from now.

Finance Canada has specifically said this will be bad for jobs, it will be bad for people saving, and it will be bad for small business. Could the member please comment?

Mr. Ken Hardie: Mr. Speaker, it is reasonable to suspect that this is not the only great thing that the government is going to do to enhance people's earnings, their income, the state of the economy, and the state of our social safety net in this country.

This is just but one piece. Stay tuned, there is more to come.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, it being 5:45 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

The question is as follows. Shall I dispense?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*Chair read text of the amendment to House*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1825)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 154*)

YEAS

Members

Aboultarif
Arnold
Berthold
Boucher
Brown
Cooper
Diotte

Albas
Bergen
Bezan
Brassard
Carrie
Deltell
Doherty

Government Orders

Dreeshen	Egliniski
Fast	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Poillievre	Raves
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shipley	Sorenson
Stubbs	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Watts	Waugh
Wong — 57	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Footé
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Gameau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacGregor	Malcolmson

Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Robillard
Romanado	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stetski	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid — 192

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1835)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 155)

YEAS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Angus
Arseneault	Arya
Ashton	Aubin
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Beech	Bennett
Benson	Bittle
Blaikie	Blair
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)	Boissonnault
Bossio	Bratina
Brison	Brosseau
Caesar-Chavannes	Cannings
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chen
Choquette	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhaliwal
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubé
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Erskine-Smith
Eyking	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Fonseca	Foote
Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Fry
Fuhr	Garneau
Garrison	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hajdu
Hardcastle	Hardie
Harvey	Holland
Housefather	Hussen
Hutchings	Iacono
Johns	Joly
Jones	Jordan
Jowhari	Julian
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Kwan
Lametti	Lamoureux
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Laverdière
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Lemieux	Leslie
Levitt	Lightbound
Lockhart	Long
Longfield	Ludwig
MacGregor	Malcolmson
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Mathysen	
May (Cambridge)	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McCallum	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinty
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morneau
Morrissey	Murray
Nassif	Nault
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Peschisolido	Peterson
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Quach	Qualtrough
Ramsey	Rankin
Ratansi	Robillard

Government Orders

Romanado	Rudd
Ruimy	Rusnak
Sahota	Saini
Samson	Sangha
Sansoucy	Sarai
Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
Simms	Sohi
Sorbara	Spengemann
Stetski	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tootoo	Vandal
Vandenbeld	Vaughan
Virani	Weir
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 192

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Arnold	Bergen
Berthold	Bezan
Boucher	Brassard
Brown	Carrie
Cooper	Deltell
Diotte	Doherty
Dreeshen	Eglsinski
Fast	Généreux
Genuis	Gladu
Godin	Gourde
Harder	Hoback
Kelly	Kent
Kitchen	Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Liepert	Lobb
Lukiwski	MacKenzie
Maguire	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo)	Motz
Nater	Nicholson
Poillievre	Rayes
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Saroya
Schmale	Shields
Shiple	Sorenson
Stubbs	Trost
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Viersen	Wagantall
Watts	Waugh
Wong— 57	

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:33 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS***[English]***CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT**

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC) moved that Bill C-307, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (tamper resistance and abuse deterrence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to rise in House and debate my private member's bill, Bill C-307. Let me say to all members of Parliament that many times they can go many years, even a decade, before they have a private member's bill drawn, so obviously when they do have an ability to debate their own private member's bill, it is a real honour in this place.

This is an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substance Act (tamper resistance and abuse deterrence).

The issue of prescription drugs and illicit drug use has touched every riding in this country. It is an issue that, as hon. members know, we face in the communities we represent, an issue that has ravaged some communities, destroyed families, and has taken far too many lives.

Most tragically, it has taken a disproportionate number of young people, including young indigenous Canadians, from us. Every day we open the paper we see another death, or, this past week in Winnipeg, three or four deaths.

The intent of Bill C-307 is to enable the federal Minister of Health to require prescription medicine, specifically opioids, as defined under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or the CDSA, to have abuse deterrent formulations and/or tamper-proof, tamper-resistant properties. By doing so it would make these drugs more difficult to crush, snort or inject, and reduce their potential for misuse, abuse, and diversion to our streets by criminals.

The bill will make it possible for Canada's Minister of Health to take immediate action whenever Canadians are being hurt or killed by a specific prescription drug.

We have all heard about the crisis of illicit fentanyl wreaking havoc in our communities. The Minister of Health, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and our law enforcement agencies across Canada are addressing part of the problem. However, before some people, especially our youth, abuse these dangerous, illegal drugs, they are often exposed to these chemicals that can give them a powerful and addictive high by their tampering with legitimate fentanyl or legitimate opioids, but especially legitimate fentanyl patches, or a host of other prescriptions: codeine, morphine, OxyContin and others.

Some people who abuse opioid pain relievers, for example, do so by tampering with prescription opioid products by crushing the pills and snorting, liquefying, injecting, or ingesting these crushed and altered substances. Instead of the pill being digested or dissolved and releasing its payload of pain relief into the body as intended, as most pill forms of medicine, from digestive drugs to heart medicines, are designed to safely work, the abuser gets, with an eight to 12 hour dose of pain relief, a significant euphoria or a high in as little as eight to 10 minutes or less.

Abuse-deterrent or tamper-resistant technologies are evolving fast, and these advancements in medical science are absolutely exciting. Aside from making pills harder to crush, to snort, or to inject, companies are also making pills with antagonist formulations. I am not a scientist, but these pills may contain an active ingredient like Oxycontin or hydromorphone, but also naloxone. If someone can break the protective casing, manipulating the active ingredient or the opioid within the pill, for example, it will not cause a high because the naloxone would mitigate the effect.

It is amazing some of the science that is now being used in tamper-resistant or abuse-deterrent formulations. New drugs coming to the market are also in what are called pro-drug formulations, so the only way the opioid can be released is by digestion. If the pill is manipulated beforehand, its active ingredients are encased in a way that it makes them almost impossible to extract from the formulation or from the pill.

● (1840)

Moreover, some companies are investing in technology to stop patients from pill-popping these medications. Basically, once a pill is being broken down in someone's stomach, any others with active ingredients would be rendered inert; they would not work.

Still other technologies are being developed that introduce aversive agents in the same pill as an opioid. For example, naltrexone can be combined with an active opioid so any tampering or manipulation will precipitate symptoms of withdrawal, not the intended high that the abuser would seek.

The science changes things very quickly. In the crisis we are in, we need a government that can adapt as well. I can appreciate that my colleagues may be skeptical of some of the science or see this as some type of science fiction out there. Before I really started looking at this and studying it, I had no idea. I thought that tamper resistant meant it came in a package, but it is so beyond that. It is amazing what technology, innovation, and science have done to the point where now today we should be taking advantage of it.

In fact, just south of us, the Americans are taking advantage of it. The United States FDA has now approved seven of these products, which are having a dramatic impact in reducing levels of prescription opioid abuse. As well, the FDA and other bodies have conducted independent studies to attest to this fact. Even more promising is the fact that the FDA reports that over 30 such new ADF medicines are in development by both brand and generic manufacturers.

Private Members' Business

Because the molecules for all opioids, including oxycodone, codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, and others are off patent, the competition in this area is fierce, which depresses any premiums manufacturers may want to charge. Cost is not an issue for these medications since the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance, involving all FPT governments, can aggressively bulk buy and bulk reimburse them at a cost amenable to taxpayers.

If Bill C-307 were available to be used by Canada's Minister of Health, then whenever we found that a specific drug in the opioid class and beyond was being abused through physical manipulation, the minister could ensure that this particular drug only be dispensed in an abuse-deterrent or tamper-resistant form when it is available. These technologies should be the exception and not the rule in powerful pharmaceutical products.

Passing Bill C-307 would complement the work already undertaken by the previous government, and commendably accelerated by our current government in providing guidance to manufacturers this past March on how to bring these drugs to Canada to make abuse-deterrent label claims in Canada.

While it may surprise my colleagues in the House to compliment the government of the day, this issue is about public health. It is about saving lives. It is about doing the right thing. It is too big and too important for partisanship. It is too important to be critical of the science. We should all be encouraging the government to move on this.

As I mentioned earlier, all members of Parliament know about the waves of drug abuse that are impacting Canada and many other nations. Canadians are calling on government and health authorities to take action. Bill C-307 is one answer to that call. It is an answer that would be an effective, upstream harm reduction intervention to prevent abuse in the pharmaceuticals before it can occur. It is a ready complement to other downstream measures being taken by public health authorities, first responders, addiction workers, and law enforcement. I am hopeful my colleagues will agree that Bill C-307 would provide a non-partisan and practical measure for Canadians.

All members of the House were pleased when the Minister of Health took action this past summer to further control six ingredients known to be used in the illicit drug trade. I thank her for that action. I was working on this private member's bill and I heard that she was taking action on fentanyl. Although it did not cover it to the extent that I would have liked, I commended the government for doing that.

Bill C-307, though, is a very small part of legislation that was tabled in the House by the previous government in the final days of the 41st Parliament.

• (1845)

In November 2013, the Senate committee on social affairs, science and technology issued a unanimous all-party report and recommended that Health Canada pursue abuse-deterrent formulation technologies and regulatory change.

In April 2014, the House of Commons health committee issued a unanimous report on the federal government's role in prescription drug abuse. Three of the recommendations supported tamper-resistant and abuse-deterrent formulations. In fact, the opposition Liberal Party at the time said that we did not go far enough as a

government on the issue of tamper resistance and abuse deterrence. I encourage all members to read those reports.

This is an expeditious regulatory change that can save lives.

I am aware that the current government continues to work towards a new drug strategy. We are on the eve of a national opioid summit this weekend, with many experts drawn from across Canada. I am a member that will be attending that. I commend the government again for having this summit. Yet I also believe that Bill C-307 would allow all members of Parliament to take some action together and immediately.

Bill C-307 is an opportunity for us to get behind a measure right now. We look forward to what the health minister will propose, but we do not have to wait. We can do some things right now.

I want to thank the employees of the House of Commons who help members of Parliament with private members' bills. I have had a great deal of help drawing up Bill C-307, and I am following much of their advice. The final two sections of Bill C-307 would allow the minister an appropriate amount of time to prepare the necessary regulations. I have accepted their legal advice that I have received to establish the timeframe. Apparently, it is a reasonable time period and there are precedents, but I am not a lawyer.

Outside the House, there is considerable support for abuse deterrence and tamper resistance to be applied to prescription opioids. Many companies, brand, generic, and start-up, with both the United States and Canadian roots, are in various stages of research and development on their own products.

Fifteen industry members of the Abuse Deterrent Coalition wrote to Canada's Minister of Health in support of abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistance formulations so they would be able to apply them across the entire class of opioid medications. Also, 37 of Canada's leading pain and addiction specialists have written Canada's health minister in support of abuse-deterrent formulations.

Many Canadian organizations have commented on the value of abuse-deterrent and tamper-resistant formulations. Some of them support these formulations as part of a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of prescription drug abuse, misuse, and diversion.

I am not opposed to a comprehensive approach, but every weekend when we pick up the paper and see more and more deaths, we ask ourselves what we can do right now. This bill is one of those things.

Private Members' Business

Some of those associations and groups that support this type of technology, tamper-proof and abuse-deterrent formulations are: the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Pharmacists Association, Canadian Association of Chief of Police, Canadian Public Health Association, Paramedic Association of Canada, Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, Centre of Addiction and Mental Health, Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians, Centres for Pain Management, and I could go on with the list.

The abilities of the government to regulate tamper resistance exists, to some extent, right now through a general power. However, Bill C-307 would provide a more specific power for our Minister of Health.

We are in the midst of a public health crisis when it comes to prescription and illicit drug misuse, abuse, and diversion. My time in this place, 16 years, has taught me that in the life of each Parliament, there are rare occasions when we come together to support a worthy private member's initiative. I have been encouraged in this term, as I have seen many of those happen.

I believe Bill C-307 affords us this opportunity to confront, combat, and curtail prescription opioid abuse in a meaningful way, while not impacting patients who benefit from these medicines.

Let us do the right thing, the right thing together and the right thing for our country, by supporting and passing Bill C-307.

• (1850)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all parliamentarians take this issue very seriously.

I am the representative of Winnipeg North. Just the other night three people died from a drug overdose in the beautiful community of Meadows West. This type of thing is happening all over country. We recognize that there are 12 or more individuals being treated in hospital every day, that is one of the numbers I have heard.

The Minister of Health has acknowledged this as have other ministries. The government is aggressively pursuing what we need to do as a national government, meeting with the different provinces. In fact, I believe the minister of health for Manitoba is going to be in Ottawa tomorrow to talk about this very important issue.

It really important for all us to appreciate the fact that we all recognize this is a crisis situation. Our hearts go out to those victims and their families that have endured so much as a result of overdose.

Would the member agree that it is absolutely critical we incorporate all the stakeholders to ensure we come up with a plan to address this critical issue?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, just as an aside, I saw this on my wife's Facebook account. A young girl who lives in our community put a picture on Facebook of the home where those in the member's riding were killed. She said that this was the home in which she was raised in Winnipeg.

Again, here is a beautiful young girl, almost like a second daughter to us, who is mourning these people she did not know, but that was the area, the community, and the home where she was raised.

I go back to the member's question, which is correct. On issues like this, we must work in a non-partisan way. I am pleased that the Senate committee issued a unanimous report saying that we should move towards this. I am encouraged that the House committee in the former Parliament said that we should move toward this. Even the Liberal Party said at the time that we did not go far enough and we needed to do this type of measure.

This is one small tool in the tool box. It is not going to solve the problem, and I recognize that. However, for those prescriptions, where there is abuse and misuse, let us use those tools and save the lives of young Canadians.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are molecules in the extended opioid family that we have known about for a fairly long time. They are available in generic form and are therefore relatively inexpensive. They are often used to treat cancer patients.

If the measure proposed by the bill is implemented and we require these medications to be available only in a tamper-resistant form, there could be consequences. For example, the fact that drug companies can obtain new patents for drugs that are modified to make them tamper resistant may drive up the cost of the new form of the drug.

Does my colleague have any suggestions to prevent a situation where the same basic molecule becomes much more expensive because a drug company got a new patent for a product that has been around for decades?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. When we start making these changes, is it going to drive the price way up? Are there only a few companies that have this technology? Those are all good questions.

The United States has adopted this in great measure. It is like anything else, it will initially drive up the cost between 8% and 12%. Most said that it was closer to 9.5%.

However, once the pharmaceutical companies see that there is a will of Parliament to move in this direction, many pharmaceutical companies can move on this very quickly. Like anything else, as more and more come on board, as we have heard, and I have talked to many of them, the price of this will again go down.

The member's other question was whether it would change the formulation of the drug. If the pill is changed so it cannot be crushed, will it still solve the pain people experience? The pharmaceutical companies assure us that pain relief and the active ingredient in the prescribed drug would remain constant and strong, but it could not be abused to degree it is now.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks on this piece of legislation, I would first like to take a moment to discuss the current crisis that is facing our nation.

Private Members' Business

Across this country we are facing a national emergency that has cost lives. This tragedy is something that I think all members agree is completely unacceptable and one that we need resources and initiatives to address.

Earlier today the Minister of Health, along with the Minister of Public Safety and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, met with the premier of British Columbia and her cabinet colleagues to discuss the crisis in British Columbia. The province's delegation provided parliamentarians and Canadians with a glimpse of the real human impact of this crisis. This meeting built on a trip that the Minister of Health made to Vancouver last week where she met with local first responders, the mayor, provincial ministers, and the provincial task force addressing the crisis.

How we go about addressing this crisis is incredibly important. We do not want to create potential harm or unintended effects with well-intentioned ideas. This is why any action that the federal government takes must be based on sound evidence. With this thought in mind, I would like to speak to Bill C-307, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, tamper resistance and abuse deterrence.

Insofar as the intention behind the bill is to address the opioid crisis, I share the member's concerns. The minister, I, and our government commend the member for wanting to work to address this crisis; however, while I appreciate my hon. colleague speaking about this, unfortunately our government cannot support Bill C-307.

As a brief reminder to members, in the case of pills intended to be swallowed, tamper-resistant properties could, for example, make them more difficult to be crushed or dissolved. If tamper-resistant regulations were put in place, it would mean that only tamper-resistant versions of certain drugs or classes of drugs could be sold in Canada.

I would like to make the point that we strongly support tamper-resistant products and continue to encourage pharmaceutical companies to continue to make progress and invest in this technology. We also know that any strategy to address opioids needs to be comprehensive and that there is no silver bullet to address this issue.

Our government acknowledges that making tamper-resistant products mandatory has an intuitive appeal. However, Health Canada's review of the evidence concluded that the introduction of tamper-resistant versions of one drug does not reduce the overall harm of opioid misuse. This is a concern that was also echoed by many witnesses studying the opioid crisis who appeared before the Standing Committee on Health.

These conclusions came about due to a number of factors, and the minister's decision not to move forward with these regulations at this time was not taken lightly.

I should make the point here that the minister already has the ability to do what this legislation intends, under regulation, and at this time the risks outweighs the benefits. Regardless of this legislation, if evidence changes, the Minister of Health will already have the ability to take regulatory action.

However, the evidence today points to several things that do not make it possible to support the bill. First, tamper-resistance has not been shown to prevent the most common form of misuse, which is swallowing intact tablets. Second, the small number of individuals who choose to crush or dissolve a drug are more likely to switch to non-tamper-resistant drugs, including illicit drugs, than to stop misusing drugs altogether. This is also known as the balloon effect. These people may even be at increased risk of harm or death if they switch to using street drugs such as heroin or illegal fentanyl.

Beyond the minimal impact that requiring tamper-resistance would have on opioid misuse, such regulations could also negatively impact patients who legitimately need access to these drugs. I would also stress that mandatory tamper-resistant formulations primarily benefit the patent-holder. New tamper-resistant formulations can be patented and sold at substantially higher costs than their generic equivalents. Passing regulations requiring pharmaceutical companies to only produce tamper-resistant forms of their products would increase the cost to patients and provincial governments, which in many cases pay for their prescription drugs.

● (1900)

These extra costs are estimated to run into millions of dollars if only one drug, OxyContin, is legally required to be tamper resistant. Therefore, the minimal potential benefits simply do not outweigh the risks and the costs.

I would also like to note that tamper-resistance technology is not sufficiently developed to cover the entire class of opioids, some of which come in the forms of patches, sprays, or injectable liquids.

As members can see, it simply is not in the public interest to move forward with regulations requiring drugs to have tamper-resistant properties.

This is not to say that Health Canada is not supportive of drug companies voluntarily including tamper-resistant features in their products. That is why Health Canada released a guidance document for all opioid manufacturers that will help guide them in making their products tamper resistant, should they desire to do so.

As I said earlier, over the next two days, the Minister of Health will be hosting a summit on opioids to bring together experts, patient groups, governments, and regulators to discuss the current crisis and identify actions for moving forward, building on our five-point plan announced earlier this year.

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Other actions to save lives have also been taken. We are switching the status of naloxone and improving a user-friendly nasal spray version of naloxone following an expedited review. We will also be proposing a variety of regulatory changes, including requiring both a prescription for low-dose codeine products and new warning stickers to be placed on dispensed opioids. We will be approving properly established, managed, and community-led supervised consumption sites. We will be proposing regulations to control the precursors of fentanyl. We will be allowing physicians of certain patients to apply for special access to heroin-assisted treatment under the special access program. Also we will be supporting the private member's bill, Bill C-224, the good Samaritan drug overdose act, proposed by the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, a bill that would save lives, as Bill C-224 would encourage people witnessing an overdose to call 911 by providing immunity from minor drug possession charges.

In conclusion, I would like to once again reiterate our government's support of any measures grounded in sound evidence that would help address this troubling public health crisis, and once again, I want to thank the hon. colleague for raising this issue.

As previously stated, if forthcoming evidence demonstrates that there would be a positive net benefit impact from requiring drugs to be tamper resistant, there are already existing authorities within the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to move forward with regulations.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): I am pleased to rise, Mr. Speaker, especially after the two hon. members who spoke before me.

In my question to the Conservative member who is the sponsor of the bill, I raised some of the concerns I have with this bill. However, I will support it since the change to the regulations allows Health Canada to require drugs to be resistant to tampering and abuse. This is not mandatory, but Health Canada can opt for this requirement. It is not mandatory if the effectiveness of the drug is not proven or if there is a concern that it will drive up the cost too much. However, this bill gives Health Canada the option and that is why I will support it.

The bill introduced by my colleague seeks to respond to the problem of substance abuse, mainly fentanyl, a very powerful substance compared to other drugs in the same family. Other opioid analgesics have been on the market for a long time and are generally used more than fentanyl.

As many of my colleagues know, I was a nurse. In the vast majority of cases, when doctors prescribe drugs to people at home, they prescribe Dilaudid, which is hydromorphone, or morphine, which has been in use for a long time. Fentanyl is rarely prescribed to people living at home. It is mainly used right in the hospital and is rarely prescribed elsewhere. It is typically administered by injection in a hospital setting or by skin patch for patients with cancer or terminal illness.

Other opioids are used too. One of these is Demerol, or meperidine, which has been around for a long time, but is not used

much because of its serious side effects. Another is oxycodone, which has also been associated with overdose and addiction, and codeine, a medium-strength opioid typically used to treat more moderate pain that is not severe enough for morphine.

Most of the people who are prescribed a drug go home with hydromorphone or morphine, generic versions of which are available for the reasonable price of about 40¢ to 50¢ per pill.

Long-acting tablets, on the other hand, can be much more expensive. For instance, tamper-resistant medication can easily cost between \$10 and \$20 per tablet. Forcing people to use these products could have a serious impact, given that they are much more costly. In addition, these products are often under patent protection, because the fact is, pharmaceutical companies work very hard to develop these drugs.

The most common form of tampering is crushing the drug in order to snort it or inject it. In most cases, patients with a legal prescription are not the ones doing these things, but rather people who steal the drug from patients they know. For instance, some people might raid their grandmother's medicine cabinet to see what they can get. Sadly, these people will steal from their friends and family.

● (1910)

Some measures could be introduced in terms of prescription practices, for instance, and the services offered by pharmacists. It could be a question of giving patients smaller amounts of medication. Perhaps they could be given a week's worth at a time, rather than a month. We need to find ways to ensure that smaller quantities of drugs are found in peoples' homes. This would also mean that patients would be less likely to be robbed.

We also need to educate patients about this phenomenon. They could be told not to keep their medication in plain view, for example, on the kitchen table where everyone can see it. We could try these kinds of measures.

As for skin patches, I have heard stories of people using syringes to pull out the liquid from inside fentanyl patches. It is extremely dangerous. With these kinds of practices, an overdose is almost guaranteed. That is another serious danger.

It is entirely appropriate to want drugs with tamper-resistant properties. My only fear is the higher cost for patients, especially when we are talking about terminally ill cancer patients. They should not find themselves in situations where they can no longer pay for their medications.

We could also work on doctors' prescribing habits. People could be prescribed drugs that are less likely to be stolen. For example, I believe that oxycodone should be used as a last resort when prescribing opioids. The use of this drug should be limited.

Clearly, there needs to be some soul searching if injectable drugs are being used at home, unless they are required for home palliative care, which usually does not last very long. We should perhaps limit as much as possible the use of pills at home. We could ensure that pharmacies only dispense small quantities to avoid having large quantities in people's homes and to prevent others from being tempted to take the medications after the patient's death.

We could also be more proactive when a patient dies. The pharmacy could request that the medication be returned so that it is not left in the home. That could prevent someone from searching and finding these drugs. There are several modest measures that we could put in place.

There are drugs, in pill form, that are available for a reasonable price and that limit problems. For example, there is long-acting morphine. Inside those capsules are tiny beads that are almost impossible to crush. Therefore, people cannot snort or try to inject them. This type of pill is sold at a fairly reasonable price compared to the tamper-resistant forms that can be used.

We can put several measures in place. I think that it would be worthwhile to move more and more toward tamper-resistant forms, particularly for molecules that are especially likely to be used by addicts and in cases where the molecules are already patented in their other form so to speak.

However, we must also not make it harder for patients to access medication. I think that my colleague's bill is balanced because it allows Health Canada to take action, but does not require it to do so. Health Canada would therefore have the freedom to determine whether the risks outweigh the benefits. It will have the flexibility to proceed if necessary. I believe that this approach is well balanced because it is cautious enough to provide some flexibility, which will ensure that patients are not deprived of treatment.

● (1915)

We must also give ourselves the means to act in the event that the benefits outweigh the risks.

I thank the House. I was pleased to be able to speak to this issue.
[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am truly honoured to stand today and talk about Bill C-307. I want to thank the member for Battle River—Crowfoot for allowing me to second this bill, for supporting me in terms of the debate, and for bringing forward this incredibly important issue. He did an excellent job talking about what the bill is about, what it will do, and why he has moved it forward. However, I will talk about a few areas that I do not think have been covered yet in this debate.

We have a record. Often when we hear we are number one or number two, it is something that we are very proud of. However, we are not and should not be proud of this particular record. Canada and the U.S. are the world's heaviest opioid users, with the rate of overdoses and deaths increasing dramatically. In 10 months in British Columbia alone we had 622 deaths. I wrote these notes yesterday. I had to revise that. It is now 623. This is in British Columbia alone. Of those, 322 have been related to fentanyl. Over 2,000 naloxone kits have been handed out, which is the antidote.

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Therefore, there were 2,000 potential overdoses and death might have been prevented with the use of the naloxone kits.

Back in September, I spoke in favour of the member for Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam's bill, Bill C-224, the good Samaritan drug overdose act. At that time, I talked about a young man and his wife I knew. They had both died from an overdose, leaving behind a young baby. However, I want to give another face to this crisis. I think it is important to give faces to the crisis and that it is important for the government to hear this if there is any way that it will help. I will talk about some of the evidence later, but I hope the bill will at least go to committee to get the most up-to-date evidence and to really have it looked at.

There was a young man who lived in Kamloops named Paul. I knew Paul as a very young boy. He had the cutest little smile, and he was a hockey player. I watched him grow up from someone who tottered around on skates to someone who was very skilled in the arena. He was a very fine young man. I saw Paul in September. I was at a golf tournament. I had not seen him for a long time, and I chatted with him for a while. I asked him what he was up to. He had graduated from university, he had a job with the Investors Group, he had a girlfriend, he was smiling, he was happy, and he seemed to have the world by the tail. That was in September. In October of this year there was a wedding. Paul was a groomsman at this wedding and did his duties for the day. Then he made a fatal error. He kissed his mom, and he and four friends went upstairs to the hotel room and decided to ingest some drugs. That was a fatal mistake, a silly mistake, and the wrong thing to do. The groom noticed that his friends were missing and decided to go and find out what had happened to them. He went upstairs and five of them had overdosed on fentanyl. They were unconscious. What had been a joyous occasion ended in panic, mayhem, and tragedy. There were four who lived after being given the antidote naloxone. However, Paul's mom and dad had to come and say goodbye to him. This is our neighbour.

Today, we have the premier of British Columbia, we have the health minister here, and we have this conference happening. They have said that we are the face, the whole face, of this tragedy—and people need to recognize it is a tragedy. If it has not impacted members yet, we can only hope that it does not, because in the community where I am there is Ryan's mother, there is Jordan's mother, there are way too many who have tragically made a mistake that has ended in tragedy.

I do recognize that Bill C-307 is just one tool. We have talked about its tamper resistance and abuse deterrence. It is strictly one tool in the tool box, but it is a tool that could make a difference.

● (1920)

We have to have many strategies and I noted that one of the questions from the Liberals was about the importance of an overall strategy. Absolutely, we need an overall strategy, and I hope the conference over the next two days will get us to a better place with an overall strategy.

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However, I want to point out that it did not stop the Liberals from moving forward with Bill C-224, which they recognized made sense. Again, I would suggest that it should not stop them from moving forward with Bill C-307 or at least taking it to the next step. We moved forward on naloxone, in terms of the nasal spray. We have moved forward in many ways. Just because there is a need for a comprehensive strategy does not mean that we should not move forward with this particular bill.

I heard the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health talk about the evidence and the balloon effect. To be quite frank, the evidence is actually contradictory. She talked about the worry about a balloon effect, but she did not cite references. I will follow up to see what her sources were.

The *New England Journal of Medicine*, which is a very respected publication, had a study where the new formulation decreased abuse from 35% down to 12.8%. That is one piece of evidence that needs to be taken into account.

A lot of work has happened in Australia, which has shown a significant decrease. The study focused on 606 people who had regularly misused opioids and due to the tamper-resistant and abuse-deterrent formulation, there was a significant decrease in the misuse, without the balloon effect that Liberals talked about as their reason for not supporting this legislation. The balloon effect was not there. There was not a shift, in this particular study, to using other drugs. There are a number of studies that have shown that is not an issue.

There was another study done by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales. Opioids were used 3,500 to 4,000 times a month and once they established the tamper-resistant and abuse-deterrent formulation, it went down to 500 in terms of usage.

What I would tell the Liberals is this is such an important issue and they need to look at this very carefully. They need to vote for it, at least at second reading, because when it gets to committee, they will be able to review the evidence. When the Americans made their decision, they had a lot of evidence and moved forward. The previous minister of health for the Province of Ontario regularly asked for Canada to move forward with this.

We would be missing an opportunity to review the latest evidence. Concerns have been expressed around pricing. Again, things have changed over the last couple of years. As a result of studies done by the House of Commons and the Senate, they recommended we move forward. Those studies are a couple of years old now, so it would give us the chance to review this in light of new evidence.

To sum up, this is not the be-all and end-all and I am hoping the conference tomorrow and much of the other work will help us at least get a handle on this. The tamper-resistant and abuse-deterrent formulation has a very important role to play and we should not miss this opportunity. This is for Jordan, Hardy, and Ryan. Today the premier, with one of the mothers, laid out 54 pictures for the minister to see. These are 54 of the 600-plus who have died in British Columbia in the last few years, deaths that can be prevented.

• (1925)

I support this bill. Let us check the research and evidence and send it to committee to see where we are at.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we resume debate with the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader, I will let him know that there are only about seven minutes remaining in the time allocated for private members' business this afternoon. Of course, he will have his remaining time when the House resumes debate on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I believe that my colleague was going to be replacing me. I had the good fortune of being able to ask a question. People are aware of my thoughts on this, and I will let my colleague continue.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary. I did happen to notice in my peripheral vision that the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard was on his feet. My apologies for not having that cued up.

I believe he heard the same instruction. There are about six or seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

M. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, opioids are an important issue.

[*English*]

I personally happen to know a lot about the bill, because prior to becoming a politician, I had a medical device company, and we spent a lot of time developing pain management products and pain management devices. Many times people confuse devices with pharmaceuticals. I did not do pharmaceuticals. I did devices.

In that light, I had the opportunity to travel around the world to meet pain management specialists from many countries and understand the challenges faced by people who suffer from pain. What we strove to do was give people an alternative to opioids. Specifically, when it comes to palliative care issues, there could be opioid problems where someone is going to die. This happens a lot with some types of bone cancer, for example. It can be excruciatingly painful in the last six months, and people are then in a position of spending their lives drugged up, or they could be offered alternative tools. This is something that, as electrical engineers specializing in biomedical products, we worked to develop. I am happy to say that we were very successful around the world offering people alternatives to opioids.

The danger of becoming addicted to opioids is very real, and we should be, and we are, searching for solutions. As we speak, tomorrow and the next day our minister is having meetings with stakeholders.

What often happens with these issues is that we think there is a simple solution, and it does look simple at first glance, but there are challenges. My concern is moving forward without hearing the stakeholders, without hearing from the other ministers of health, without hearing from the physicians I know, the experts, and people working with the United Nations to make pain management a universal right, the right to avoid pain. There is a lot of work being done in this area and it warrants listening to those experts before we undertake any bill.

I do not criticize the idea. In fact, the overall objective is a good one, and it is one our government takes extremely seriously: How do we help people not become addicted? If we are going to take action to stop certain people from becoming addicted, we need to make sure that we do not inadvertently push up the price or take off the market or make it difficult for people who need them to get access to these medicines. This is an important and dangerous challenge if not done right.

Addiction is a disease, and that should be understood. Many times we tend to think of the person who is addicted as being weak-willed or not having strong character, and that is incorrect. It is an addiction, and it is a problem. I stand here lucky enough not to suffer from pain, so I do not feel I am in any position to ever criticize people who inadvertently become addicted because they have been in chronic pain for a long time. I have seen that. I have had people who have undergone procedures with devices I have made and designed tell me how it has changed their lives to not live in pain.

I say that to let people know that never should we criticize a person who becomes addicted to opioids. By the same token, when we take action to help them, we need to make sure that those actions are going to give us the results we want. In life, unfortunately, we have the law of unintended consequences. We set out to do something and inadvertently cause another problem. This is why, on such an important issue, I believe that our Minister of Health is taking the proper holistic approach. I believe it is right to hear from all these experts to understand which medications are more likely to lead to addiction and which ones are not. What are the dangers involved? What type of approaches, technological and psychological, should be taken? Sometimes we tend to think that the answer is always technology. That is not always the case. Sometimes it is a combination of many things.

• (1930)

I strongly suggest that we take the time to take this holistic approach. We listen to the experts from government. We listen to the experts from the medical field. We understand the challenges, and we move forward with a comprehensive approach while ensuring that we are monitoring the situation so we do not inadvertently cause a problem that we then try to backpedal on. Unfortunately, with addiction, if we do it wrong, we might condemn more people to all sorts of problems. We might make more addicts. We might have all kinds of issues that come from that, so we need to be extremely careful as we move forward on this issue.

For this reason, I agree with our government that this bill in its present form at this time is not ready to be supported. I do not say that it is a bad idea. I actually encourage the member for the thought process, and it is wonderful that we are talking about it. However, I want to move forward intelligently and very carefully. When we are talking about someone's health, if we get it wrong, there are serious consequences.

We stand here in the House of Commons many times and talk about this and that and joke around at times. Sometimes we insult and taunt each other. I do not agree with any of that, and I do not get into it. When we talk about bills of this nature that would actually impact someone's life, I always tell people that the person could be my mother, could be their brother, or could be someone's son or

daughter. If we are cavalier about these things and we get it wrong, there are real consequences from these types of medical bills.

For this reason, I am always going to err on the side of caution and going forward intelligently and safely, because getting it wrong, I have seen. I have been in cases where patients have died from errors. This happens. We do not like to think about it. We do not like to believe it. It happens. Doctors, nurses, and patients are all human beings. They do not always get it right. In this instance, not getting it right can mean, in the worst case, death. It does happen. I have been there. I have seen it.

I strongly suggest, as we look to move forward, that we talk to everyone. Even when we do all that, it does not guarantee that we will get it right, but it would tell us that we did everything possible to get it right. That is all we can do in the end. We cannot do more than that. On these important issues, we can take the politics out of it. We can say that this is too important to play games. We play games in a lot of things, but in matters such as this, where it would impact people's lives, we take that responsibility as parliamentarians and representatives of our country extremely seriously.

That is why I am strongly suggesting that we go through the proper process and hear the experts. This is no guarantee that we will get it right, but we will have done everything possible to have done so.

• (1935)

The Deputy Speaker: Just as a note to hon. members, they may have noted that the hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard did, in fact, have pretty much his full 10 minutes. I erred just in terms of the timing of this last particular speaking slot in this first hour for the bill that was before the House. In fact, we are at the end, and the floor is clear.

We will then say that the time provided for the consideration of this item of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 30(7), the House will now proceed to the consideration of Bill C-309 under private members' business.

* * *

[*English*]

GENDER EQUALITY WEEK ACT

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.) moved that Bill C-309, An Act to establish Gender Equality Week, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to rise today to speak about my private member's bill, Bill C-309, An Act to establish Gender Equality Week.

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First and foremost, a word of thanks to my incredible team, particularly to my legislative assistant, Adrian Zita-Bennett; to the amazing team of parliamentary legislative drafters, particularly Wendy Gordon; and to all who have contributed ideas, comments, and collective views over the past months, and especially the women in Mississauga—Lakeshore and in many other parts of our country who encouraged Adrian and me to push ahead with this project.

We connected with provincial and municipal governments, ministers, indigenous women's groups, local women's shelters and organizations, such as Armagh House, and the Mississauga and area chapter of the Congress of Black Women of Canada, the LGBTQ2 community, academia, advisory committees, and individual citizens.

Bill C-309 is truly a team effort, and I am very grateful for all the ideas, questions, and suggestions that have brought it to where it is today. The story began when my friend and former schoolmate, Rachelle Bergen, walked into my constituency office last spring. Rachelle is one of the founding members of Strength in Stories, a community-based organization that draws on the power and strength of storytelling to portray the experiences of Canadian women, including indigenous women and new immigrants, where they focus on resilience and the courage to overcome obstacles.

Education and awareness are at the core of what Strength in Stories is all about.

●(1940)

[Translation]

Rachelle and I then started looking at ways we could act at the federal level to promote social and political change with respect to the status of women and gender equality in general. When I talked to her about my opportunity to introduce a private member's bill, we realized that we could spur progress by proposing the designation of a nationally recognized week during which all Canadians would be encouraged to reflect on the promotion of gender equality.

[English]

In our decision to move forward with Bill C-309, there were two specific messages that Adrian and I took on board. The first is that men need to do more of the heavy lifting when it comes to working towards equality and equity between genders. The most compelling reasons are both socio-historical and economic in nature.

The second message is that government cannot do all of the required work alone. Academia, the private sector, not for profits, community activists, and individual citizens must be close partners in this effort.

[Translation]

This bill is way overdue. My team and I were actually surprised that the legislation was not already in place. Moreover, as we learned more about this issue, we quickly realized how many problems there still are and how big some of those problems are. Poverty, violence, isolation, racism, the wage gap, unequal access to education and justice, and lack of equal opportunity in the sciences, technology, engineering, mathematics, politics, and sports are some of the biggest obstacles mentioned in the preamble to Bill C-309.

I think that we have to start by acknowledging the existence of those obstacles before we can have a constructive conversation with Canadians about how to tackle them.

[English]

Along the way, such inspiration came from my former doctoral supervisor, Anne-Marie Slaughter, who served as head of policy under former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and who now runs New America, a think tank and civic enterprise.

Anne-Marie Slaughter writes extensively on the issue of gender equity. Her works include a seminal article in the *The Atlantic* entitled, "Why Women Still Can't Have It All", followed by the book, *Unfinished Business*, in which she sets out her vision of the care economy.

Her message is simple and compelling, that we must ensure that family care is given attention in the same manner as work, and that men are expected to function in roles related to family care in the same general sense as women.

[Translation]

International organizations are also becoming increasingly interested in the issue of gender equality. The Inter-Parliamentary Union, or IPU, an international organization that brings parliaments together, had its 135th annual assembly in Geneva last month, where it unanimously adopted a resolution entitled "The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference: Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective".

●(1945)

Among the 32 paragraphs of the preamble, article 3 of the resolution states:

3. Calls on men and women parliamentarians to work together and to take joint initiatives in parliament to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women at all levels of policy-making processes and decision-making positions;

At the IPU assembly, I was invited to take part in a gender-balanced debate on gender equality in politics, and I used that as an opportunity to tell my counterparts about Canada's new parliamentary code of conduct and the process for developing Bill C-309. Basically, the *raison d'être* for gender equality and equity as well as the demand for collective action are now crossing national borders without any problem.

[English]

Through its global gender gap index, the World Economic Forum has, since 2006, published annual reports to capture the full scope of gender-based disparities and efforts to address them, particularly in the areas of health, educational attainment, economic opportunities and participation, and political empowerment.

According to its 2016 report released just last month, Canada is ranked 35th out of 144 participating countries, nestled in between the likes of Luxembourg and Cape Verde, but it is ranked highest in North America.

We as Canadians must recognize that we can do much more to close gender-based disparities and gaps that exist. We must recognize that the wage gap between women and men, as the 2005 Royal Bank report highlighted, has caused up to \$126 billion in lost income potential for Canadian women each year.

We must also recognize, as a 2015 RCMP report outlined, that indigenous women make up just over 4% of our population, yet account for 16% of female homicides and 11% of missing Canadian women.

In addition to the problem of gender-based violence, we must recognize that Canadian women need and deserve better health outcomes. Gender equality week could raise much awareness of the work that lies ahead.

We see elsewhere just how increasingly untenable and unacceptable it is to allow current gender-based gaps to persist. Women in countries such as France and Iceland have recently made international headlines for their bold action to protest the existing wage gap in their respective countries. In the coming days and months we may well see similar protests in some of the Scandinavian countries.

There is a clear call to action for all of us, particularly men, to do more to ensure fair, just, and positive outcomes for everyone. That is why I am so proud that our current government under the leadership of our Prime Minister has been proactive in its commitment to do more to ensure a gender equal Canada. The attainment of gender parity in cabinet sent a clear message, not just to Canadians, but to people around the world, that anyone, regardless of gender, should have access to the opportunity to maximize her or his individual potential.

Indeed, the World Economic Forum has also acknowledged in its recent report that this measure “would clearly boost Canada’s ranking” in future reports, as it helps the empowerment of Canadian women.

Along with the Minister of Status of Women’s work to strengthen implementation of gender-based analysis across federal departments and to develop a federal strategy against gender-based violence, the federal government is taking critical steps to advance gender equality. Through its emphasis on fostering local community based dialogue on the challenges we face, gender equality week can serve to strengthen current federal initiatives in communities across our great country.

Our Prime Minister has repeatedly emphasized that reconciliation with our indigenous communities is a key aspect of his and our government’s agenda, which is why the launching of the public inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls was so significant.

I hope that gender equality week will also raise awareness on the prevalence of gender-based violence and inadequate health outcomes for indigenous women in Canada. The conversations that my team and I had over the spring and summer with indigenous groups as we developed the bill underscored that gender equality week could function effectively toward this end.

I envision gender equality week as a uniquely Canadian platform through which additional momentum for social change can be

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generated. Some of my colleagues may wonder, quite appropriately, what exactly an annual gender equality week would look like. As elected representatives in our respective communities, we as parliamentarians will be able to use this designated week to build and strengthen relationships with community advocates and organizers, with students, with directors of women’s shelters, indigenous leaders, corporate executives, researchers and many others who take this issue seriously and are willing to work hard toward a more inclusive society.

Most importantly, gender equality week can inspire all Canadians—girls, boys, men, women, and those of minority gender identity and expression—to foster and participate in an ongoing constructive dialogue on how to best tackle and solve such challenges, including the wage gap between women and men; gender-based violence against women, particularly indigenous women; the lack of equitable access by women to legal recourse in cases of abuse; the barriers inhibiting women from attaining careers in the STEM fields, senior management roles, or representation on various elected bodies; and the obstacles faced by women who are newcomers to Canada in terms of employment, language, training, and professional accreditation. For Canadians of minority gender identity and expression, these challenges often present themselves in an even more profound manner.

My bill encourages federal, provincial, municipal, and indigenous governments; not-for-profits; academia; indigenous communities and organizations; the private sector; sports organizations; first responders; our armed forces; the media; and civil society at large to participate in an ongoing conversation, and then, during gender equality week, raise collective awareness of these challenges and identify constructive solutions.

This effort could take the form of community town halls and debates, research proposals, plays, television and social media reports, fundraising initiatives, marches, art and music, and many other forms of advocacy. In other words, gender equality week would create an opportunity for Canadians to become engaged in and champion the issue of gender equality in as many different ways as are reflected in the needs and aspirations of our local communities, and thereby strengthen national awareness of existing inequalities.

There will truly be room for everyone: children, students, established professionals, new Canadians, and seniors. There will be some who are going to argue that we do not really need gender equality week, and others who may claim that it does not go far enough.

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• (1950)

[Translation]

Very few people will deny the very real challenges facing our society, such as gender-based violence, including violence against indigenous women, or the obstacles faced by women in predominantly male occupations, including our armed forces, and police and fire services. There is still discrimination. Those of minority gender identity and expression face challenges every day. Older women feel isolated. Others bear the brunt of the wage gap's social and economic impact. We need to do more for these individuals, for these Canadians. Gender equality week will give us the opportunity to do more.

[English]

Above all, gender equality week would advance inclusiveness from coast to coast to coast in this great country. Canada is already known around the world for its diversity, for its protection of individual and collective rights and freedoms, and for its tolerance. We take great pride in not merely accepting but appreciating and celebrating the multitude of different cultures, ethnicities, perspectives, and approaches of our fellow Canadians. We hold ourselves to a higher standard in the treatment of others, and we are resolute in our belief that better is always possible. Therefore, we know that more work does indeed remain ahead of us.

It is my hope that as it moves forward, Bill C-309, an act to establish gender equality week, will inspire members of the House and all Canadians to do more, to engage in our local communities on the challenges we know to exist, and to work together to achieve true gender equality across our country.

[Translation]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for introducing his bill and for his speech in the House today.

[English]

I think this is an interesting and great idea. It is important that we promote awareness. However, this seems to be more of a celebratory piece of legislation, and I think that what we need is something concrete.

We know that 12 years ago we had the pay equity task force that submitted a report. About 12 years ago, there was a report by the standing committee requesting that we move forward on proactive pay equity. That was in 2005.

I wonder if my colleague who has presented this legislation would lobby his government to move pay equity legislation in the House of Commons by the end of 2016 so we can put an end to this discrimination for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for that very important question.

[English]

The issue of pay equity is indeed probably the elephant in the room in addition to the issue of gender-based violence. Pay equity is as much an economic issue as it is a socio-historical issue.

When my colleague says that the bill is celebratory, I would like to just reposition that. The bill was aimed, specifically, at being not celebratory but evocative of the concrete challenges that we face today in Canada. If my colleagues takes a look at the preambles, they actually outline, in quite frank language and in quite a level of detail, all those things we need to overcome.

What the bill hopes to do, instead of just being government-centric in terms of the efforts to champion gender equality and pay equity, is to engage civil society. This is not something government can do alone. There are culture changes that are required, particularly in the corporate sector and in those sectors that are traditionally male dominated.

We hope to get Canadians to our side. I very much agree with the member that pay equity is a fundamental issue.

• (1955)

Ms. Pam Damoff (Oakville North—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for his advocacy and commitment to gender equality and for his vision to bring forward this private member's bill.

I would love it if we had 52 weeks a year that were gender-equality weeks. However, it is a wonderful initiative to bring this forward so we do have a week where we can raise awareness about some of the issues we need to address in our society.

Having worked in investment banking, which was a non-traditional career, it is very important for us to encourage young women and girls to not only pursue but also stay in some of these more non-traditional careers.

I am very proud, as vice-chair of the status of women committee, our committee is embarking upon a study on the economic empowerment of women.

Could the hon. member speak to not only this wonderful initiative to recognize the importance of gender equality, but also the economic benefits of gender equality in our society?

Mr. Sven Spengemann: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend and hon. colleague, the member for Oakville North—Burlington, for her advocacy. I am very proud of the fact that she seconded the bill at first reading. I am grateful to her.

The economic argument is incredibly powerful. In fact, just last week, Christine Lagarde, who is the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said, and I am quoting her loosely, that equal pay and equal economic opportunity for women and men was an economic no-brainer. The last part really is her language. She said that it was good for growth, it was good for diversification of the economy, it was good for reducing inequality and, from a micro point of view, it was also good for the bottom line of companies.

That really is the way we can bring men, who traditionally have dominated the sector that my hon. colleague was part of, into the equation. We can look to other institutions, like UBS management and the McKinsey Global Institute. If we look at this globally, the economic loss or, depending upon which way we look at it, economic output gain that would increase if we had gender-equality pay equity tomorrow would be in the trillions of dollars, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$10 trillion.

In an economic environment globally where growth is hard to come by, this is an issue that we should pursue from an economic lens.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for bringing forward Bill C-309, the bill on gender equality week. I want to say at the outset that I am absolutely and fundamentally opposed to discrimination on the basis of gender, and so I will be supporting this legislation.

The preamble in the bill is fairly long, but it lists a lot about the current state of our nation in terms of what women are facing. Today I want to focus on three of those areas: first, the violence that women are experiencing; second, poverty; and third, the continued discrimination that women face in Canada.

I am the chair of the status of women committee. Our committee is currently undertaking a study that looks at violence against women and young girls. We have heard absolutely horrific testimony, and the statistics that have come our way are really horrifying. We studied date rape on campuses in Canada. At campuses across our country, 29% of young women are sexually assaulted in the first eight weeks that they are at university. This is horrific. This is totally unacceptable. When we delved into the reasons for that, it was very disturbing to hear that among men ages 18 to 24, one-fifth of them think it is okay to force sex on a woman. This happening in our country today and at this time just shows the state of where we are at.

We heard testimony as well that, right here in Ottawa, 40% of women who show up to complain of sexual assault are turned away at the police station without even filing a report. That is unbelievable. Of the 60% who do file a report, 5% of them actually go to trial, and of those maybe 1% are successful. The penalties applied are measured in months, while the victims suffer for years.

The state of the nation in Canada in terms of violence against women and young girls is totally unacceptable.

The member talked about indigenous women. They are even more at risk of violence, and this is a huge issue. I really would encourage the government to move on this. With respect to the inquisition into murdered and missing aboriginal women that is going on, \$14 million has been spent in the pre-consult and there will be another two years of consulting at a cost of \$54 million, and there has been no action. We really need to move. We understand the issue. There are many reports with recommendations that we could start on. I would like to see action as well as consultation.

Another very vulnerable group is immigrant women. We did have testimony as well about women who come from South Asia and various other countries. Not only do they face violence but they face

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language barriers and all kinds of other issues, leaving them very vulnerable and in serious need of help.

We also heard about transgender people and the huge amount of violence that they are experiencing. We need to improve in this area. We need to get better quickly.

Looking at some of the statistics, women are four times more likely to be victims of intimate partner homicide, and half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since they were 16 years of age. Two-thirds of Canadians say they have personally known at least one woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse, and up to 80% of the perpetrators are men.

Gender inequality exists at all levels of our lives. From personal interactions to workplace practices, women are systematically on a different playing field.

The second thing I want to talk about has to do with poverty. We have heard people speak today about the wage gap that exists. I was fortunate enough to be on the pay equity committee that studied this issue, the special committee that was put together this last term. How disturbing it was to hear witness after witness before committee say that in 2004 the Bilson report was written and it was a very fulsome report, and to put it into effect would be the right thing to do.

Twelve years later, here we are, and women still make 73¢ for every dollar that men make. Canada is ranked 80th in the world. This is totally unacceptable for a country like Canada that is supposed to be the best country in the world. We need to do more.

● (2000)

I heard the member refer to the under-representation in science, technology, engineering, and math. I am passionate on this issue. I am always talking about women in engineering and the difficulties I faced personally. There were 13% women when I began and it is not much better now, maybe 25%, depending on the field. Therefore, there still is a wage gap, even in that high-paying field.

There are also barriers to promotions. The old boys' club is still alive and well. We have heard reference to the glass ceiling. These things are absolutely still true in our country. There are barriers to women being on boards. We saw an article in the paper just recently saying that although the federal government has done a fairly good job getting to gender parity, the crown corporations are still at 34% representation. We need to see activities happen there.

As for women in politics, I am very pleased to see 26% women in the House. The women in the House are bringing harmony, intelligence, and some great things, but I would like to see that number come to gender parity and gender equality. I know the minister has supported Equal Voice with an initiative to try to promote getting more women as candidates so we can have more women in the House. That is good.

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We need to recognize that in our country there are people suffering in poverty, and disproportionately many of them are women. We are talking about elderly widows, single moms, and transgendered people. There are a number of demographics that are really suffering, and it is discriminatory. They have trouble getting a job. They have precarious work. In many cases, they did not work through their choice, and now their husbands have passed away, and there they are in poverty.

To get over poverty is a complex issue, but education is one of the keys. Mental health and getting over addictions is another key. Having well-paying jobs to go to is another key. There are lots of activities we can do to try to address the poverty issues we face in the country.

Gender equality week would bring women's poverty to the forefront. In Canada, more than 1.5 million women are living on low incomes. The Canadian Women's Association measures that 16% of single senior women, 28% of visible minority women, 33% of women with disabilities, and 37% of first nations women live in poverty. We need to do something about that.

Statistics Canada concluded that women spend more time on the care of children and the house than men. They also spend double the number of hours on child care, 30% more hours doing domestic work, and 50% more hours caring for seniors. We have talked about the wage gap. We need to do something to lift these women out of poverty and to address the continued discrimination that women feel in the country.

We heard testimony about the rape culture that exists. They described a rape pyramid, where at the top we see violence against women in all forms, but at the bottom of the pyramid we see all kinds of behaviours that women in our country are experiencing on a daily basis. Catcalling, harassment on the street, slut shaming, victim blaming, and all these things are happening and are commonplace. We are very normalized to them. We need to raise the bar on those. That is why I am very supportive of anything we can do to bring awareness to the issue of the problem we have with gender inequality in the country and the discrimination that people are facing.

There are lots of different types of events that can be done. Some members were on the Hill to participate in the Hope in High Heels event, which I did not participate in because I cannot walk in high heels. However, my staff was able to do it, and it certainly was a great event. There was lighting up the tower this week, on Tuesday, to stand in solidarity with women who have been victims of violence and abuse. These are all good things.

Gender equality week would be a great way to raise that awareness. It would happen in the middle of women's history month, where we have the day of the person, and the day of the girl. Why not gender equality week?

It is my pleasure to support Bill C-309, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it today.

• (2005)

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we definitely need gender equality. There is no question. Canadian women earn only 74¢ for every dollar earned by men.

Domestic and sexual violence cost our economy over \$12 billion per year. There are 1.4 million women who report, and few report, having experienced forms of sexual violence in the last five years. One in four women in their lifetime will be affected by gender-based violence. Canada ranks 60th in the world when it comes to gender parity in our parliaments. We are behind Kazakhstan, South Sudan, and Iraq. Then we just had this very high-profile loss with the U.S. election of president where a lot of us are saying that a highly qualified woman lost to an under-qualified man. It is important to raise the profile of the contribution that Canadian women have made to the growth, development, and character of our country. There is no question.

Already this year, we have women on bank notes, we have a gender-balanced cabinet, and we have this bill being debated today to establish gender equality week. None of that makes a whit of difference in the lives of Canadian women on the ground. I suggest respectfully that the best way to honour women is by legislating real change on gender equality. After more than a year in power, the current Liberal government has failed to translate feminist rhetoric into real change, and it is far beyond time to put words into action.

New Democrats have a great list of actions that could be taken to make a difference in the lives of women and girls.

Number one on the list of actions is pay equity legislation now. Women make 74¢ on the dollar. Aboriginal women with a university degree earn 33% less, so the gap increases the more educated indigenous women are. Although the legislation was written 12 years ago when the previous Liberal government was in power, the government now says its target is late 2018. There is no excuse for that. Not a single witness recommended that kind of time lag. Women have waited 40 years for pay equity, and they should not have to wait any longer.

Another action is more women in Parliament. There are only 26% in this House. At this rate, it is going to take us 89 years to reach gender parity in Parliament. Because the Liberal government voted down the candidate gender equity act last month, which would have promoted a gender-balanced Parliament, we think that the government should introduce its own measure to actually get more women in these seats. Members of Parliament who voted against the candidate gender equity act include the sponsor of this bill and the Minister of Status of Women.

We want an expanded strategy to end violence against women. We still do not have a national plan of action to promote the protection of women and girls despite the commitment made to the United Nations in 1995. Since then, many countries have adopted a national action plan. They include Belgium, Finland, France, and the United Kingdom. Australia is on its fourth plan, kind of breaking some stereotypes about Australia's cowboy mentality. Here in Canada, rates of violence against women have remained largely unchanged over 20 years, and the absence of a national action plan is resulting in fragmented approaches across the provinces and territories. We want the action plan scope that the minister is now undertaking to be expanded to include service delivery in areas of provincial responsibility. That is what a national plan is. That would mean that it includes education, policing, and the justice system, all key services that can help end violence against women.

We want well-funded women's domestic violence shelters. On any given day, more than 4,000 women and over 2,000 children reside in a domestic violence shelter, every day. More than 300 women and children are turned away from shelters on any given day. Three out of four cannot be accommodated, and those are the ones who come forward looking for help. There has been a 24% increase in phone calls at the Haven Society in my riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith. More and more women are asking for help. We need expanded services to be able to accommodate them. We are pushing hard for federal funding to support domestic violence shelter operations, and we note that in the mid-1990s the Chrétien government cut that operational funding, which was characterized as the most Draconian spending cuts in federal history.

• (2010)

New Democrats want domestic violence shelters for first nations, Métis, and Inuit women. According to Amnesty International, “The scale and severity of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada... constitutes a national human rights crisis.” Some 70% of Inuit communities do not have access to any domestic violence shelters.

Indigenous women face a violence rate of three times that of the rest of the Canadian population, and yet the Liberal budget funded only five new shelters on reserve over the next five years. That would result in a total of just 46 violence against women shelters on reserve across the country, and that is by 2022, well after the government's term is over. We also have to look much more thoughtfully at violence against women shelters off reserve.

Gender-based analysis is something that we need legislated in Canada. Gender equality can be exacerbated by policies and spending decisions if we do not have a legislated lense through which these kinds of decisions are made. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women, back in June, recommended that legislation be tabled in the House by June 2017. New Democrats recommended that it be tabled next month, because we need to get ahead of all of the policy changes and infrastructure spending that is about to roll out. However, the government's response was no timeline whatsoever. It thinks that in 2018 it might have a reaction to whether we need legislation at all. Therefore, there is no timetable for legislation.

We need child care in this country, high-quality, affordable child care, that helps women seek employment, improves their job skills

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and careers, and eases family financial stress. I was delighted to see this week that Premier Notley, the New Democrat premier in Alberta, is creating 1,000 new child care spaces and 230 new child care jobs. As Stephen Lewis has famously said, feminism is a vacant construct without a national child care system.

New Democrats want more federal appointments of women to crown corporations. Only 27% of members of boards of directors of federal crown corporations are women. This is a power that the government has to change, right now. The Canadian Dairy Commission, for example, has no women on it whatsoever. The Bank of Canada and CMHC have mostly male board members. In my community, the Nanaimo Port Authority has a majority of women on its board, and it is a fantastic board.

The federal government made commitments to real change in the mandate letter for the Minister of Status of Women, but no action has been taken yet. If none is taken, then I will encourage the government to support my bill, Bill C-220, which would move, over the next six years, gender parity on federal crown corporation boards and commissions.

There should be free prescription birth control. The costs of family planning fall disproportionately to women, and yet it is increasingly unaffordable. Liberals should work with the provinces to provide a framework for the full cost of prescription contraceptives to be covered.

Finally, the NDP wants the government to act on its fundamental responsibility by restoring the funding cut by the Conservative government to all of the under-funded social service organizations that support women, girls, and children in our communities. This is especially urgent for women with disabilities, women who are suffering poverty, aboriginal women, and women living in rural and remote areas.

In summary, we should take real action to achieve gender equality. We believe that, when women are no longer disproportionately affected by violence, inequality, and poverty, then we could legitimately have a celebratory week. I am going to vote in support of this bill, but New Democrats are going to propose at committee that this bill not enter into force before the government implements proactive pay equity legislation and gender-based analysis legislation.

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After more than a year in power, the Trudeau government has failed to translate feminist intention into real change. It is far beyond time to put words into action. Together, let us create a gender equality week once we have something to celebrate.

● (2015)

The Deputy Speaker: I will give just a gentle reminder to hon. members that, when referring to the Prime Minister in relation to his government, they should not use his family or given name, but his title or his riding.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women.

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today to Bill C-309, An Act to Establish Gender Equality Week. I would like to begin by thanking the member for Mississauga—Lakeshore for introducing Bill C-309, which would designate a gender equality week in Canada.

The bill would recognize aspects of Canadian society where women have not yet achieved equality, promote awareness of these inequalities, and educate Canadians on opportunities to advance these issues. Anything we can do as a society to increase opportunities for women and girls and bring gender parity closer to reality makes sense.

Why is more action needed to advance equality? Consider some of the challenges our country still faces. Women continue to advance in many sectors of the economy, yet a woman working full-time makes 73.5¢ for every dollar a man makes. A record number of 88 women were elected to Parliament in 2015. This represents an increase of only 1% from the last election in 2011, with women now holding 26% of the seats here, but we have much more work to do to achieve gender parity. The more recent statistics from the Canadian Board Diversity Council 2015 report card indicates that women hold 19.5% of board seats at Fortune 500 companies.

These persistent inequalities underscore how difficult it is to make change happen. Therefore, as we prepare to mark next year the 150 years since our nation's founding, we need to stay focused on the fact that the fight for equality is far from over. Designating a gender equality week would serve to remind everyone of this very, very important fact.

● (2020)

[*Translation*]

Our support for Bill C-309 also underscores the government's commitment to promoting gender equality and building an inclusive and prosperous society. I am proud to say that the Prime Minister is committed to leading by example on this priority. He appointed the first gender-balanced cabinet in the history of Canada and the first-ever minister fully dedicated to gender equality, the Minister of Status of Women.

The Prime Minister's commitment has fuelled the dialogue on equality and feminism across the country and around the world. We are adopting strong measures to promote equality. Gender-based violence continues to be a barrier to women and girls achieving their full potential, and some groups of Canadian women are more at risk.

In order to come up with solutions to the unacceptable level of violence, we launched a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. The Minister of Status of Women also brought together key stakeholders nationwide to develop a federal strategy addressing gender-based violence.

During the consultations held in Canada last summer, we gathered the views of gender diverse Canadians. Many told personal stories of the violence and discrimination they endure.

[*English*]

Our government is committed to recognizing the rights of gender diverse Canadians and eliminating the barriers that can leave them vulnerable to violence and economic marginalization. We are committed to advancing explicit protections related to gender identity and gender expression within the Canadian Human Rights Act. Gender equality week would also serve to highlight the issues faced by transgender and gender non-conforming Canadians.

Our government also recognizes that increasing women's participation in leadership and decision-making roles is critical to building a healthy and inclusive society. For example, we have put in place a new merit-based, open, and transparent approach to selecting high-quality candidates for some 4,000 governor in council and ministerial appointments to commissions, boards, crown corporations, agencies, and tribunals across the country.

Last October, the Minister of Status of Women announced funding of over \$8 million for approximately 45 community organizations to carry out a dozen projects. These projects will foster greater inclusion and increase women's participation and leadership in the democratic and public life of the country.

[*Translation*]

Last September, our government introduced Bill C-25 to update in various ways the federal framework legislation on corporate governance. The main objective is to better target the representation of women on corporate boards and in senior management by using the comply or explain approach.

In November, as part of the government's plan to advance the middle class, the Minister of Finance stated that budget 2017 and all subsequent budgets will be subject to more rigorous analysis by carrying out and publishing a gender-based analysis of the impact of budget measures. That is a positive step that will result in inclusive budgets for Canada.

To help diminish the gender wage gap, the government is currently developing a framework on early learning and child care, promoting a Canadian poverty reduction strategy, launching the new Canada child benefit, and enhancing the use of gender-based analysis to ensure that any decisions concerning policy, programs, and legislation will advance gender equality.

• (2025)

[English]

Here are some further actions we have taken that will support many women in our country.

Budget 2016 announced changes to old age security and an increase in the guaranteed income supplement, a monthly non-taxable benefit for pension recipients who have a low income. We know that low-income seniors are most likely to be women living alone. We have also introduced legislation to enhance the Canada pension plan, which aims to reduce the share of families at risk of not having enough for retirement. It also includes enhancements to disability and survivor benefits. We believe these two actions in particular will improve the situation of Canadian families, help women, and get us closer to gender equality.

We are taking these bold actions for one simple reason: Canadians believe in equality, a fact that I believe is borne out by the debate we are having today on Bill C-309.

In October we celebrated Women's History Month, which includes important commemorative dates such as International Day of the Girl and Persons Day. To ensure that gender equality week is recognized and celebrated, a discussion about when such a week should occur would be beneficial. However, the reality is that we cannot rest as a society until all women and girls have equal opportunities to succeed and reach their full potential.

[Translation]

That is why I am pleased to support the bill before the House today, which would establish gender equality week in Canada.

[English]

That is why we are supporting this bill.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, gender equality is an extremely important issue for me. It should be one of our primary concerns, and we should take practical measures to do more in this area. I will therefore support this bill because it deals with an issue that is dear to me.

Then again, this bill, like other similar bills that talk about awareness, will not result in any real action. It is all well and good to dedicate days, weeks, or months to certain causes, but the fact remains that on every International Women's Day there are women who are sexually assaulted or beaten and on every International Day of the Girl there are girls somewhere in the world who are forced to marry men who are three or four times their age.

Talking about these issues is important, but so is taking action. Action is what allows us to forge ahead. Unfortunately, the government has missed opportunities to take meaningful action. My colleague from British Columbia introduced a bill to increase the number of female MPs by imposing financial penalties on parties that did not run enough female candidates. That would have been a practical way to get more women in Parliament.

However, the government chose not to support that bill and, worse still, did not even let it go to committee. It voted against a bill on an important issue that would have helped us achieve gender equality,

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which is shameful enough, but it did not even give the bill a chance to go to committee, where experts could have spoken to its value and suggested improvements that would have made it acceptable to everyone. By doing that, the government sent the message that it was not even worth the trouble of trying to come up with something that works for everyone. That is the saddest part.

For a member of the governing party to remain silent rather than tell his colleagues that the bill is worth looking at in committee is deplorable. Maybe he just does not have enough clout in his caucus. Either way, it is a little sad.

The Prime Minister talked about his balanced cabinet. However, among the six senior ministers, which include foreign affairs, national defence, finance, treasury board, and justice, although I am missing one, there is only one woman, the Minister of Justice. He could have appointed three women and three men to lead those key departments, but he did not ensure that balance from the beginning.

In addition, in a cabinet made up of 30 ministers, the five minister of state positions, which involve tasks of a lesser magnitude and no budget to manage, are all filled by women. Seats could have been a little more evenly distributed, but they were not. There is still work to be done.

• (2030)

Gender equality is not only about having the same number of men and women in one place. If there are 30 employees at a company, and there are 15 women and 15 men, that does not automatically mean equality. If the 15 men are executives and the 15 women sweep the floor, that is not equality. We have to go beyond the numbers. When it comes to gender, we must always choose measures that increase equality.

Year after year, women continue to be the ones to perform the majority of household chores. Now they often work, too, but still take care of the house and the children and manage everyone's schedules. They basically have two full-time jobs. This causes a great deal of stress, and yet they get very little support.

For example, we still do not have an accessible child care program for women. Sometimes friends help us find child care at a reasonable cost that meets our needs. Other times, however, that is not the case at all. Just today on the bus, I was talking about the daycare that I found for my daughter. I was saying that I was fortunate because, in my situation, I cannot use public child care and I had managed to find a private facility that charges \$25 a day. A woman on the bus approached me and asked where this day care was located because she pays twice as much for her child. What this actually means is that women sometimes earn less than minimum wage when we calculate all the expenses they must incur, especially for their children, such as child care. Thus, there really is a lot to do.

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Let us talk about access to contraception. Canada does not have universal pharmacare. In Quebec, we are fortunate to have a drug plan that covers those without private insurance. Unfortunately, people are sometimes forced to take the private insurance offered by their employer, which is very expensive, even more so than government insurance. I will not go into the details. As I was saying, in Quebec, most people have the benefit of some type of prescription drug coverage, or at least they have that option. That is not the case in other provinces.

When it comes to contraception, each woman should choose what is most appropriate for her. Quite often, contraception is the sole responsibility of the woman. We are supposed to have an egalitarian society; however, in terms of the couple, this is more often than not the responsibility of the woman. The exception is Quebec, where vasectomies are most popular. Elsewhere, women bear the responsibility for contraception.

Some devices might be clinically more appropriate for certain women, but they simply cannot afford them. A hormonal IUD costs roughly \$300. Many women do not have an extra \$300. The IUD lasts five years, but there is still no payment plan available for making monthly payments for an IUD. For many women who cannot afford anything else, the only option ends up being contraception that is contraindicated for them.

A lot of work remains to be done when it comes to violence. Tangible measures can be taken, including in the justice system, to make the process easier for victims, to give them the courage to report, all in the hopes of creating a more egalitarian society. We keep taking baby steps when it comes to the status of women. We are treading water.

Unfortunately, although I intend to support my colleague's bill, gender equality week is not a tangible measure that is going to fix these problems. Maybe we will talk about them, but I think we have already done that. In the absence of other, complementary measures, this bill will not really get us anywhere.

● (2035)

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.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 26, I asked the Minister of Health to explain why the federal government intended to move ahead with the \$36 billion in cuts imposed by Stephen Harper.

Two days later, on September 28, the Minister of Health officially announced that the health transfer increases would be cut by half from 6% to 3% a year. The Liberals unilaterally decided to cut the health transfer increases.

The government is applying the cuts proposed by the Conservatives. It likely does not realize that, by so doing, it is jeopardizing the future of the provinces' health care systems.

What is more, it is people who are sick who are going to pay for the government's decision to slash health transfers. After promising Canadians that they would invest billions of dollars in health care, the Liberals are instead moving forward with the Conservative cuts and imposing conditions on the health transfers. The health care system will lose \$1.1 billion in the first year alone and \$36 billion in the long term as a result of this decision. We call that a broken promise.

Let us not forget that, during the election campaign, the Prime Minister sent the following message to his Quebec counterpart, the Premier of Quebec:

Unlike Mr. Harper, I do not intend to deal with [transfers] unilaterally. My party is aware of the challenges that increasing health care costs...represent....

I get the impression that this government does not really understand the impact of these cuts. I will explain that impact. The cuts mean longer wait times, fewer doctors and fewer nurses for people. They will open the door to powerful interests that want to privatize Canada's health care system. Let us not forget that the federal government covers only 20% of health care spending, and that percentage is declining.

The quality of health care that Canadian families receive should not be determined by how much money they make. That is one of our values, but it is under threat. In Quebec alone, health care costs are growing by about 5% per year. Rising costs will outpace federal transfers.

This fiscal imbalance prompted the parliamentary budget officer to paint a worrisome picture of public finances in his work on Quebec. He found that reduced federal transfers, mainly health transfers, would make the provinces non-viable, or in other words, bankrupt.

The federal government cannot continue to ignore this issue considering our aging population and the two major challenges facing the provinces when it comes to health: developing home support services and providing better mental health care.

Furthermore, the provinces expect Canada's aging population to be taken into account in the calculation of the transfer amount and they all agree on that. This is not a partisan issue; it concerns the health care provided to all Canadians.

In closing, the NDP is calling on the government to not adopt the cuts Stephen Harper had planned for this year and to negotiate in good faith with the provinces.

Can the government commit to that?

• (2040)

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address the hon. member's question regarding the Canada health transfer and health care funding. Before I begin, let me be very clear. There will be no cuts to our health care.

Roles and responsibilities for health care services are shared between provincial and territorial governments and the federal government. Provinces and territories are responsible for the design, delivery, and management of health care in their jurisdictions. For its part, the federal government sets and administers national standards for the health care system through the Canada Health Act, provides funding support for provincial and territorial health care systems, and supports the delivery of health care services to specific groups.

In 2016-17, provinces and territories will receive \$36.1 billion in cash through the Canada health transfer. Under current federal-provincial fiscal arrangements, this amount will continue to increase each year, in line with the rate of nominal GDP growth, with a minimum increase of at least 3% per year. In addition, over the next five years, provinces and territories will receive \$19 billion more in the Canada health transfer to support health care.

In addition to the Canada health transfer, our government has also committed to providing \$3 billion in targeted funding to support improved access to home care, including palliative care, as part of the health accord.

Canada is one of the world's highest spenders on health care, yet we are not achieving the kinds of results Canadians need and deserve. The health accords of the past, for all their good intentions, did not tackle the fundamental structural problems facing Canadian health care. We took the status quo and we inflated it.

We have an obligation, as the Government of Canada, to do more than simply open up the federal wallet. Canadians expect their government to have a say in how new funds are to be invested to achieve tangible improvements in health care. Our government understands that new targeted investments are needed to accelerate change. Much more can be done to ensure value for money and improve the responsiveness and sustainability of our health system.

The health accord provides a great opportunity to trigger innovative transformation in care delivery. Federal, provincial, and territorial ministers of health have already agreed on a set of shared priorities in health where change is most needed. These include home care, pharmaceuticals, mental health, innovation, and better health care for indigenous Canadians.

By working together across jurisdictions, we have a golden opportunity to start shifting the system and to address some of these priorities. Our government comes to the table ready to invest new federal money in ways that will advance transformation in health care. We must ensure that new money does not simply inflate health system costs but helps to modernize health care to deliver better care and better outcomes at an affordable cost.

In closing, our government is clearly demonstrating our commitment to the future of Canada's health care system through

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sustainable funding and by fostering partnerships that can achieve better health outcomes and quality of care for all Canadians. As a government that truly cares about Canadians, we know that better is always possible.

• (2045)

[Translation]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, when dealing with an issue as important as health, we should not be playing with words. When the promised 6% increase turns into a 3% increase, that is a reduction.

This government keeps saying that it wants to negotiate in good faith and that it is listening to the provinces. However, I do not believe that this is borne out by the facts. When the government says that it has set the priorities together with the provinces, that does not mean that it can make decisions about provincial programs. That is not how you come to an agreement about the priorities.

Is the government thinking of its citizens and voters who are going to see a substantial decline in their health care system and proposed services? This type of decision by the Liberal government threatens the universality of the health care system and access to care.

The government must abandon this policy, honour its promises, and not renege on its commitments. We must not forget that the goal is to strive to ensure the sustainability of the Canadian health care system across the country without exception.

Can the Liberal government keep the promises it made to Canadians?

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, again, let me be very clear. There will be no cuts to our health care.

Canadians expect governments to make sound investments in our health care system that will achieve measurable outcomes in terms of the accessibility, quality, and sustainability of health care. Much more can be done to improve the value for money of investments that are currently going into health care and to accelerate change that would improve the responsiveness of our health system.

Through collaborative leadership and in partnership with provinces and territories, our government can help the system evolve and innovate to better meet the needs of all Canadians. Together, federal, provincial, and territorial governments can ensure better care and outcomes at a cost that is affordable.

We have already begun to identify our shared priorities, and I look forward to our continued collaboration as we work to strengthen our health system so that all Canadians can get the care they need, when they need it, now and into the future.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a few questions of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

In October of this year, the Prime Minister announced that he would be imposing a massive carbon tax grab on Canadians. This tax, by the year 2022, will require Canadians to pay about \$50 per tonne of CO₂ emissions. That is billions of dollars coming out of the pockets of taxpayers.

The Prime Minister did this without the support of the provinces. Many of them have lamented the fact that this is absolutely the worst time to hammer Canadians with a carbon tax, given our floundering economy. Canadians will be saddled with billions of dollars of extra taxes a year. They would have the right to assume that at the very least, prior to imposing such a heavy tax burden on Canadians, the government would actually do a cost benefit impact analysis, in other words an economic impact analysis on what this tax would mean for the Canadian economy and the damage it could cause.

I was certainly pleased to hear the minister was making one of her assistant deputy ministers available for a briefing. We came to that briefing and we asked whether a full impact analysis of the carbon tax had been done. We were shocked to hear him say that not only had no cost benefit impact analysis been done, but it was the view of the assistant deputy minister and the minister herself that such an impact analysis was premature.

With that in mind, on November 1, I asked the minister in the House whether it was true that an impact analysis had not done on the carbon tax. Sadly, the minister did not answer the question and instead fell back on her bland talking points. She certainly could not provide any answers on how the national carbon tax would impact ordinary Canadians. This is what she actually said. In order to tackle climate change, a carbon tax “is also the way to grow our economy, create good jobs, and ensure a sustainable future for our children.”

Canadians will be very surprised to hear the Liberal government says that the way to grow the economy is to tax the daylights out of Canadians. Canadians will be shocked to hear that.

If the minister is so sure that additional taxes will spur economic growth, where is the government's modelling that proves that?

I have three questions for the parliamentary secretary. In the interests of transparency and open government, which is what the Prime Minister promised when he was running for election, I would ask that he please answer the questions directly.

First, is it true that the government announced its massive carbon tax grab without ever doing an impact analysis on what that tax would mean for ordinary Canadians?

Second, if that is so, could the parliamentary secretary tell us exactly how much additional government revenue is expected to be raised from the carbon tax once it is fully implemented in 2022?

Finally, could the parliamentary secretary tell the House why the government plans to raise taxes on Canadians at a time when our economy is floundering?

● (2050)

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government has consistently stated that it is committed to putting a price on carbon pollution. This is a critical aspect, although only one aspect, of driving the transition to a low carbon economy and, importantly, for the private sector, a means by which to incentivize clean investment decisions at the lowest possible cost.

It is an odd thing about our society that we charge for many good things, like fresh water, but in many areas, there is presently no charge for damaging things like air pollution. A price on carbon pollution would provide an incentive to slow carbon emissions and stimulate technological innovation. Here I would note that over 80% of Canadians already live in a jurisdiction that has an effective price on carbon.

Support for carbon pollution pricing now crosses party lines and jurisdictions. The principle, for example, has been endorsed by Preston Manning, who said:

Conservatives profess to believe in markets.... So why don't conservatives major on how to harness markets to the environmental conversation, and make that their signature contribution.

The principle has also been endorsed by others, including Mark Cameron, former adviser to Prime Minister Harper and to the new Conservative premier of Manitoba and to the leader of the Ontario Conservative Party.

Many of Canada's biggest companies are on board as active members of the international Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition, including companies like Cenovus, Teck Resources, and Suncor. Indeed, the president and CEO of Desjardins Group recently stated:

...the time has come for all the sectors of the economy to include climate change considerations into their strategic plans, to take advantage of business opportunities, to reduce risks and to meet the needs of Canadians.

RBC's senior vice-president, John Stackhouse, has stated:

A rising, Canada-wide carbon price is the most cost-effective way to reduce emissions, spur private investment and stimulate clean innovation across the economy.

In July, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change met with 23 key Canadian industry and business leaders about the path toward significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. The common theme throughout was that carbon pollution pricing is one of the most efficient ways to reduce emissions and stimulate the market to make investments in innovation and to deploy low carbon technologies.

Our government recognizes that the pricing of carbon pollution is crucial to supporting clean growth. Our government also understands the need to provide flexibility to provinces, in terms of the specific mechanism they utilize to price carbon pollution.

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Last month, our government brought forward a plan for carbon pollution pricing. This plan would provide for significant provincial flexibility, including ensuring that provinces have a choice in the form of carbon pollution pricing mechanisms they will implement and the way in which such mechanisms will address local circumstances, and ensuring that all revenues from carbon pollution mechanisms stay in the province in which they are generated to be used to reduce taxes and to invest in green technology or renewable energy.

The member opposite, like me, lives in a jurisdiction where all of the revenues raised by the provincial government from a price on carbon are returned via income tax reductions.

The economic impacts of carbon pricing would depend on the provincial-territorial design and the choice of how revenues would be used. For example, the impacts on the competitiveness of highly trade-exposed industrial sectors could be addressed while still maintaining an incentive to reduce emissions.

Our government's economic analysis suggests that the pan-Canadian approach to carbon pollution pricing itself would have a very limited impact on the Canadian economy overall. The same is true when one looks at the economy on a sector by sector basis.

Further, this government expects that our focused strategy relating to the acceleration of a clean growth economy—including a historic infrastructure program that includes the deployment of clean technologies, the development of a robust innovation agenda for Canada, and a deliberate and focused strategy for the rapid growth of the clean technology sector in Canada—would drive accelerated economic growth going forward.

As we have heard from leading figures of all political stripes, and from Canadian business, putting a price on carbon pollution is not political, but just good business.

Canadians know that after a decade of inaction and lost opportunities on the climate file, this government is taking real, concrete, and lasting actions to reduce our emissions, to grow our economy, and to create good, middle-class jobs.

• (2055)

Hon. Ed Fast: Mr. Speaker, I specifically asked the member to answer the three questions I had put to him. Not surprisingly, he has not done so.

The question was, why was an economic impact analysis not done before the Prime Minister announced the massive carbon tax on Canadians?

Here are some more questions for the member—and I do not expect answers, because these have not been forthcoming from the Liberal government.

First, has the government not taken note of the election of Donald Trump as the next president of the United States? Mr. Trump has promised that he will not be imposing any carbon pricing on the United States. In fact, he has said that he is going to reduce taxes on American companies down to 15%.

In Canada, we are raising taxes on Canadian businesses. In the United States, they are actually reducing taxes on businesses.

Therefore, where is investment going to flow? It is going to flow into the United States. Have the minister and parliamentary secretary taken that into account?

How does the Liberal government expect Canadian companies, small businesses, to compete on such a tilted playing field against Canadians businesses?

How does the parliamentary secretary square the Prime Minister's promise to create millions of jobs when he is undermining the ability of the business sector to create those very jobs?

Mr. Jonathan Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the economic analysis that has been done with respect to carbon pollution pricing shows very minimal impacts in Canada, and we expect to see accelerated growth related to the investments that we are making in the development of the clean energy and clean technology sectors in Canada.

The hon. member knows very well that it is simply not true that there is a massive tax grab going on. He comes from a province that has had a carbon price for almost 10 years now, and that is returned fully in the form of income tax reductions. If we are going to have a conversation about carbon pollution pricing in the context of a climate strategy we need to start with the facts.

The facts are that the mechanisms can be implemented by provinces and not by the federal government, which will retain none of the revenues associated with dollars that are raised associated with pollution pricing; that the provinces have the flexibility to implement them as they see fit; and that they can, as British Columbia has done, return those fully to taxpayers in the form of income tax reductions.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in this House to talk further on the devastating impacts of the Phoenix pay system. On October 4, I asked a question for the people of my riding of North Island—Powell River and too many of them are still waiting for answers. Across my riding, multiple people are struggling because they are not getting paid. In the past week alone, we have had to open four new files.

I want to share with members the stories of the constituents in my riding. I have constituents who have been told that they must wait until they can prove that they are going to default on payments to be made a priority. Constituents have not been paid because the system has incorrectly identified them as terminated or as having reduced hours, so people are showing up for work every day, doing their jobs, and not being paid because of a glitch in the system. One constituent told me that she was grateful to friends who have had the family over to feed them because they simply cannot afford enough food.

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What is most concerning is that we have had more cases come into our office, not fewer. There are some people in my riding who have not been paid in multiple months, there are some who have not been paid any of their overtime, and there are some who have not been paid in full. In fact, a constituent today came to the office and said that because of a mix-up this individual is actually being told that he or she owes money that has not yet been paid. Too many constituents in my riding, as well as people across Canada, have been left with little to no income for an extended period of time. How twisted and unethical can this get? It is embarrassing that the Canadian government is not meeting these basic obligations.

I was an employer for over eight years. If I had not paid my staff, I would have been fired by my board.

My constituents and I have many questions. I am hoping that tonight the member opposite can share with this House the reasoning for the government to ask for proof of financial default to pay its own employees. Can the member explain to me and my constituents why people are being identified as terminated while working and working well, might I add, at their jobs? Can the member opposite explain why families have to be dependent on others for their basic necessities? How broke do employees have to be to get their hard-earned compensation?

At this time, let us take a step back and look at the numbers. We know that the federal government has missed its self-imposed deadline to clear a backlog of 82,000 public service payroll cases. Further, we know that there are 22,000 unresolved cases. Here is my concern. Those numbers represent only the cases as of July. What about the cases since then, like the ones coming through my office?

People in my riding are feeling desperate and the uncertainty is creating significant stress on individuals and their families. Trying to walk through this complex process where their financial existence is always on the edge is reckless to ask of people who work so hard for our public service.

We need to know. Has there been a new backlog of cases growing since July 1, so that the government has missed its self-imposed deadline, which in itself is a fraction of the actual cases that need to be solved? Can we get a clear answer from the government? My constituents deserve an answer and they deserve it now.

• (2100)

[Translation]

Ms. Leona Alleslev (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. opposition member for her interest in this matter.

I can assure the House that we on this side of the House are just as concerned as anyone else by the performance of the Government of Canada pay system. We want to assure the House that public servants are being paid for the work that they do.

Nearly 300,000 public servants from 101 departments and agencies receive more than \$500 million in payments through the Phoenix payroll system for every pay period.

As we have already said, representatives from our department are working hard to ensure that every employee is getting paid what they are owed. Temporary satellite pay offices were set up this summer to

help resolve the pay problems while allowing the ongoing processing of regular transactions. The system is being improved and efforts are being made to streamline processes and increase efficiency.

In addition, measures have been taken to ensure that employees and managers across the public service get the information and training they need to use the Phoenix system efficiently and effectively. Compensation employees are working day and night, seven days a week, to clear the backlog and ensure that each and every Government of Canada employee is paid accurately.

[English]

To date, we have ensured that 64,000 employees have had their cases resolved. However, because many employees have multiple transactions, there remains work to do.

Currently, there are approximately 18,000 employees with some form of outstanding pay transactions remaining in the backlog. Examples of these cases are terminations that involve multiple transactions and changes to pay as a result of acting assignments. They require a fair amount of research to ensure that we are capturing proper pay amounts from those periods.

• (2105)

[Translation]

Each month, the Public Service Pay Centre in Miramichi receives a constant stream of new pay transactions to process.

As a result, the pay centre still has some 80,000 transactions in the processing queue. Usually, these transactions would be processed in accordance with the established service standards. However, right now, employees are waiting too long to be paid.

[English]

Most new pay requests are expected to be processed within 20 days, but we are only meeting our service standards 20% to 30% of the time. Because of this slowdown in processing, the number of transactions in the system has expanded, so that we now have more than two months of additional work, representing 200,000 transactions. We will progressively return to normal processing over the next few months.

We have said that there is no reason why any federal government employee should go without pay. Employees can request emergency salary advances through their own departments, and these payments can be issued within 24 to 48 hours. Anyone having difficulty receiving emergency pay should seek assistance through the online feedback form for Phoenix.

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We are working hard to address these problems, and we will do just that.

Ms. Rachel Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I just want to be absolutely clear. This is not just about my interest. This is an MP standing here fighting for her constituents' livelihood.

The reality is that the cases continue to increase. The Conservatives were wrong to imagine the federal government could effectively replace its payroll systems with off-the-shelf software from IBM. Instead, they forced through a system that was not ready. Under the Liberals, the drive to save money has left people penniless.

We know that the cost to taxpayers is over \$50 million, and thousands of workers are still not being paid properly. Many of them live in my riding. Now we learn that an extra \$6 million will go to IBM for not anticipating the result of the implementation.

Will the minister finally take responsibility and quickly fix this mess?

Ms. Leona Alleslev: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that public service pay problems are unacceptable. Our priority remains to ensure that employees get paid for the work that they have done.

We are all working hard to ensure we fix the issues and processes of all employee pay transactions as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 9:08 p.m.)

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