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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the October 24, 2016, by-election in Medicine Hat—Cardston—Warner.

This document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the fourth part of the 2016 session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and its parliamentary mission to Malta, the next country to hold the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, held in Strasbourg, France, and Valletta, Malta, from October 10 to October 19, 2016.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ACT RESPECTING THE FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN FOR VICTIMS OF CRIMINAL ACTS

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-343, An Act to establish the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Criminal Acts and to amend certain Acts.

She said: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce my bill, the act respecting the federal ombudsman for victims of criminal acts. The responsibilities of the ombudsman for victims of criminal acts have evolved since the position was created in 2007, so this bill

would make the position equal to that of the correctional investigator in terms of independence and accountable directly to Parliament.

It will henceforth be independent from the Department of Justice to ensure that the rights of victims of criminal acts, as laid out in the four pillars of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, are fully respected. Under this bill, the position of the ombudsman for victims of criminal acts will no longer be defined as a program, thus ensuring its long-term existence.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

ALGOMA CENTRAL RAILWAY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise once again in this House to table a petition to the Minister of Transport regarding the Algoma passenger train, which has not been operating for quite some time. The petition is from the riding of Sault Ste. Marie, and it is also signed by petitioners from Garden River.

It is important to note that 75% of properties in proximity to the rail line are inaccessible except by rail service. There has been a huge economic impact in the area, especially for the tourist outfitters. This also impacts first nations' access to remote regions of their traditional territories. The cancellation infringes on the federal government's obligation to have consultation with first nations. The Algoma passenger train has been the only safe, affordable, all-season way to access the Algoma wilderness rail corridor for over 100 years.

The petitioners are asking the Minister of Transport to put the Algoma passenger train back into service to ensure the mission of Transport Canada to serve the public interest through the promotion of a safe, secure, efficient, and environmentally responsible transportation system in Canada.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions today. The first is from residents within Saanich—Gulf Islands calling on the government to take action to ban the possession and sale or distribution of shark fins in Canada.

Shark finning itself has been illegal in Canada for some time, but the import of shark fins for markets within Canada is contributing to the extinction of shark species around the world.

The Budget

•(1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents more broadly of Vancouver Island who are proposing a very, I think, significant and innovative approach to protecting our green infrastructure, that is the naturally occurring watersheds that protect drinking water.

They acknowledge that the E&N land grants put under federal control land throughout Vancouver Island that could be converted to community ownership of these watersheds. The petitioners call on Parliament to work with the Province of British Columbia, first nations, municipalities, regional districts, and landowners to begin a process for the protection of community drinking-water watersheds on Vancouver Island by putting them under public ownership.

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present petition e-565, which has been duly certified. It was initiated on September 22, 2016, by Marie-Claude Michaud, the executive director of the Valcartier Family Centre. I would like to acknowledge the presence of that organization on the Hill today, to take part in the tabling of their petition.

This petition is intended for the Department of National Defence to show the importance of the families of our soldiers, our military personnel, who fight overseas every day in the defence of Canada. We also have to think about their families. Our country's family resource centres do a great job, and they should be recognized. The department must be able to give family resource centres the support they need and officially recognize them.

The petition has 1,087 signatures, and I am pleased to present it today.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment, and of the amendment to the amendment.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell (Pickering—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise in the House to speak to a unique and historic budget.

Budget 2017, "Building a Strong Middle Class", paints a clear picture of our government's priorities. These priorities include investing in skills, innovation, and infrastructure and establishing a fairer tax system. It also includes a comprehensive listing of new programs and initiatives and how they will help middle-class Canadians succeed. It provides an accurate picture of the economy and the fiscal anchors we are using to help guide us. Most importantly, it outlines an aspirational vision of what we together are building: an inclusive, diverse nation ready to excel in the economy of tomorrow with a plan that works for the middle class, our most valuable economic engine.

However, it is 2017, and it is well past time that Canada's feminist government put the full weight of our intentions in writing. Budget 2017's gender statement represents the government's first comprehensive effort in reporting on a gender-based analysis of budgetary measures. It is a real opportunity to show how we considered and prioritized outcomes for women. Hon. members in the House do not need to be convinced that this work is essential, because it is. I do not need to remind the House that the effort we are taking to promote women is not about partisanship. With this gender statement, we are challenging the basic assumption that budgets are always gender-neutral. They have not always been, and we mean to change that. In fact, we need to change it.

In this period of slow economic growth, empowering women to become economic drivers equal to men would have a real and positive effect on our economy. Let us consider the facts.

Recent history has shown that as women have become more educated and more established in the workforce, Canada's economy and the incomes of both men and women have grown. Canadian women are among the most educated in the world and make up 47% of the labour force, yet women are still paid less than men in exactly the same positions. Compared to gender wage gaps in countries similar to Canada, our record is less than stellar.

Women are also less present in certain sectors, particularly the trades. Conversely, they are overly employed in lower-paying occupations. Executive level positions are most often held by men. On company boards, women are a minority.

Most important of all, we know that women and girls are more likely than men to experience poverty, violence, and harassment. As policy-makers, it is our obligation to consider and take action to address the inherent bias that persists in these areas, not only because it makes economic sense but because it is the right thing to do.

The Budget

Well before budget 2017, our government started taking action on gender-based challenges. This included increasing the guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit to boost support for the most vulnerable seniors, who are disproportionately women. This year we go much further, with actions that focus on innovation and inclusive and sustained growth for women and all Canadians. That includes \$7 billion toward early learning and child care and over \$11.2 billion for a national housing strategy over the next 11 years.

Before I had the honour of being elected to serve in the House, I was a municipal councillor for close to a decade. I am proud that this budget continues the work of budget 2016 in providing the support communities need to grow in a sustainable and inclusive way.

Public transit and truly affordable housing are critical infrastructure for communities like Pickering and Uxbridge. Just this previous weekend, the Prime Minister announced that more than 300 projects have been approved in Ontario under the public transit infrastructure fund. Through this fund, Durham Region received over \$17.5 million in federal support. That means that residents in Pickering and Uxbridge, including students and seniors, will be better able to access important community facilities, services, and workplaces. The Prime Minister also announced that our government will invest more than \$1.8 billion in GO Transit regional express rail projects in the greater Golden Horseshoe area. These investments are shortening commute times, decreasing air pollution, and growing our economy.

I am also proud that budget 2017 will fund a national housing strategy that provides a road map for governments and housing providers across the country. This has been a major priority for our region of Durham. This strategy will focus on a renewed partnership between the government and our provincial and territorial partners while creating a new \$5-billion national housing fund to address critical housing issues and to better support vulnerable citizens.

•(1015)

In 2017 we all must do our part to combat and prevent homelessness. Budget 2017 takes an important step in addressing this issue by renewing and expanding federal investments.

One of the areas in the budget that I am most proud of is the investment and support we are providing to young people. Back home I speak with residents regularly who want the government to create the conditions for young people to succeed in our economy. Budget 2017 would see the launch of an ambitious initiative to support up to 10,000 new work integrated learning and co-op opportunities per year. This investment would help ensure more young Canadians are able to get the skills and experience they need to attain that well-paying career after they graduate.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, I was particularly proud of the budget's work on creating a fairer tax system. Canadians agree that building a fair, more inclusive society includes raising taxes on the wealthiest individuals and closing tax loopholes that disproportionately benefit the richest Canadians.

I want to thank the Minister of National Revenue for accepting all of the finance committee's recommendations on combatting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance schemes. Last year's investments in the CRA to crack down on tax evasion and avoidance

have already been working. Budget 2017's additional investment in supporting the CRA's work to crack down on tax evasion and combat tax avoidance is expected to have a revenue impact of \$2.5 billion over five years. That is expected to yield a return on investment of five to one. It is also in addition to a number of actions that strengthen the integrity of our tax system.

As I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not mention the investment of \$30 million in budget 2017 to complete, enhance, and maintain the Trans Canada Trail in partnership with provinces and individual Canadians. This is of particular importance to me because Uxbridge, a community that I am proud to represent, has been named the trail capital of Canada. This is a point of pride for my community, and I am thrilled to know that more Canadians would be able to enjoy our trails and natural scenery.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC):

Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could answer a question about the infrastructure bank. We have P3 Canada already in place that leverages public sector dollars, and \$15 billion is coming out of communities for this infrastructure bank. As this is a priority for the government and it is not going to get funded until 2028, could she explain how exactly that is a priority and why they are not using the existing system to get those infrastructure projects built?

•(1020)

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, infrastructure is truly important to our government, and to me in particular, given my background.

The key is that municipalities are being funded with infrastructure dollars. As I mentioned, Durham region in my community alone just this past week received over \$17.5 million for transit.

What is critical and important is that the infrastructure bank is new and historic as a way to invest in larger projects, projects that perhaps could not be funded through traditional means. It is important as we continue our partnerships with municipalities and local governments that we take it slowly in exploring how the infrastructure bank and this new stream of funding major projects will work. That does not mean municipalities are not receiving support from the federal government. In fact, we have made historic investments in infrastructure, something of which I am extremely proud.

The Budget

[Translation]

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, softwood lumber will be subject to a surtax as of April 24. Since September 2016, we have been asking the government to introduce loan guarantees. We really need to have a plan B to protect our forestry industry. The current situation is serious. The Union des municipalités du Québec asked for loan guarantees, as did Quebec forestry associations and the Government of Quebec. Deals have been signed with Ontario to reinforce the message sent to the Trudeau government.

Just because the word “wood” appears in the budget twice, that does not signify any real willingness on the part of this government. No money, no plan B, and no loan guarantees were included in the budget to protect our softwood lumber industry.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of that and what the government intends to do. Is it waiting for the industry to be brought to its knees before it will fix this situation?

[English]

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, I am proud of the efforts our government is making. In fact, at the onset since forming government, when it comes to softwood lumber and other important industries and trade initiatives, we have stepped forward to deal with these issues. We are working with all partners. I look forward to the recommendations and steps that our government is going to take to ensure that Canadian producers and Canadians are protected.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, in going through the budget, it is exciting to read big numbers, like \$11 billion for housing over the next 11 years, but when I break down page 151 of the budget, in all categories of housing cumulatively, we do not get to more than \$300 million before the next election. This is a pattern through the whole budget, on infrastructure spending, on climate action. Everything is after the next election.

I would ask the hon. member why we do not see more urgency in getting these projects going now and not basically telling us that we have to re-elect the current government to see the programs.

Ms. Jennifer O'Connell: Madam Speaker, multi-year budgets are good fiscal planning to ensure that we are taking reasonable steps to fund our priorities, but also keeping in mind that we saw a decade without growth. This is a prudent approach that Canadians expect of this government.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the budget that was recently tabled by the Liberal government. First, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my friend and colleague, the member for Burnaby South, who will be taking the second half of our party's time.

I will begin by commenting on what the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands just said.

● (1025)

[English]

The leader of the Green Party just made a statement that I found spot on, that the Liberal story narrative, the Liberal arc, is classically the following. The Liberals make a bunch of promises during an election campaign, things like democratic reform, let us say, and then, one by one, they do not keep those promises, but as it gets closer and closer to the next election, they say that the world will come to an end unless the Liberals are re-elected because they were just about to get to it. I guess we could call that particular Liberal approach the “we are just about to get to it” budget, because that is what we have here.

Benjamin Franklin had a famous saying that people loved to quote, and it is true. He said that there were only two certainties in life: death and taxes. I can say that there are only two certainties in Liberal administrations, debt and taxes, because that is what we see in this budget. It is not so much a question of how it is the Liberals have already planned to have a deficit of over \$100 billion only 18 months into their administration and they are announcing that they will never ever see a balanced budget, despite the promise during the election campaign that they would only have an itsy-bitsy, teeny-weeny deficit and then, by the next election, they would be back to balanced budgets.

What we are seeing is just what the leader of Green Party correctly described as the Liberals' take on things. They are so good at spinning their stuff they would even have Canadians believe that consistent deficits with nothing in return are actually a progressive value, that somehow that is what left-wing administrations do. Actually, that is what Liberal administrations do. People who are progressive hold the following to be their key value: to make sure that they are there consistently and reliably. Let me provide a counter example.

After seeing the success of the CCF NDP's health care plan in Saskatchewan, Canadians were happy to see universal free public medical care applied across the country. It was a fifty-fifty federal-provincial plan. What is it now, now that the Liberal government is imposing Stephen Harper's cuts in health care? We are down to less than 20% of the federal government share.

[Translation]

This is a classic example of the tail wagging the dog because the Liberals are telling us that not only are they going to go forward with Stephen Harper's cuts but that, from now on, the federal government will be dictating what the provinces can and cannot do when it comes to health care. We all witnessed this vicious cycle of quick spending to score cheap points and the inevitable backtracking where the government is forced to make cuts under Paul Martin.

[English]

This is the cycle of the Liberals. We have seen it time and again. They pose as progressives, yet they fought against the \$15-an-hour federal minimum wage during the campaign. They posture as environmentalists, but Environment Canada says that it will not even meet Stephen Harper's woefully inadequate targets for greenhouse gas emissions. By the way, that is the only thing that matters.

The Budget

I was in Paris when the Prime Minister threw out his arms and proclaimed that Canada is back. That produced a lot of head-scratching in the room, people saying that they did not know Canada had ever left. What we had was a Prime Minister trying to communicate that thank goodness he was there because now things would finally change on the environmental front.

Here is the reality. The only plan the Liberals have is Stephen Harper's plan, and they will not meet Stephen Harper's target. People do not have to take our word for it, because Environment Canada confirmed that over the weekend. I guess that is what the Liberals meant by real change. They keep Stephen Harper's targets but they just do not meet them.

The Liberals pretend to be feminists. When one knows that one of the principal impediments to equality in the workforce is the lack of quality affordable child care, one knows that emphasis has to be put on child care. How much money is in the budget that was just tabled for child care? There is not one cent. My colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé asks how much. There is not one cent in this budget for child care for next year.

• (1030)

[Translation]

The Liberals are saying that, if we just give them a chance, they will get there eventually. It is a bit like the promise they made on housing. They are saying that they are going to make a huge investment in social housing, to the tune of \$22 billion, but when is that going to happen? It will not happen until after 2022. That is the game they are playing. They got elected by promising to do a certain number of things, such as changing the electoral system. They did not keep that promise. They promised to restore home mail delivery, but they did not keep that promise either. They pretend to do those things. Two years later, after many broken promises, when people start to wonder what is happening and reminding them that they promised to restore home mail delivery and change the voting system in this country to make it fairer, they start making promises for after the next election campaign.

Let us not forget that, in this budget, the Liberals cut exactly \$1.25 billion from the environment portfolio. Yes, members heard me right.

[English]

Despite all their preening, posturing, and their cardboard cut-outs on environment, the reality is that in this budget the Liberals cut \$1.25 billion in what they had promised in the fight against climate change. Canada will never be able to meet Stephen Harper's weak targets, much less our obligations under the Paris accord. That is the reality of the Liberals.

I do not underestimate their ability to spin a yarn in their own favour. I have grudging admiration for it. However, sooner or later the reality always comes back to haunt them, as it did with this most recent budget, which I think we could give a subtitle of the “we will get to it” budget. They are promising, as the Liberal arc always does, that it is going to happen sometime in the future.

I remember that after 13 years in power and four consecutive Liberal governments, Liberals wailed and moaned and whined about the injustice when they were defeated in 2006 because Canadians

were going to be deprived of the Kelowna accord and of child care. When we reminded them that they were thrown out not because of child care but because of corruption, they said that they were just about to get to child care and the Kelowna accord. They were just about there and how unfair it was that they were not re-elected.

Meanwhile, today in Canada, six out of 10 people who lose their jobs are not eligible for employment insurance. Nothing in this budget addresses that. We have a finance minister who tells young Canadians to get used to it, that the job churn and lousy, low-paid, part-time precarious work are their lot in life. There is not a single measure in this budget to address that. That is the reality. See you in 2022, Madam Speaker.

[Translation]

What is being proposed for public transit is unbelievable. The Liberals are creating an infrastructure bank in order to steal money from taxpayers and make access to assistance even harder and twice as costly. There is not a single word in this budget about major infrastructure projects, including the Caisse de dépôt's electric train. Not a word and not a penny.

To top it off, the Liberals are getting rid of the public transit pass tax credit. When did they say they were going to do that? During the election campaign and again three weeks ago, they promised to get rid of the tax loophole for corporations.

[English]

We saw it again yesterday. So much for the middle class: \$32.6 million U.S. in bonuses for Bombardier, keeping the CEO stock options; that is how they pay themselves. That is the reality. Right now we know what the Liberals are all about, and that is why it is important for Canadians to start paying attention, because they have to go.

• (1035)

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member likes to talk a lot about what is not in the budget rather than celebrating what is in the budget. I can see why he would be green with envy as for what is actually in the budget: \$180 billion to be spent on infrastructure; \$625 million to veterans; \$2.7 billion into training; \$225 million over the next four years to identify and fill skills gaps; \$11 billion to affordable housing; \$6 billion to home care; \$5 billion to mental health initiatives; \$950 million to innovation clusters; \$1.26 billion to innovation for agriculture; digital; advanced manufacturing; and the list goes on and on.

I would like to know how much the member feels he could have accomplished by trying to balance a budget and also get things done for Canadians. This government has made the commitment to make those investments in Canadians to create the jobs for the future and to help our businesses grow.

The Budget

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, the member gives me the opportunity to remind him that balancing looks at both sides of the balance sheet. The NDP was proud to say, and it was an obvious truth, that Canadian corporations were not paying their fair share. We are the only party in the House with the courage to raise corporate taxes, and we maintain that was the right thing to do.

I ask that the member for Hastings—Lennox and Addington point out to us where in the Liberal platform they informed Canadians that they would be removing the tax credit for public transit. Where did the Liberals ever tell the average working Canadian who is doing a good thing by taking public transit, lowering traffic, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, that the supposedly pro-middle class, pro-environment government was actually going to remove the one tax credit that was an incentive for people to use public transit instead of their private cars? Where was that in their platform?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, we talked about the proudest things that the Liberals were coming out with in the budget being the child care initiatives and the national housing strategy. Of course, we know that in some of the major urban centres affordable housing is very problematic. Being that the budget is pretty much totally back-ended, could he explain how this would impact those who are most vulnerable who really need those opportunities?

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, the member's important question goes right to the heart of what this "we'll get to it" budget really is about. The promises that are there for housing are for years and years down the road. What will happen immediately is that people will lose their tax credit for public transit. The Liberals are getting to that right away.

With regard to child care, we know it is something that has been crying out for action for a long time, yet the Liberals are again shovelling this forward. There is not one penny for child care for next year. I remember during the election campaign the NDP made it a key part of our platform. It was costed; we had a rollout and good, solid, public administration. The Liberals said that would take far too long. What they are proposing is taking twice as long as anything we ever proposed, and they have not done a thing since they formed government.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Madam Speaker, Canadians and scientists alike understand the urgency of taking action on climate change.

We often think of it as a race against time, but the truth is that it is really two races. First there is the race to reduce our carbon emissions and limit their impact on our climate. This is a race with the highest possible stakes: ecological and social upheaval, food security, mass migration, and natural catastrophe.

However, there is a second race, too, and that is the race to lead the transition to a new post-carbon economy. In the second race, the stakes are jobs and prosperity for our communities, success for our businesses, knowledge and technical advancement, and the benefits that come from leading the world.

On the one hand, it is a race to avert disaster, and on the other hand, it is a race to seize opportunity. In both races, the stakes are enormous. In both races, the key is a shift to clean energy. In both races, unfortunately, Canada is running behind.

Today, Canada produces only 18% of our primary energy from renewable resources. Sweden and Norway manage to meet 45% of their energy needs with clean energy, outstripping Canada by two and a half times. In Iceland, the figure is a staggering 88%.

Now, it is not for a lack of talent. Our country has some of the most cutting-edge companies in clean energy. In my own riding, I am thinking of Ballard Power Systems, with its fuel cell technology; Nano One, which is changing how the world is making battery materials; and just a few blocks away, Bullfrog Power, with its innovative approach to funding renewable energy.

It is not a lack of resources holding us back, either. We have huge potential reserves for wind and solar, for tidal and geothermal energy, and to extract even more from our hydro.

If talent and innovation are working in our favour, and if our reserves of renewable energy potential are so tremendous, the question remains. Why does Canada still lag? What is lacking, frankly, is commitment and strategy at the highest political levels in Canada. I am sorry to say we saw that lack of commitment in the latest budget from the government.

For years Canada had a federal government that held renewable energy in nearly overt contempt. Anything that did not burn oil, gas, and coal was not worth the time of day as far as the Conservatives were concerned. Then came the Liberal government, and I will say this for it: it talked a very good line. If feel-good rhetoric and symbolic gestures were energy sources, Canada would be the next OPEC, but they are not and we are not.

Instead, the budget we are debating actually removes over \$1 billion from funds the government had promised for the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change. Apparently sunny ways do not extend to solar power.

They do not extend to conservation of energy efficiency either. One of the most important energy insights in the past 50 years has been that a kilowatt conserved is even more valuable than a kilowatt generated, because it does not require the overhead of generation and transmission. However, this budget offered nothing to help Canadians reduce their emissions and lower their energy bills by retrofitting their homes. This kind of program has proven, time and time again, to cut emissions and save money while creating well-paying jobs. Not tapping that potential, while cutting back on investments in clean growth, is a failure of vision, a failure of leadership.

The Budget

That is why I introduced my private member's motion, M-123, calling for a national clean energy strategy. This is a call for Canada to act urgently to rally our full array of resources to make the most of the opportunities clean energy offers and to meet the challenge of climate change head on. To succeed, a clean energy strategy has to be collaborative to the core. Imposing top-down solutions has a bad reputation in Canada, and rightly so.

Instead, Ottawa should be working with provinces, territories, municipalities, aboriginal communities, and with both public and private sector energy providers. For one thing, we know there is far too much wisdom and expertise among Canadians to let it all go to waste by ignoring it. For another, we need all hands on deck to make our transition to post-carbon energy successful. That means buy-in from all quarters, and we will not get that unless everyone has a hand in shaping solutions.

• (1040)

Even more fundamental than that is the question of fundamental justice and self-determination, and it applies in particular to aboriginal communities. Too often, when energy questions arise, first nations in Canada are bypassed, ignored, patronized, or offered lip service. However, energy policy and resource use are inextricably tied to our land base, and land is fundamental to aboriginal title. There should be no question that aboriginal communities must be full partners in crafting our clean energy strategy—anything else is unthinkable.

In the same way, when we talk about clean energy, it should not just be clean in terms of carbon and the environmental footprint, but clean ethically, as well. A project like B.C.'s site C hydro dam fails this test because without the consent of affected first nations it has no social licence to proceed.

The goal of our strategy, then, should be to steadily increase our capacity to produce ethically and environmentally clean energy.

The first step is to assess how feasible it is to increase that capacity to 100% of our energy needs; that is, through both increasing raw generation and reducing demand through conservation.

Obviously, this will vary from region to region. However, people will probably be shocked to learn just how close we are in British Columbia. BC Hydro estimates that we are currently meeting 93% of our needs with clean, renewable energy.

Once we have that sense of feasibility and timelines, let us set a realistic but ambitious target and, together, develop a plan to get there. At every step in that discussion, let us ask ourselves these questions. How does this help Canadian workers, communities, and businesses? How can we give them every chance to succeed and prosper? How can we ensure that we are helping workers and communities affected by the transition away from carbon-based fuels? What is needed to secure for them the kind of opportunities that come with being one of the world's leading renewable energy exporters?

I mentioned regional differences. Different regions will, of course, have different specific needs, strengths, challenges, and priorities, and each region understands better than anyone else how these needs and priorities play out. Therefore the strategy should allow for a

made-in-B.C. plan, a made-in-Alberta plan, a made-in-Quebec plan, and so on.

Now, nobody who seriously thinks about these issues believes for one moment this will be easy; but anyone who thinks seriously about these issues knows it is essential.

If we fail to act, if we continue down the path we have been headed, we do not get to avoid this transition. All we are doing is ensuring this transition, when it comes, will be an upheaval—unplanned, chaotic, and disruptive. Communities and, potentially, whole regions will fall through the cracks of a rapidly shifting economy. We are ensuring that other countries get to seize the opportunities instead of us. They get the jobs. Their businesses lock up the markets, build the research and technology capacity, and set the standards, not ours.

Meanwhile, we continue to pay the ecological price of relying on fossil fuels: the spills that can devastate the ecosystem in communities; the environmental degradation; the poor air quality; and the damage to people's health and well-being.

Of course, we reap the results of failure to act more quickly and more effectively to reduce the carbon load in our atmosphere. The disruptions and damage wreaked by climate change may well dwarf any of the other impacts I have mentioned.

Compare this bleak picture to what we could instead gain, such as energy security: a sustainable, secure supply of safe, affordable energy throughout the country. Families need to know that they can heat their homes; schools and hospitals need to know they can light their corridors and power their equipment; and businesses need to know their offices and factories can operate reliably and affordably.

We can bring an end to price shocks and the economic roller coaster of a commodity-based economy. This strategy can give us leverage to diversify economies and build a thriving and growing clean energy sector in communities throughout the country. The countries that make the transition now get early-mover advantage. This means they develop expertise and industrial infrastructure that create a virtuous circle, attracting investment and research that, in turn, strengthen our economic leadership.

We can deliver cleaner air and water; we can end the ruinous devastation of our land that is too often the calling card of the carbon economy; and we can reclaim the mantle of global leadership that Canada has held before, technologically and economically and in the fight to end the destabilization of our planet's climate.

Clean energy is ultimately about securing our future and doing it in a way that is quintessentially Canadian. It is about working together to ensure prosperity that can be shared by everyone throughout this country. That should be the goal of any budget.

The Budget

The most important measure of that budget's success is an economy that lifts everyone up.

● (1045)

By that measure, this budget represents a tragically missed opportunity. Let us not let these opportunities pass us by.

Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I agree with the member on the importance of climate change. I think the approach our government has taken has been very balanced. The investments we have made into climate resiliency infrastructure are important. Investing in innovation in green technology is important, and so is putting a price on pollution. Our government's approach has tried to reach a balance so that it does not have a massive effect on our economy, while at the same time it tries to deal with the climate change issues.

Would the member not agree that through a balanced approach, trying to achieve our Paris targets and at the same time trying to grow our economy can happen hand in hand?

● (1050)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, the balance I am thinking about in this budget is the platform that was presented to Canadians in the last election and in this budget. They seem completely imbalanced. We have promises that Canadians voted upon in good faith, and now they are not being delivered on.

In my riding of Burnaby South there has not been a single unit of affordable housing built by the government, nor will there be a unit built by the next election. That is because the money is so back-end-loaded in this budget. That applies if we are dealing with issues such as affordable housing, but it also applies to things like climate change. Again we see that money that was promised has been extracted from this budget. Over and over again, we see broken promises.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments, especially for those around the green energy strategy.

The Conservative government started signing agreements in 2007, and then in 2010 there was another one with Sweden. We funded genome innovation clusters research, digital research, and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, and of course we set up the green infrastructure fund.

As the member said, in his community there are some clean energy facilities, as there are in mine, such as a biofuel facility and Endurance Wind. Many cities are doing a lot of work. The foundation was put in under the Conservative government for a lot of these things to be funded, and through PPP Canada as well.

I wonder if he could talk a little bit about bringing all of these pieces together under a national strategy for clean energy.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, what we are seeing on the other side is really a lack of vision. I have been here since 2011, and I have said this before: the last government under Stephen Harper was at least organized, while this Liberal government seems to be scrambling from issue to issue.

The Liberals seem to be unprepared to be government. We are seeing this in the lack of bills that get through this House. We see it

in the lack of an overall vision. On the file for which I am responsible, science, we see piecemeal policies being put forward. We see budgets that are not comprehensive, and then we have broken promise after broken promise.

I agree with the member. What we really need is overall strategies for how we transition. Then perhaps we could talk about how this would look in future governments, but as far as I am concerned, this government is all talk and no action.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that renewable energy is very important to my colleague. I wonder if, like me, he noticed in the budget that the government is not renewing the eco-energy program to help make homes more energy efficient. There is also no initiative for building green homes. This could not only provide homeowners with better energy efficiency, but also create jobs, while lowering heating bills.

Does the hon. member agree that this budget generally lacks a progressive vision with regard to environmental protection?

[*English*]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Madam Speaker, we hear the promises and there was a great bluster when we signed the Paris accord and all those promises were made by the Liberal government, but then we see the practical implication of that, which is cutting bus pass tax credits.

Actions are not meeting words here. It is a great shame. There was a great opportunity, a great will to move forward to tackle climate change, but we are seeing failure from the government. We need a comprehensive strategy.

Mr. Yves Robillard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Avalon.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

With spring in the air, I rise in the House with great optimism to speak to budget 2017. However, before saying anything more, I would first like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents. I have had the privilege of rising in the House for more than a year thanks to their confidence in me. Today, I want to thank them.

I am very proud of the people in my riding and they are the reason why I became involved in politics. I have said it before and I will say it again, my riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin is enriched by its people. I was proud of what budget 2016 gave my constituents and all Canadians, including the Canada child benefit, which has helped lift 300,000 of our children out of poverty.

The Budget

Today, I am just as proud of budget 2017 for the following reasons. First, it shows compassion to our veterans and the most vulnerable Canadians. It manifests a visionary confidence in our youth and our businesses. The Canada child benefit is a fair and compassionate initiative that targets our children and remedies an unacceptable vulnerability.

Many of the measures announced in budget 2017 reflect the same values, beginning with measures for our veterans. We are announcing a new veterans' education and training benefit. We are also committed to enhancing the career transition services program so veterans can successfully transition to the civilian workforce. Veterans and their families have made many sacrifices. In return, we need to ensure that they do not become vulnerable.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons With Disabilities for over a year now. This fall, the committee spent several of its meetings discussing affordable housing, so committee members were very pleased with budget 2017's significant support for affordable housing to ensure the security and independence of some of the most vulnerable members of society, such as seniors and people with disabilities who need accessible or adapted housing.

Another file that I have spent a lot of time on over the past few months in committee is technology, specifically, digital literacy as a springboard for our youth and our most vulnerable citizens. The government responded to that need in its new budget with a \$22.3-million investment over five years to set up a new accessible technology development program. This program will make it easier for Canadians with disabilities to participate in the digital world and its economy.

There is support for seniors too. Our government announced a \$29.5-million investment over five years for a new digital literacy exchange program to support non-profit organizations to implement initiatives that teach basic digital skills and so on to seniors. Imagine classes in Laval where seniors can learn how to use iPads. Imagine an individual who transcends his or her disability and develops a smart phone app to help others.

Budget 2017 sends a clear message that our government is looking to the future, but is not forgetting to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society benefit from technological progress.

I want to talk about the future, since we often hear that our youth best represent the future. Young people will also benefit from the government's vision. In fact, our government announced a \$50-million investment over two years to support a program for youth, from kindergarten age up, teaching them how to write code and giving them the tools they need for the digital era.

This means that we are investing in our young people and giving them the means to become the next big innovators in digital technology, and not just one or two, but a dozen of them.

Robert Kennedy talked about a tiny ripple of hope, but that one measure alone represents a tidal wave of hope and potential for the future of our society. I have talked about the importance of such a measure many times in committee. Seeing it become a reality in budget 2017 makes me so proud. This measure comes with two other major investments in our young people. The PromoScience program

will get a boost. This existing program is designed to give kids hands-on learning experiences in order to promote the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

As a former teacher, I am also pleased to see that we are working on expanding eligibility for student loans and grants. Our budget supports students, but it also supports our young, ambitious entrepreneurs. We are investing to renew funding for Futurpreneur Canada to support the next generation of entrepreneurs through mentorship and funding.

The budget supports both current and future entrepreneurs because we are investing in fostering international trade opportunities for Canadian companies.

Clearly, with the announcement of such measures for our entrepreneurs and our economy, we have cause to be optimistic in the riding of Marc-Aurèle-Fortin and from coast to coast.

I will close by coming back to what I said about the budget last year. I said that budget 2016 helped build our society brick by brick. Budget 2017 will allow us to continue to make our society a place where we strive to take better care of the most vulnerable. Budget 2017 allows us to do so with compassion, while facing the future boldly and confidently. That is how we will continue to strengthen the middle class.

• (1100)

[English]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was really pleased to hear my colleague's words about addressing the issues for the most vulnerable, so I would like him to give us the rationale behind the removal of the transit credit for the most vulnerable, the people who use transit, and the rationale behind the fact that there is no money for child care in the budget for next year. Also, on the national housing strategy, the dollars are not flowing until after the next election. While I am really thrilled to hear about helping the most vulnerable, can he tell me how he can square that?

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I thank my opposition colleague for the question.

Our government is committed to the well-being of our seniors. Last year, we increased the guaranteed income supplement for seniors living alone. This year, as I said in my speech, we announced significant support for initiatives related to affordable housing, thereby promoting the security and independence of seniors who need improved accessibility in their home.

The Budget

•(1105)

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. He spoke about the future and the most vulnerable Canadians, but he only touched on the issue of veterans. That is probably because there is not much for them in the most recent budget.

The government really missed an opportunity to implement the recommendations of our veterans, especially with regard to the need to provide them and their families with permanent financial security.

We can find nothing in the budget that gives them financial security. I would like to know how my colleague explains that.

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I will talk about something that I am very interested in and that goes to my colleague's question as well.

I invite her to read the results of the defence policy review when they are released. It just so happens that they address the issue of veterans. I am convinced that this document will give us the tools and information we need to move forward and better support our troops.

The well-being of our troops and veterans is always a top priority for this government.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my question is related to infrastructure. As the member is fully aware, Canada's historic amount of investment in our infrastructure will in fact assist our middle class in growing, and will invest in Canada in every region of our great nation. I wonder if the member could provide his thoughts on the important commitment we have seen from this government toward Canada's infrastructure, because all communities benefit from it. Could he provide some of his thoughts on just how important Canada's infrastructure is?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Robillard: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Among the other measures in budget 2017, there is a \$1.26 billion investment for the creation of the strategic innovation fund, which will help our businesses continue to make Canada a leader in innovation, clean technologies, and many other vibrant and emerging sectors.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity today to speak in support of budget 2017 and all the work our government is doing that continues to build a strong middle class of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

I am pleased with the continued investments by our government in my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador and, more specific, in my riding of Avalon. We continue to make significant investments in infrastructure and in our communities, but we are also making good investments in our youth, working Canadians, and seniors.

Following in the footsteps of budget 2016, this budget offers immediate help to those who need it most and helps ensure everyone has a real and fair chance of success.

A strengthened middle class means that hard-working Canadians can look forward to a good standard of living and better prospects for our children. By investing in the projects Canada needs and the people who can build them, we can strengthen and grow the middle class and make our communities an even better place to call home.

Over the past year, our government has put in place a plan to grow the economy in a way that works for the middle class and those working hard to join it. Taxes were raised on the wealthiest 1% so we could cut taxes for the middle class. We introduced a new Canada child benefit that would give more money to nine out of 10 children and lifts thousands out of poverty.

My home province of Newfoundland and Labrador continues to struggle with the financial mess that was caused by years of previous provincial overspending and financial mismanagement. Unfortunately, Newfoundland and Labrador suffered from years of an unco-operative approach and no collaboration with the previous federal government. A total lack of trust and personal vendettas with the previous administration set our province years behind.

As an example, after the last federal election we found the allocated federal infrastructure funding was never applied for or provided to Newfoundland and Labrador. A total lack of trust and disrespect saw some \$350 million of infrastructure funding not being invested in our communities.

Things have changed, and I am proud of the co-operation between all levels of government.

Just this past Friday, I was delighted to stand with one of my provincial colleagues and the mayor of Placentia to announce a strategic investment whereby all three levels of government contributed to ensure much needed improvements to the Placentia Culture and Heritage Centre would be completed, and I did the same thing just two weeks ago in the town of Holyrood.

It is great. We are co-operating and we are getting things done.

However, it is not all about big infrastructure projects about which our constituents are talking. In my riding, people come up to me every day and express their gratitude for the things their federal government is doing for them, but is everything great? No it is not.

Our fishery and those involved in the industry are going through a difficult transition. We are transitioning from a lucrative shellfish-based industry to the realization of a future industry based on groundfish and aquaculture. We are very fortunate to have a Minister of Fisheries in Ottawa who has a keen interest and understands the complexities of the Newfoundland and Labrador fishing industry. I am very confident that his decisions around the quota reductions in the shellfish resource and his cautious approach to ensure the return of healthy groundfish stock is done with the best intention of the resource and the people who work in the industry.

The Budget

Our government has stepped up to the plate to help Atlantic Canadians in the fishing industry with the Atlantic fisheries fund. This \$325 million investment will transform and drive innovation in the fish and seafood sector in Canada, with a focus on developing the sector to better meet growing market demands for sustainably sourced, high quality fish and seafood products. The fund will position the sector for even greater future success by supporting national market access, creating jobs for the middle class, and supporting coastal communities that rely on the sector.

The Atlantic fisheries fund will encourage innovative ways to harvest, process, and deliver the highest quality and sustainably sourced fish and seafood products from Canada's wild capture and aquaculture fisheries.

Our most recent budget contains important new initiatives that will help middle-class Canadians be more productive in the workforce and more adaptable to ever-changing family dynamics.

I want to speak for a few minutes on some of these initiatives, including changes to the employment insurance program that promotes new training opportunities and assists with the aspects of lifelong learning and making employment insurance more flexible for families around caregiving and parental benefits.

• (1110)

I also want to speak about our new investments in child care and housing. These initiatives are important to Canadians but more specific, they are important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Budget 2017 is the next step in our government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for middle-class Canadians. Our budget put Canada's greatest strength, its skilled, talented, and creative people, at the heart of a more innovative future economy, one that will create middle-class jobs today and tomorrow. We will equip Canada's workers with the tools they need to succeed in the economy of the future.

We are committed to better support adult workers returning to school, who face the high cost of post-secondary education, along with the financial pressures associated with daily life and raising their families. Our budget outlines how we will significantly boost federal support to provinces and territories by \$2.7 billion over six years to help more unemployed and underemployed Canadians access the training and employment support they need to find and keep good jobs.

Furthermore, we will ensure Canadians receiving EI are able to get the training they need without fear of losing the critical benefits they may depend on to support themselves and families.

Recognizing that Canada prosperity will increasingly depend on young people getting the skills and training needed to access the good, well-paying jobs of the future, we are further increasing our investments in our youth employment strategy.

Family caregivers are so important in every one of our communities. As such, we will better support caregivers by creating a new EI caregiving benefit of up to 15 weeks. This new benefit will cover a broader range of situations where individuals are providing

care to an adult family member who requires significant support in order to recover from a critical illness or injury.

Parents of critically ill children will continue to have access to up to 35 weeks' benefits, with additional flexibility to share these benefits with more family members.

Parental benefits are such an important advantage for young families functioning in our workforce. Proposed changes will allow parents to choose to receive EI parental benefits over an extended period of up to 18 months, but will also continue to be available for the existing 12 month benefit. Our government believes in offering flexibility to make the lives of young Canadians that much easier.

Child care is another huge pillar of budget 2017. I am very proud of our additional \$7 billion investment over 10 years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care spaces across the country. Over the next three years, our investments could increase the number of affordable child care spaces for low and modest income families by supporting up to 40,000 new subsidized child care spaces. This will make it more affordable for parents to return to work, with thousands of parents more likely to enter the workforce once child care is made more affordable.

As housing needs vary greatly by community, our government is committed to working with the provinces and territories to ensure the unique needs of communities all across Canada can be met. Over the next 11 years, \$3.2 billion will be provided to support key priorities for affordable housing. These priorities could include the construction of new affordable housing units, the renovation and repair of existing housing, rent subsidies and other measures to make housing more affordable, safer, and accessible for seniors, persons with disabilities, and other individuals requiring accessibility modifications.

I was very pleased to stand last year to support budget 2016, which had a huge and real impact on our youth, working Canadians, and our seniors. I am equally pleased to stand now, on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Avalon, to support brand new and very strategic initiatives in budget 2017.

• (1115)

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Madam Speaker, the Liberal government has cut \$8.5 billion from the National Defence budget this year. That is now \$12 billion if we take into consideration what was cut last year.

The Budget

Last summer our caucus held coast-to-coast round table discussions with many communities. From these discussions, people told us very clearly that they wanted to see the military spending increased, and our military itself increased and modernized.

Could the member please tell me how we can do this when the government has cut military funding in the last two years by \$12 billion?

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, it is hard to figure out the opposition. One day members are telling us we are spending too fast and too much. The next minute they condemn us for not spending enough, so I do not know which way they want it. They cannot have both sides of the cake at one time.

We are making strategic investments in the Canadian Armed Forces. We are making strategic investments in our veterans, and we will continue to do that for the men and women who wear the uniform.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I must thank my friend from Avalon, who I went with to the east coast with the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. We visited his community and we met with cod fishermen and fishermen in Miramichi to talk about the decline of the Atlantic cod and the Atlantic salmon. We found out that we had a lot in common on the west coast and the east coast. There was a lack of investment in restoration, in enhancement, and in salmon habitat protection.

We know that it is a clear map to the return of our stocks in our fishery if we make critical investments. When I say critical, I am talking about the urgency of the situation. We had record low returns in the Somass River of sockeye recently, and we have seen a record decline in our fish on the west coast. We need our fish for the cultural and economic health of our communities.

We know, as coastal people, the importance of our fish. Why has the government not invested any new money in enhancement or restoration, given the critical situation we are facing and the decline of our fish?

• (1120)

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, I would tell the hon. member that we all enjoyed that visit to my home community when we met with the fishermen. As I said in my speech, we are investing in the fisheries. For my home province and the Atlantic provinces, we just announced a \$325-million fund. This fund will be available for processors, for fisheries, and for education. It will encompass it all, and the money will flow to all the provinces. We want to see the fishery of tomorrow be the real fishery of the future, and that is what the money will be used for. It will concentrate not only on what is taken out of the water but on what is in the water and stays there to make sure our stocks are healthy for the future.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was happy hear that the budget offers immediate help, but if we look at child care and at the housing strategy, there is no money this year. For homelessness, there is zero this year and zero next year. For cultural and recreational infrastructure, there is zero this year and zero next year. For disability accessibility, there is zero this year and zero next year. For creating Canada's clean growth economy, there is zero this year and zero next year. For skills training, there is nothing this year, and in some sectors, nothing next

year. For skills innovation and middle-class jobs, there is nothing this year.

Could the member please explain what he means by offering immediate help?

Mr. Ken McDonald: Madam Speaker, again, I will go back to how I responded earlier to one of the questions. The same party condemns us for spending, and then when we bring in a budget, they ask why we are not spending it all this year. We were elected on a four-year platform, and we will continue to work on that and prepare for the future, whether it be for the middle class, education, or innovation.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time this morning with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

I welcome the opportunity this morning to speak in support of budget 2017 and all the work our government is doing to continue to build a strong economy in the country from coast to coast to coast.

Before I get into my comments on the budget, I want to first congratulate all the volunteers and organizers who helped ensure that O'Leary, Prince Edward Island, was named Kraft Hockeyville 2017.

O'Leary is a small community in my riding. I want to acknowledge the tremendous work of its volunteer committee, made up of members Della Sweet, Jo-Anne Wallace, Tammy Rix, Bill MacKendrick, and Dean Getson, for their tireless effort to ensure that this community would win Hockeyville 2017. It has already received \$100,000 for facility upgrades to its arena. It will be hosting an NHL pre-season game between the Ottawa Senators and the New Jersey Devils. This is a significant accomplishment for a small community with a population of less than 1,000. Therefore, I want to acknowledge this tremendous effort. It was an island-wide effort. Indeed, the effort was from coast to coast, as people were supporting it. I am pleased that I also took part in it.

I briefly want to acknowledge budget 2017 and the positive impact on my home province of Prince Edward Island. The budget would increase transfer equalization payments by \$10.1 million from the previous year. There would be \$152 million through the Canada health transfer, which is an increase of \$4.6 million, and \$56 million through the Canada social transfer, which is an increase of \$1.7 million.

I am pleased that the government would provide Prince Edward Island with an estimated \$45.1 million in the next decade, of which \$24.6 million would be dedicated to better home care, including for addressing critical home care infrastructure requirements, and \$20.5 million would be allocated to support mental health initiatives in the province. These are issues I heard a lot about during the campaign in the summer and fall of 2015: the issue of home care and support for our aging population, seniors; and the growing issue of mental illness and the need to provide more services. I was pleased that our government recognized that my home province was meeting additional challenges in these areas and required additional funding to make sure that the citizens of Prince Edward Island have access to health care that is equal to that enjoyed across the country.

The Budget

I want to touch briefly on a specific issue my colleague from Newfoundland spoke to a little earlier, and that is the significant new announcement by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of \$325 million to support innovative technological investments in the fish sector on the east coast, in fish processing facilities, and in training upgrades to bring this industry into this century. It is recognition that we must invest in technology to ensure that our first-class seafood is processed in the most innovative manner to allow us to stay competitive in the international market.

As well, this budget would continue on from budget 2016 by allocating an additional \$5 million to small craft harbours, which are essential to a successful fishery. This would follow on an investment last year of \$149 million. These are strategic investments in strategic infrastructure on the east coast to support the very important fishery on Prince Edward Island.

While addressing the budget today, I want to focus on three areas that I feel are important in our society. Those three areas speak to the heart of what a government is expected to do in the area of strong social policy and social supports.

• (1125)

Governments, after all, always have to meet the challenge of managing the affairs of a country with methods close to the private sector. At the same time, they have a social responsibility to ensure that people do not slip through the cracks and that they have access to programs and funding to ensure that they have equally productive lives in this country.

I did a little research. The 2016 budget was an historic one, with the transfer of a significant amount of money to children in this country. I do not have to go into detail. There have been various debates in the House on this issue. Why I am referring to this is that when I look back at three very significant social programs in the country, they were all initiated by Liberal governments.

The first family allowance in Canada was issued on February 20, 1945. Mackenzie King was prime minister of the country. The first family allowance cheques to Canadian mothers was \$5 a month for each child under the age of five, \$6 for children aged six to nine, \$7 for those aged 10 to 12, and \$8 for teenagers 13 to 15 years of age.

My riding is small compared to some of the larger ridings in the country. In one month, in my small riding, our government's child tax benefit, and this is an estimated figure, is \$2.31 million. It is money that goes to children in my riding of Egmont. That is a significant benefit to children, families, and single-parent families in my riding. That is one of the signature initiatives of our government. It started last year and we are continuing to build on it this year. It is \$2.31 million for a program that was started in 1945 by a Liberal prime minister. It shows that our government recognizes that we have a responsibility to make sure that children have every opportunity in life. The Canada child benefit is the tool that does that. It is one of the initiatives I have been most proud of since I became a member of Parliament.

As well, the first mandatory old age security system, in 1927, was under Mackenzie King. A non-contributory program, the system was later updated by Prime Minister St. Laurent in 1957 and by Prime Minister Pearson in 1965. It is interesting to note that universality

was repealed for a while by the Mulroney government in 1989. Again, the old age security system, one of the hallmarks of Canadian society, was an initiative introduced by a Liberal government.

I was pleased that our government was able to recognize that seniors most in need, single seniors, were depending on OAS and GIS, and we raised that by \$90 a month in the last budget.

The final issue I want to talk about briefly is the employment insurance system. I was pleased that in this budget, our government recognizes that a deterrent to skills training and higher education is that people on employment insurance cannot take training on their own initiative for fear of losing the benefits they depend on. We recognize this. It is an issue I long championed as a provincial politician. Why not allow people who are out of work to access training, upgrade their skills, and receive employment insurance at the same time?

That is why I am proud to support this budget. These three social programs are pillars of what defines Canada as a nation, and I am delighted to support budget 2017.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, this morning, in the all-party anti-poverty caucus, a doctor told us about one of his patients whose mental and physical health had been affected by the presence of mould in her apartment and who was unable to find affordable social housing because the waiting lists are too long.

In Hochelaga, as in Montreal, there are over 20,000 people on the waiting lists, and the situation in Toronto is even worse. Many people cannot afford decent housing and that is affecting them. However, what the Liberals are telling them in this budget is that, even though they are in crisis and there is mould in their home, they will have to wait because 90% of the money will not be allocated until after the next election and 50% of the money will not be allocated until two elections from now.

How can the Liberals look those most in need in the eye and tell them that they will have to wait a little longer?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, that is a good question. At least our government has recognized that there is a crisis in housing in large urban centres, as in other communities across the country. Our government recognized that crisis by announcing the largest single investment in housing in some time in this country.

The very issues that my hon. colleague referred to are issues that our government is sensitive to and aware of. We are the first government in some time to put a commitment in the budget to begin to recognize this situation across the country and to make investments in housing in major centres across the country.

The Budget

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for talking about youth mental health. For over a decade on the west coast, primarily in the Nuu-chah-nulth communities, we have had a high number of youth suicides. We have had many suicide attempts, and recently there was a significant spike in the Nuu-chah-nulth communities.

We recently asked the government for funding for one full-time child and youth counsellor and one full-time adult counsellor. We asked for funding to build capacity for cultural healers, to include an opportunity for an intensive traditional healing space, and also for funding to build an apartment for external support services.

The support staff are working overtime. We have some staff who have worked 21 days straight, and still there is no help. Not only have we not seen any money for first nations youth in this budget, but we have not even heard back from the minister on our request.

Children are dying in our communities. This is not okay. In spite of its clear promise and multiple rulings from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, the government refuses to end discrimination in funding for first nations child welfare. The member stood in the House and voted for our motion calling for an immediate investment of \$155 million to close this gap, but the budget does not contain a nickel of it. Does the member believe that the government should comply with the Human Rights Tribunal and end this discrimination so that we can save these children's lives and provide the adequate resources that are needed right now, urgently?

• (1135)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, the first priority of the government is to recognize that there is an issue and a serious challenge in parts of this country. Beginning during the election campaign and since this session of Parliament began, our government has made a number of commitments to begin addressing the wrongs that the former government put toward our first nations communities. A lot of work still has to be done, but in the last two budgets our government has recognized that this is a priority and that we have to put money into these areas. That is why I was pleased to see in the budget that we will begin looking at areas such as mental health issues across the country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could provide some of his thoughts with regard to the Canada summer students program. We talk about trying to provide opportunities for young people, and with this government we have seen significant increases within that program that will have an effect in all of the different regions of Canada. Could the member provide some of his thoughts and reflections on the importance of that increase?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to share my thoughts. My colleague, the parliamentary secretary, is correct in recognizing that our government, beginning last year, made a significant investment in youth employment across the country.

That is extremely important in a rural riding like mine, where young people do not have the same job opportunities as in larger centres. It is important that the government provide funding to various non-profit organizations to allow them to hire young people

who can get work experience in a field related to their education background.

We have come a long way in that area, and I am really pleased with the numbers we have reached. They are significant investments, and significant numbers of young people are being employed through that program.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I grew up in a rural area, and like the member for Avalon, rural issues are very important for me.

The town I grew up in has about 1,000 people. It is about an hour from Montreal. It is not a large town, and it lost its school more than 40 years ago. The school, of course, is the anchor of a small town. The school was lost before I was born, and with it went a small number of economically critical good jobs, as well as the social and cultural focal point of our community. A few years ago, we got a gas station. Life, it seemed, was starting to look up.

However, my hometown is one of the lucky ones in rural Canada. Our population is stable. Today I am a member of Parliament for my hometown and 42 other municipalities in the riding of Laurentides—Labelle. The riding is some 40 times the size of the Island of Montreal.

The trouble with big ridings like mine is to understand the different needs we have in rural areas, so I really appreciate that the budget is putting billions of dollars into rural needs, very specifically, especially into our biggest issue, which is Internet access. For me, Internet access is the core of all of our issues. We can invest billions and billions of dollars into rural infrastructure, but if we do not have the Internet to back it up, it is not going to help with the bigger problems that we have. We need to ensure that families can bring their kids back.

In my riding, we have people who finish high school and leave to go to college or CEGEP, because we do not have very much in our riding. They do not come back, ever, or they come back to retire many years later. When I ask the students at the end of high school who is planning to stay, none of them are. The issues, they say, are the lack of public transit in rural areas, the lack of post-secondary education, and the lack of Internet and cellphone service.

Therefore, for me, the addition of \$2 billion in the fall economic update for infrastructure is very important. That was just for deep rural needs. The budget made this money available for rural Internet projects.

This is a really critical infrastructure program when added on top of the \$500 million Connect to Innovate program from last year.

The Budget

•(1140)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): If I could just interrupt the member for a second, there is a lot of feedback on the speaker. I would ask if he could be a little more mindful that the microphone is there.

The hon. member for Laurentides—Labelle.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I do not remember exactly what I was saying, but I was talking about the need for Internet in rural areas. Very often I see people who come to the riding, want to buy houses or set up businesses, look at beautiful properties, look at their phones, and see the famous red X because there is no signal. They ask the real estate agent if they can get online, and the answer is that they cannot get online here unless they want to use satellite, which has high latency and low reliability. People are looking for solutions, and I am really looking to solve these issues. The billions of dollars available for Internet will help that region.

My riding in the north has the MRC county of Antoine-Labelle with a population of approximately 35,000. It has 17 municipalities. It is a large and not very wealthy region. We did a study last year to find out who had access to Internet, and fewer than one in three households had theoretical access to 10-megabit service. Even fewer than that are actually connected.

What happens is that the kids finish high school, and they want to get online. They want to participate in the modern economy. They go to the city and they simply do not come back. Then the parents want family to come visit, but they will not even come to visit as much as they used to. The cottage owners are having their grandchildren come less often than they used to because of this very serious problem.

Related to this is cellphone service. If people do not have both Internet and cellphone service, we are not going to solve the communications issues we have.

What do we do about all this? We have to invest. The federal government, provincial government, municipalities, and the CRTC have all committed large sums of money to grow the Internet, so I am very happy with that progress. The CRTC's statement just before Christmas that broadband has to be defined as 15-megabit service with unlimited data is a critical new threshold, because, quite frankly, nobody in my riding has that access.

I am really hoping we can build on the huge progress in our budget, which moves a whole lot of things forward very well, and move this file forward as quickly as possible. Internet is critical, and I would like to make sure we get there.

Another issue is public transit funding, which I think is terrific. I spent years, when I was living in Guelph, as a transit advocate. I believe that if we invest a lot of money in our transit systems, then we can get enough people out of their cars that we do not have to expand the highways infinitely.

I always wanted to know if there is a line beyond which we do not need to pave any further. I have always been curious if we can find that line. We can build highways and roads in every direction as far we want, as long we want, as often as we want, but at some point we

have to ask if we have enough, if there is a better way of getting around. Our budget and platform have committed large quantities of money over a long period of time to improving our public transit infrastructure. I really believe this is the direction we need to be going as a country.

•(1145)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear about the importance of rural communities. Right across the country we are all affiliated with rural communities.

I would like to ask the member for his thoughts about the almost 300 jobs from the rural community of Vegreville being removed to go into an urban centre, Edmonton; the \$15 billion from communities, including rural communities, being pulled out of infrastructure to go into an infrastructure bank; and of course the removal of the credit for public transit that would help seniors and youth get around his community. Perhaps the member could comment on those items.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, I am not sure that the public transit credit did a whole lot in my community, where public transit is essentially non-existent. We have a system that I believe uses six retired school buses on a one-off fare system with no passes, so there is nothing that worked for the actual credit. Those six buses try to service 35 communities about four times a day. It is not a realistic system, so we need to figure out ways to move this forward and to better invest in rural areas. Rural is a rather large portion of this country, as my colleagues will definitely relate to. Rural needs are really important, and I always look forward to new investment in rural areas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the things on which my colleague is very consistent is advocating for rural Canada.

I have had the opportunity to witness first-hand a very strong sense of passion in wanting, for lack of a better word, urbanites to better understand the importance of rural Canada, so I do applaud him for his efforts to make it a little bit easier for us to understand.

The issue he talked about today was the Internet and the impact that it is not having in some areas of Canada. It is because of limitations, and that is one of the reasons why the government does need to invest in Internet.

I am wondering if the member could just continue to provide a sense of why Internet is so important. When I listen to the member, I cannot help but think about the lost opportunities because of lack of access to the Internet in our rural communities. Could he maybe just add a few more thoughts with respect to that?

The Budget

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: It is true, Madam Speaker. Had I stayed at the end of school in the town where I grew up and which I now represent, I would not have the career that I had. I found really interesting work, on contract, working on the Internet from 2000, for almost a decade, as an editor for an online high-tech news website. With all my education, all my experiences having been the same, had I stayed at home I simply could not have done that.

The economic opportunity loss for our youth in rural areas is very serious. The Internet file is the number one issue that people speak to me about in my riding. There are so many other issues that come up, but there are none that come up more often or more firmly than the lack of Internet access in our region.

When I toured the 43 municipalities in my riding, all 43 of them, every one of them, said that their number one priority in the community was Internet. A town of 400 people spent \$100,000 of their municipal budget on getting Internet access when it had a boil water advisory in its small aqueduct downtown for more than 10 years.

If that does not tell members how important this file is for us, there is no way of expressing it well enough.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Madam Speaker, if I understood the member correctly, he is saying that the elimination of the tax credit for Montreal metro passes, for example, does not affect him because he does not live there.

I would like to remind him that he lives just one hour from Montreal and that, if fewer people take the metro in Montreal because this tax credit has been eliminated, the pollution will affect his community.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Madam Speaker, obviously, it is important to look at all of the policies surrounding tax credits. I do not fully agree with my colleague.

[*English*]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, today, I will be sharing my time with the member for Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola. I apologize to the people who reside in Similkameen because I probably said it wrong. In any event, I am honoured to be here today to discuss the budget with all parliamentarians and with Canadians.

Specifically, there are a lot of things in the budget that may be good for Canadians and may be good in 10 to 20 years, but I have a lot of concerns and I heard many concerns from our local residents of Elgin—Middlesex—London during our break week. However, I am actually going to start off with some positive things that I did see in the budget that I can actually applaud the government on, some good initiatives. Initiatives are one thing, but it is the implementation that is going to be the biggest hazzard here.

I would like to applaud the government for the caregiver employment insurance. Over my time as an assistant, working many times with families who had critically ill children or critically ill parents or a family member who had been in a terrible car accident and was in the hospital, I saw that a lot of times that would create a lot of chaos for people in their homes. Having the opportunity to have this employment insurance allowing people up to 15 weeks so

they could take care of a loved one is very important, especially when it is not compassionate care but we are looking at people who will indeed be better in a few months. I do applaud the government on this.

I had a lot of people coming through. It might be someone's wife who is suffering from cancer, who needed to go to the cancer clinic, and so, being able to be there to support a family member is really important. I believe a lot of times we expect others to do it, but it is very important for families to have that opportunity, so I too would like to commend the government on the caregiver EI.

Parental leave is another thing that we actually had in our 2015 budget, as well, extending it to 18 months. This is going to be a really tricky one, though, I believe, for the government. Although it is a really good, honourable thing to do, we have to recognize that there is a cost to extending it to 18 months to allow families to be able to nurture and raise a child for the first 18 months. We know that those persons taking off time to raise a child would have 33% of their income for the period of 18 months. A lot of times when we are dealing with that, we hear people say employment insurance at 55% is not enough and it is very difficult to get by. Therefore, we have to recognize that, for 18 months at 33%, there are going to be struggles as well.

By no means am I saying that the government should be increasing or decreasing those amounts. I am just saying the government might end up in a real pickle and it should be very aware of that.

I actually sit on the status of women committee. Just a few weeks ago, when we were talking about employment insurance, we were talking about men getting involved in the caregiving of their children. I believe the uptake currently on parental leave is 2% for men, meaning 98% for women. We really talked about equality and things of that sort. One of the things that I heard from witnesses was, "Well, they're going to have to have employers top up the employment insurance."

One of my biggest concerns is, when it is a government and these people are working for taxpayer dollars, there may be programs available to them in the public service that might top them up to 90%. I know that my sisters, as school teachers, were able to have that. They received the 55%, and then an additional 35% that topped them up to 90% of their actual earnings. We have to understand the effect and the impact that this may have on those people employed in the private sector. We have to be aware that, at the end of the day, it might end up costing employers more.

Those are some concerns that I have in the long run. I believe the idea is very good, but at the same time, we have to see what we are going to be doing to private employers, people who work for non-taxpayer dollars who may not have those benefits available, because I do know that there are advocates out there saying it should be the employers. I think anytime we are discussing those things, we need to really take that into consideration.

The Budget

We talked a lot about the gender lens and the fact that this entire budget was looked at through the gender lens. I know there was an entire chapter in the 2016 budget. However, when we are talking about the gender lens in this one, I do not see it actually applied because I do not think that the government is taking into consideration what would happen. Is it going to be mothers who are going to be taking off those 18 months and then going back to a job?

We also have to recognize that the Canada Labour Code has to be addressed, as well, because currently we can only take one year off; so that is another thing, as well. There are a lot of Canadians who are pleased with that but, at the same time, are extremely concerned, and it could cause a lot of issues.

● (1150)

Finally, another positive thing is the targeted funding for housing. There is some funding that I saw in a little note talking about housing for persons who are leaving domestic violence. I would once again applaud that.

During my time, during my work not only as an assistant but as a member of Parliament and within my own community, I recognize there are not the financial resources available to help victims of violence. One of the greatest things is the need for shelters. Having targeted funding that is going to help people escape violence and get into a safe home that is going to be assisted through the federal government, that is very positive.

However, we also need to make sure that it is going to hit all 338 ridings. Domestic violence is not a rural issue. It is not an urban issue. It is not a first nations issue. It is an issue for all Canadians. We know that one in four young women are part of a sexual assault within their first eight weeks of post-secondary schooling.

We have to be aware of all of these situations before we target this funding. We need to make sure it is available to everybody, and not just going to urban centres.

We know some of the key issues. When we are looking at housing in rural areas, we may see the resources very limited. Just last week I was in the municipality of West Elgin, where we were looking at the Canadian index of well-being and discussing some of the resources or lack of resources that communities have.

It was interesting because they were talking about all of the resources available to them in southwestern Ontario. One of the biggest and most important, crucial impacts that they have is the fact that there is no transportation to many of these services. They are not actually located in the municipality of West Elgin and the transportation for them is limited, because there is no busing other than that from West Elgin to Glencoe.

If people need to have services in the city of London, the city of St. Thomas, or the city of Chatham, things like that are not available to them. It is not just the domestic violence piece, but it also has to do with mental wellness and mental illness. We have to understand that when we are doing targeted funding, we need to think of all Canadians and not just punt the money into government-held ridings. That is something I am very concerned with: we have to make sure we are looking at this as a broad issue and not specifically in one riding or another. It is something we all have to deal with.

As I continue with this, I am going to look at some of the other concerns I have. I have talked many times about helping our youth. One thing we saw last year was that the tax credit for textbooks was removed, and this year we are seeing that the tax credit for transit is being removed. A few minutes ago I heard the member from Quebec say that it was not helping his riding.

I live in the city of St. Thomas, actually the municipality of Central Elgin. We do not have a municipal bus there. I have a son who goes to school in Toronto, and because of the cost of living in Toronto, he is looking at living outside of Toronto proper. He will be moving into a community outside. Therefore, we really looked into transit, to make sure there was public transit available to him.

Last week we heard the member of Parliament for Milton talk about the fact that those people using GO Transit will no longer be able to get those passes and credits that will help with those costs. It is not just for those people who are using GO Transit, but it is families like my own, families like most Canadians. A child leaving and going to post-secondary education is not going with a car. Therefore, important things like public education and transit credits are very important when people are living outside a large city and trying to travel in to their schools. This is just another cost to the student.

We saw that the tax credits for tools are also gone. Anyone working in apprenticeships or the trades programs are kind of being nickle-and-dimed. They are not going to be able to take some of those initial expenditures and use them as tax credits.

I am going to shift away from that and look more at Elgin—Middlesex—London. Last week I was speaking to some of our mayors. Immediately, they brought up the SWIFT program. It was interesting, because we speak a lot about the infrastructure and the need for Internet. What we saw in budget 2016 was a \$2 billion amount to be spent on infrastructure for rural Canada. All we have seen in the 2017 budget is the money that was not spent in 2016 being transferred to the 2017 budget and still not getting out to Canadian rural municipalities.

When I spoke to the mayors, the mayor from Central Elgin and the mayor from Southwold, I asked them specifically about the budget. These are people who would be very honest with me. If they were very happy with the budget, they would say, "Karen, it is a great budget." Instead they said, "Karen, there is nothing in it for us." As mayors, they found there was nothing for their municipalities. There was nothing in it for the farmers. Worrying about rural infrastructure, worrying about Internet, we are not seeing that.

● (1155)

Just six months ago the Minister of Innovation announced the SWIFT program that was put forward by our Western Ontario Warden's Caucus. We do not see it mentioned in the budget. The caucus is concerned this program will not be supported.

As a person from rural Canada, as a person representing many municipalities with populations of 300 and 400, I am concerned that much of our money will go to larger municipalities and not to rural Canadians.

The Budget

•(1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member across the way, but I do not necessarily agree with all of them.

There is a great deal for mayors, reeves and all Canadians to be happy about with respect to this budget. We see an ongoing commitment toward infrastructure. For example, just the other day an announcement was made of around 200 proposed projects just in the province of Ontario alone. Substantial projects are taking place in many different municipalities.

The feedback I am receiving has been overwhelmingly positive on this government's decision to invest in Canada's infrastructure.

Would the member not acknowledge that investment in virtually every region of our country is being well received for the simple reason that, generally speaking, Canadians understand and appreciate the importance of our infrastructure?

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: Mr. Speaker, the member has to remember that our critic for infrastructure brought up the fact that infrastructure dollars were not rolling. We showed that last year when we talked about how much was going to be invested, how much actually went out the door, and how many shovels were in the ground.

My mayors are looking for something that is not Ontario. They are looking for something for their communities.

It is going to be very difficult for members of Parliament in this area to tell Ontario rural MPs and MPPs that they are getting a fair share. Unfortunately, as a rural resident, I do not see that throughout Ontario. It is very focused on the city of Toronto. I am not against Toronto by any means, but I am pro my community. Those are some of our concerns.

The government has to start rolling out the infrastructure dollars rather than keeping the money in its coffers. If the federal government tells the province of Ontario that it is going to give it money, make sure it is not just going to the city of Toronto, but going to all municipalities throughout Ontario.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London for raising concern about the money for affordable housing being delayed getting out the door.

A man who goes by the name of Elvis lives in my riding. Elvis is an alcoholic. For years Elvis would get intoxicated to the point where the community would have to call for an ambulance to take him to the hospital or he would have run-ins with the law, which cost the criminal justice system money. This literally cost us thousands of dollars a day and hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to provincial, federal, and municipal governments. The Port Alberni Shelter Society has secured a unit for Elvis. For five years Elvis has been living in this shelter for \$500 a month, or \$6,000 a year. He is provided with a home, but it saves taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In this budget, the government has announced over \$10 billion in money for housing, but only \$20 million of that will get out the door

this year. That is about 20 houses in Toronto and Vancouver. That is not going to do a lot for people in rural communities.

Maybe the member could talk about the cost savings in ensuring that people who need help have roofs over their heads and about those single parents who might even make the worst decision and who do not have a home.

Mrs. Karen Vecchio: We have seen that all over Canada, Mr. Speaker. As part of a HUMA tour we took with respect to poverty reduction strategies, I remember going to a place where 80 people were living. It had four walls and 80 cots. There was no food. There was nothing to help those people. We do not have resources available for them. We also do not have resources available for addictions.

I really appreciate the story of Elvis, because everybody in this room has an Elvis in their community. A lot of times it is about stopping it before it gets too far. The St. Thomas Psychiatric Network is in my community and it has seen decreases in its funding. It takes people off the streets and gets them into housing first, which is a great positive strategy. Could we do more? Yes, we absolutely could do more. There are some strategies that we could use, like the Housing First project.

We have an issue when it comes to shelters. It is not just people from violence, as I spoke about, but people with addictions, or a variety of issues. We need to ensure the money gets out the door because the federal government has not invested in that. We need to ensure that money goes all over the country as well. Poverty is not just in urban areas but in rural areas as well.

We need to create opportunities for housing as well as create opportunities for employment, which to me is number one.

•(1205)

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my comments this afternoon in this debate by pointing out I have some very serious concerns with the budget. I would like to take a few moments to explain exactly why.

My concern is that I am seeing an alarming pattern. All governments and all elected officials will try to add a little pizzazz to their words, try to add a little flavour to their rhetoric so they sound like they are addressing the needs of the day. All governments will do that but, as we know, the current government is a big fan of buzzwords. In fact, it was humorous to read punditry columns the morning after the budget as they were all virtually united in expressing how boring and overused buzzwords had become with the Liberal government. In many respects, this was a buzzword budget.

Getting back to my point, in last year's budget the go-to buzzword was "infrastructure". Here is the thing. The Liberal government threw out a massive number of over \$186 billion in infrastructure spending. However, when we look at the fine print, that is \$186 billion over 12 years. Only \$13 billion and change was proposed to be spent over the first two years.

The Budget

I mention that because we know the parliamentary budget officer could only identify just over \$4 billion in infrastructure projects currently under way. Why do I mention that? Because in the budget presented a few weeks ago, we learned that over those same two years the Liberals would run up deficits totalling over \$50 billion.

To recap, the parliamentary budget office finds over \$4 billion being spent on actual infrastructure, yet the Liberal government is adding over \$50 billion in new debt. This basically means the whole infrastructure theme was a carefully designed sham, as the vast majority of that promised infrastructure spending has been punted down the road. That is the same problem we see in this year's budget for 2017. Yes, the buzzwords have changed, but the pattern of making big promises that are in effect kicked down the road has not.

Let me give a few examples of this from the budget. "Helping working adults upgrade their skills" is something people would be very supportive of. How much new money did the Liberals actually budget for that in the 2017 budget? Absolutely zero, but \$151 million in the 2019 election year.

The next is "Investing in skills Innovation". How much new money did the Liberals budget in the 2017 budget? Once again, the answer is zero, but guess what? The Liberals have budgeted \$50 million in the 2019 election year. What a coincidence.

How about "Expanding the Youth Employment Strategy". Guess how much new money is budgeted in 2017? Once again, the Liberals budget zero for that in this year's budget. However, wait for it, the Liberals budget \$96 million, but in which year? That is right, the 2019 election year because unemployed youth who need jobs today should have to wait around until Liberals need to be re-elected.

The budget is simply playing politics with the lives of Canadians. I can cite many more examples where there are items in the budget that are not actually budgeted in 2017. In every case, surprise, surprise, there is money for these things in the 2019 election budget. Again, the budget is playing politics with the lives of people lives.

Is it any wonder why one columnist describes the budget as being an empty wrapped gift box. All that is missing is the do not open until 2019 credit card.

I mention the latter part because we know despite all these unbudgeted items, the Liberal government will be running a deficit in excess of \$25 billion this year alone. We all know the Liberal government promised Canadians modest deficits of \$10 billion per year, much as the Liberals promised to lower the debt-to-GDP ratio annually and, of course, to balance the budget in 2019.

• (1210)

On this last promise, the Prime Minister went on CBC, looked Canadians right in the eyes and said that the promise to return to a balanced budget in 2019 was set in stone. Today, the words "balanced budget" are dirty to the Liberal finance minister. A few weeks ago, the finance minister embarrassed himself, I would allege, by refusing to answer a very simple question from Peter Mansbridge as to when his plan would return Canada to a balanced budget.

The fact is that the finance minister does not have a plan to return to a balanced budget. However, his department does. It told us that, at a minimum, having a balanced budget again would be somewhere

in 2050. What did the finance minister do when he saw the report from his own department last October? He intentionally punted and hid this information from Canadians until it was posted on Friday, December 23 of last year.

Why did he do that? Here is the most alarming part of it all. If we look at what the Liberal government said about real GDP growth in last year's budget and compare it to what it is forecasting in this year's budget, for every year the Liberals are in power, they have now downgraded real GDP growth expectations. In fact, the Liberals even show that real GDP growth in 2019 will actually be lower than it is today. In other words, even the Liberals own budget factually shows they know their own fiscal plan is failing.

Keep in mind that we also know that business investment in Canada has declined every quarterly reporting period since the Liberal government came to power, and we all know why. Simply, it has made Canada less competitive. How? Because the Liberals increased costs on employers and job creators. Even when told by their own Department of Finance that increasing CPP would harm jobs and the Canadian economy for over 20 years, the Liberals did not care and did so anyway. Establishing a national carbon tax, when none of our major trading partners are implementing one also, makes us less competitive. Again, it is no surprise why Canadian business investment is in decline. It is actually at the lowest level since 1981.

Now we have the Liberal government deciding to borrow money and picking the winners and losers for investment. All this has to be paid for, but the finance minister refuses to say how. We may have the first finance minister in Canadian history who believes that balanced budgets are bad, or that balanced budgets are dirty words. I will challenge the finance minister to prove me wrong, to come to this place and tell Canadians when and how he will balance the budget.

That leaves me with my final thought.

If the Liberals are clearly so opposed to a balanced budget, because, let us not forget that the parliamentary budget officer caught and exposed them for trying to manipulate the balanced budget they inherited from the former Conservative government, why did the Prime Minister promise Canadians they would return to a balanced budget in 2019? I would submit that the Liberal Prime Minister knew this was what Canadians wanted to hear. In fact, there are growing examples, almost by the day, of a Prime Minister who is willing to promise anything in order to get elected. Today we have this budget, much like budgets that do not deliver what the Prime Minister has promised, promises set in stone.

The Budget

Nobody forced the Prime Minister into promising a return to a balanced budget in 2019. He made the decision to look Canadians right in the eyes and make that promise. While I cannot force the Prime Minister to keep his promise to Canadians, I will certainly vote against this budget. It breaks the very word the Prime Minister set in stone.

If members on the government side wanted to truly make a difference and become part of history, they could do the same, if only to send a message. When someone looks Canadians in the eyes and makes a promise that is set in stone, Canadians deserve and expect to have that promise honoured.

I ask members to please join me in voting against this budget, never mind the Prime Minister and his inner circle, who are really running things. Canadians deserve and expect the Prime Minister to honour his word.

• (1215)

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ideally, we must always balance our budgets. There are times when, in order to serve Canadians, we need to borrow a little money to invest in Canadians, to invest in our economy.

What I find fascinating is how my hon. colleague wants to forget that the largest deficit in Canada's history was incurred by the previous government. A total of \$160 billion was added to our debt by the previous government. Yes, there are times for a deficit, but the difference is that deficit was used for signs, fake lakes, and gazebos, while our deficit is being invested for Canadians in the economy, in infrastructure, and in jobs.

Can the hon. member explain to me why he did not say a word when the previous government added \$160 billion to our debt?

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I came here in 2011, and I worked hard to encourage the government to meet its balanced budget commitment by 2015, something the Conservatives did without cutting health care, unlike the previous Liberals in the 1990s.

I would also say that when the Conservatives first came to power, Mr. Harper and Mr. Flaherty put down \$50-plus billion to pay down the debt ahead of time. When the largest dip in demand, the largest recession since the Great Depression came along, along with the G20, people made the decision to stimulate the economy. We built real infrastructure. We created net new jobs in this country. We exited the recession faster than everyone else. When we Conservatives say that we will take care of business, and we look Canadians in the eye, we mean it.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing that happened in the election which was very rare is that the NDP, the Conservative Party, and the Liberal Party all agreed on one thing, which was to lower taxes for small business people from 11% to 9%. In the last budget, the Liberals broke that promise. Then in this budget, the Liberals broke that promise. In fact, the minister said that it is a great sound bite and makes great headlines but it is not practical and not a priority for the Liberal government. There is nothing in this budget for small business. The only thing that was in the budget is the Liberals will double down on small businesses and focus on attacking them through their taxes.

As a fellow British Columbian, the member knows how important small business is in British Columbia. Small businesses are the economic generators and job creators in our communities. Maybe the member could talk about how it is affecting business people in his community, and indicate if it is an important issue for him and his community.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member's work, particularly with respect to small business. Obviously, small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They build jobs. They are very responsive to changes in taxes or policy because they have to be. They are not like large businesses that can take on costs and pass them on to the consumer.

I would simply say that many people in my riding would like to see money set aside for endangered species, like Liberal promises. The fact of the matter is the Liberals said that they would do one thing, then changed that with respect to balanced budgets and tax policies on small business. Now private campgrounds and shared business practices, such as lawyers and doctors, are all paying more. In fact, billable hours are being changed in this budget. This is all being done without consultation, all without saying what they are doing, other than just to raise the money so that they can somehow be able to scrape two cents together to say that they can pay for these things.

• (1220)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the greatest respect for my friend and colleague across the way. However, of the throngs of people who are watching this debate today, I am sure most are sitting there with their laptop, iPad or phone, and can do something as simple as search on Google for past deficits by Canadian governments. They would see that certainly when the Conservatives came into power in 2006-07, they inherited about a \$14-billion surplus from the previous Paul Martin government. Then in 2008-09, the Conservatives went on to add \$5.8 billion to the debt. An outstanding year was 2009-10, as my colleague said, with a whopping addition of \$55.6 billion. In 2010-11, there was another \$33.4 billion, and \$26.3 billion in 2011-12, and then \$18.4 billion, for a grand total of \$150 billion.

I wonder if my friend and colleague managed to google that before he put the words of his speech together today.

Mr. Dan Albas: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite must have been looking at his BlackBerry when his other colleague asked me pretty much the same question.

When we Conservatives said that we would spend money, we spent it on infrastructure. It was during the time of the greatest recession since the Great Depression and all the G20 countries decided to do it together.

The Budget

The Liberal government is going it alone. It is not spending the money on infrastructure. At some point we need to have someone credible present a plan to return us back to balance. If the government cannot reduce and curb spending when the economy is not bad, what happens when we have another recession that is even greater? We will not have the money to pay for it.

When we Conservatives make promises, we keep them with Canadians and we actually build infrastructure and jobs. With the Liberal government, it is all lip service.

Mr. Darrell Samson (Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South.

I must say that I am extremely pleased and excited with budget 2017. This budget focuses on the middle class. With this budget, Canadians will benefit. Nova Scotians will benefit. The people from Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook will benefit as well.

This budget is a framework around many groups: seniors, youth, veterans. This budget is really one that is comprehensive and helps many Canadians. We will see that throughout the year, of course, but I want to talk about three main areas. The first one is family. The second one is seniors. The third one is veterans. It is very obvious we will talk a lot longer about veterans, because there are a lot of good things there. We have been working with veterans across Canada for a number of years.

First, let us talk a little about the 2016 budget. The 2016 budget started the good work of our government, and it is a four-year plan. I want to talk about two major areas where budget 2016 is powerful. The first one is the CCB, the Canada child benefit. When I was campaigning from one area to the other across my large riding, people were very concerned. Young families were concerned about how they could continue to provide what their kids need. They were not able to. They were struggling. The CCB contribution benefit that our government put forward is extremely impressive. In my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, over 15,000 children benefited since it started in July 2016.

Let us focus on the month of October 2016. Believe it or not, 15,000 children benefited. The government paid \$5.2 million in that month alone to support families in my riding of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook. That in itself is impressive, but it is not only in my riding. There are 338 ridings, and they are all benefiting. Families in all those ridings are benefiting. That was a major help.

The second one in budget 2016 that is extremely important to mention is the 7% tax reduction on the middle class. The middle class had been struggling for over 10 years with the former government without seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. In our first year in government we were able to bring forward a 7% reduction in taxes to help the middle class. Throughout the last six months I have been chatting with my constituents, and it is clear that is a major help.

Also our government is the only government that was willing and able to put a 1% tax increase on the wealthiest Canadians. Our party was the only party that supported that.

Budget 2016 puts a nice framework on what we have done. Let us look now at budget 2017 and focus on families.

For a long time everyone in this House has heard over and over again the necessity to create child care spaces for young kids, preschool children. Back in 2005-06, it was the government under Paul Martin, and I believe the minister of the day was Ken Dryden, the famous goaltender for the Montreal Canadiens. If I did not mention that, I would be—

Hon. Kevin Sorenson: He was a better goalie than an MP.

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, that being said, at that time the Liberal Party of Canada was getting ready to approve a child care plan, but the Liberals did not win the election. The Tories did, and then they went back to sleep. For 20 to 30 years, we had been talking about how important child care is, but it was forgotten. At that time, we had committed \$5 billion over five years. That is quite impressive.

What do we have this year, this time around? There is \$500 million this year, but \$7 billion over the next 10 years for child care in this country. There is not one riding in the country that would not definitely benefit from that investment. That is impressive.

● (1225)

The second thing under the family concept in the budget, which I am extremely proud of, is a national housing strategy. We have talked about it on and on in the House for years. They talked about it before I got here, and after I leave they will still be talking about it. Our government is putting forward a strong national strategy on homelessness and a strategy to support families that are less fortunate and to support seniors who want to stay and live in their communities.

Those are major benefits. We are going to see all kinds of investments to repair and renovate housing and investments for new housing, which is so important. I know that my community would benefit from that investment.

[*Translation*]

The third point relates to the issue of rural Internet access. People with low incomes often have a hard time paying for Internet service. Our government has allocated funding to address this problem. Cable companies will be able to create packages for lower-income families.

[*English*]

The next category in the budget I want to talk about is seniors. Seniors have been talking about health care and the cost of prescription drugs. They have told me that they have to make tough choices between food, lodging, and prescription drugs. Our government is coming forward to invest in Health Canada to help reduce the cost of prescription drugs.

The Budget

The second piece I want to talk about is the compassionate care EI benefit. We would invest in those individuals and families who want to help those who are gravely ill. That would be over and above the 35 weeks already granted to support the terminally ill. That is another clear sign of our strength in that area.

In the short time I have left, I want to move to veterans affairs. Quickly, 20% of the new money invested in the budget would go toward veterans. That is extremely important. These men and women have risked their lives for Canadians and democracy and continue to do so, and we need to recognize that. In Sackville—Preston, 23% of the people in my riding are veterans or military.

The lifetime pension option is something I have heard about over and over again. That is being done, and it is extremely important.

Transitioning from being in the military to being a veteran and how we can help in that transition is also very important. Already Veterans Affairs and DND are working together to simplify and streamline the process.

Another one is the military family resource centres. We propose expanding the centres and providing outreach to make sure we help as many Canadians as we can.

The emergency fund and the family well-being fund are things they have been asking the government for over and over again. They asked the last government for that support, and they were ignored, but our government is coming through.

Just yesterday, I read that VIA Rail, for the 150th anniversary, will provide a 25% reduction for travel for veterans and military families. There is investment as well in the family wellness program. We will see VIA Rail start hiring up to 10% of its workforce from retired military members.

• (1230)

In closing, I want to say that seniors, veterans, young people, Canadians, Nova Scotia, and the people of Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook will continue to prosper under budget 2017.

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to comment on what the member shared in regard to families and the 7% decline in taxes. Along with that, we lost tax credits for young families. I have heard from three specific families in my riding who have said that they are so tired of hearing that these tax credits were only used by the wealthy. These three families are in the position of still hoping but are giving up on ever joining the middle class. Those tax credits meant that they were able to have their children in sports and music programs. The 7% reduction in taxes has more than been made up for those families by the loss of tax credits, by CPP and EI premiums, by carbon taxes, and by all kinds of barriers to buying a first home.

What would the member say to these families who are saying, “We are not part of the middle class. We used those tax credits, and now the government is taxing us by taking them away”?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, I could go on a long time and talk about carbon pricing and how it benefits Canadians in many ways. However, as I said in my speech today, the Canada child benefit is an enormous contribution to families.

This is a big-picture plan. Over a four-year period, we know that the economy will be strong. We are listening to young families, we are listening to seniors, and we are listening to young people so that we are better able to respond. From some of the things I shared in my speech today, it is clear that we are on the right track and are going to make things better for all Canadians.

• (1235)

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the things I hear the Liberals talk about is tax cuts. I just want to let members know that in my riding, we have been having tax clinics, and the people who are making \$45,000 are still looking for their tax cut. I just want to send that message over to them.

One of the other things the Liberals mentioned is EI. In the budget, they talk about expanding maternity leave to 18 months from 12 months. That is great stuff. The problem is that it would be at a reduced rate. People would have to take a cut in family income for a longer period of time. Most important, and what has not been mentioned, is that if people took plan B, with the extra six months, they would be penalized when they went to collect their CPP later in life, because the current government has omitted the drop-out period for maternity leave in the enhancement. Can the member explain to me how this is fair to the middle class?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, what is important about EI and the 18 months for maternity leave is that it would be an opportunity for Canadian families that want to stay at home a bit longer to support their families. Those are decisions they take as families. There are all kinds of decisions.

Our budget is a step-forward budget. We do not climb three steps of a ladder at once. At least in Nova Scotia and in Sackville—Preston—Chezzetcook, we go up one step at a time to make things right and make sure we get it done, and that is exactly what we are doing here today.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear my colleague's comments that the Liberals were taking child care seriously. They were elected 16 months ago. Regarding child care, there is no funding this year. For the housing strategy, there is no money this year. On homelessness, there will be no money for two years. For disabled accessibility, there is zero this year and zero next year. We look at creating Canada's clean growth economy. There is no money this year and no money next year. For skills training, there is nothing this year. For innovation, there is nothing this year for middle-class jobs.

When the member says that the Liberals take this seriously and want to get the economy moving, how is giving zero dollars doing any of those things?

Mr. Darrell Samson: Mr. Speaker, this year alone, for child care spaces, we are adding \$500 million, and it will be \$7 billion over 10 years.

The Budget

There are all kinds of investments that begin at different stages. That is the normal flow. If anyone made commitments for five and 10 years later, it was the Conservative government. It only stayed 10 years, and it did not fulfill most of them.

I am happy a change took place.

[Translation]

Mr. Terry Duguid (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to take part in today's debate on budget 2017, which goes a long way to advancing gender equality in Canada.

[English]

The inclusion of the first-ever gender statement in a federal budget is groundbreaking. In fact, an entire chapter is dedicated to this statement, demonstrating the value we see in gender equality.

As the Minister of Finance has said, we published the government's first-ever gender statement, an assessment that ensures that all budget measures, not just those aimed specifically at women, help us advance the goals of fairness, stronger workforce participation, and gender equality. In many ways, the gender statement sets a new bar for openness and transparency by examining the ways in which public policies affect women and men differently. It also emphasizes the need for a more diverse workforce and for closing the gender wage gap.

Canada continues to have one of the highest gender wage gaps of all the OECD countries. This is unacceptable. Canada should be a leader in closing the wage gap, and our government is committed to taking actions that will help close it. Budget 2017 includes a number of measures aimed at reducing this gap, encouraging greater workforce participation among women, and helping to combat poverty and violence.

These measures include a new investment of \$11.2 billion towards a national housing strategy; an investment of \$7 billion in early learning and child care, as the previous speaker mentioned, over the next 11 years that will support access to child care and allow greater participation in work, education, and training, particularly by mothers; a new employment insurance caregiving benefit that will allow more caregivers, the majority of whom are women, to balance their work and family responsibilities; the adoption of more flexible work arrangements for federally regulated employees, including flexible start and finish times; and the ability to work from home, as well as new unpaid leaves, to help people manage family responsibilities.

One of the key investments in this budget is a commitment of \$101 million over five years to address gender-based violence. Gender-based violence remains an overwhelming barrier to equality and to ensuring that our communities thrive. We must address it. Our government is committed to doing its part to help end this violence and will soon be announcing a strategy to address it.

To develop the best and most appropriate gender-based violence strategy, we must see the entire picture and exchange best practices. For this reason, we will gather evidence and engage our provincial and territorial counterparts to find the best path in moving towards a national strategy.

Budget 2017 commits to a number of additional actions to increase safety and security, including investing in gender and cultural training for judges; investing in the family law system; creating a secretariat on LGBTQ2 issues; and investing in a new national housing fund that prioritizes vulnerable individuals, including survivors of domestic violence.

As we discuss budget 2017, it is also important to keep in mind that it builds on some of the foundations established last year as part of budget 2016, measures that support women and their families. This includes, as has been mentioned, the new, tax-free Canada child benefit, which provides low- and middle-income families with more help with the cost of raising their children. Nine out of 10 families receive more help than they did before, under previous programs, with average benefits for these families rising by nearly \$2,300 in the first year.

The Canada child benefit is particularly beneficial for families led by single parents. These families are most often led by single mothers and tend to have lower total incomes. It is also important to note that most families receiving the maximum Canada child benefit are led by single mothers.

Budget 2016 also increased income support for vulnerable seniors. Enhancements to the guaranteed income supplement have resulted in 750,000 single seniors receiving an increase of up to approximately \$1000 each year. This enhancement is helping to lift 13,000 vulnerable seniors, including 12,000 senior women, out of poverty.

● (1240)

In conclusion, my comments today underscore just how strongly this government believes in moving our country closer to gender equality. Our government has a plan that builds on budget 2016 so women and girls can reach their full potential.

Budget 2017 represents a tremendous opportunity for all of us and for our country to reach its full potential. Doing so benefits all Canadians by helping to build an inclusive, prosperous country that strengthens the middle class from coast to coast to coast.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although we hear a lot of rhetoric about gender-based analyses and how we have a government that is gender-friendly and doing more, it is 2015, and all the rhetoric we hear from the other side, we really do not see much action. If we look at the budget, we do not really have a gender-based analysis. It is just a chapter, a small section, thrown in at the back of the budget. We really do not have any extra measures for ensuring we have pay equity, for example. Probably the biggest failure is that the government has not taken a lead on ensuring we have more women representatives in the House of Commons.

The Budget

I put a private member's bill forward that would incentivize political parties to run more women in elections. The government voted against it, saying that it would bring something else in, and it has not. What will happen in the next election, despite all the rhetoric, despite the Facebook feminism by the Prime Minister, is that we will have the same number or fewer women in the House. I would like the member to tell us the concrete actions by which he thinks we can increase the number of women sitting in the House of Commons?

• (1245)

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce in the House, probably for the first time, that three women were elected to the House of Commons last evening. They happen to be from my party, but they will increase the complement of women in the House, which is a very good thing.

I agree with the hon. member. Twenty-six per cent of the House represented by women is not enough. I know we, as a party, are taking measures to improve that.

Members will remember the 338 women who were welcomed to the House, the Daughters of the Vote, which was sponsored by our government and by Equal Voice. They took their seats in our places. We saw the future before us.

Like the hon. member opposite, we need to increase women's representation in the House.

For the last 10 years, gender-based analysis was given very short shrift by the previous government. The Auditor General called us out. We can do better.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, currently close 1.3 million Canadians are out of work. Six out of 10 of those unemployed Canadians cannot access employment insurance benefits to help them get by. The government has made no new investments to improve access to EI benefits for those who need them the most.

In the Alberni Valley right now, we have seen a massive layoff of mill workers. One of the mills is actually closed and we do not know when it will reopen. It cannot get fibre because of failed practices by the current British Columbia government. Raw log exports have gone up tenfold in 10 years. Our boats are getting loaded with our wood and our jobs are getting shipped out of here.

In this budget, not only were we looking at ways we could better support those who needed to get their unemployment assistance, but we were looking for the government to actually find ways to help people in areas like the Alberni Valley, people in the forest sector in British Columbia, those who are facing a threat of losing their jobs and huge layoffs.

Maybe the government could show some compassion and actually invest in these workers and extend their unemployment insurance benefits instead of bailing out on them like the province of British Columbia has done.

Mr. Terry Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that this government has helped to create 250,000 new jobs in the past six months. The unemployment rate has gone from 7.1%, under the previous government, to 6.6%. I agree we have to do more.

I do not know if the hon. member wants to cast his mind back to the previous budget in which we made major changes to the employment insurance program. The government undertook to reverse many of the changes that were made by the previous government, such as work sharing, longer weeks for certain regions of the country that were hit with high unemployment, including of course the Fort McMurray area.

There is more to do, but this government is very intent on investing in the middle class, creating employment, and creating those jobs of the future.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my excellent colleague from Calgary Rocky Ridge, with whom I practice my English, as he works on his French with me.

We francophones really appreciate the fact that the Conservative Party respects French and English equally.

On March 22, 2017, the Liberal government's Minister of Finance presented a bare-bones budget that has no vision and creates a climate of uncertainty. His budget is entitled "Building a Strong Middle Class", but I think it should be called "destroying hope for the middle class". I am no finance, tax, or budget expert here in Ottawa, but I was smart enough to confirm a few things with experts who work with numbers in the tax field every day and can predict their impact.

Now I would like to comment on a statement by Chartered Professional Accountants Canada, or CPA Canada. The organization said that the federal budget is missing a key target for future planning. In other words, the government has no idea where it is heading. CPA Canada president Joy Thomas said, "This latest budget raises concerns because there is no timeline to address these persistent deficits." She added, "Establishing a target date to bring the budget back into balance would create a goalpost to guide the government in its financial planning. This would greatly assist in fostering business confidence, supporting essential programs and minimizing the burden on future generations." So basically, no vision.

Then there is the title of the budget analysis by Desjardins, a co-operative financial institution that is the pride of Quebec and Canada: "A lacklustre budget for the 150th anniversary of Confederation". In other words, this is a ho-hum budget that does nothing to bolster the confidence of citizens, small businesses, or foreign investors. It conveys a blatant lack of vision. The Liberals have no plan.

In addition to listening to what experts have to say, we parliamentarians pay a lot of attention to what is being said by the media, which has some subject matter and communications experts. The following are the comments of one journalist, Mario Dumont, who wrote an article entitled "A promise broken three times". In that article, he said, "once elected, this government was supposed to run a modest deficit".

The Budget

The Liberals were talking about “a small deficit of \$10 billion” but, in their first year in office, they ran a deficit of \$23 billion. We clearly do not have the same definitions of “small” and “modest”. What is more, the deficit was supposed to be temporary. Looking forward, we do not see any sign of when the Liberal government will allow Canada's finances to generate a surplus. From what we are currently seeing, there is no set date for that. It could be 2055, but I do not have much faith in that estimate. The Liberals said that they would run a small deficit before quickly balancing the budget again, but now they are saying that they will not balance the budget until 2055. The House will understand that I am skeptical about how serious the members opposite are about this. They are going to run deficits in order to implement structural economic measures, but it has been two years and I have yet to see any such measures.

François Pouliot of *Les Affaires* wrote an article entitled “Federal budget: red as far as the eye can see”. Red is the colour of the Liberal Party and symbolic of debt. I am not an expert in interpreting finances, but writing things in red or in parentheses indicates a debt. Michel Girard wrote an article entitled “Canada: in the red for a long time”. That is what I just said. The Liberals do not have a plan, and we do not know when we will be able to get our head back above water.

Even the journalists at CBC/Radio-Canada have reluctantly criticized the budget. According to Gérald Fillion, “Bill Morneau's second budget is anything but an easy, simple, agreeable, and understandable exercise for journalists. It was written to try to please everyone.”

● (1250)

The media recently reported that this government spent much more on public consultations in 16 months than Stephen Harper did in the 10 years he was in power. The Liberals like to please everyone, but that is no way to govern Canada.

Liberal members also told CBC that people should trust the government to manage the budget and to ensure Canada's prosperity. As far as we are concerned, nothing in the world would make us trust the government.

Emmanuelle Latraverse, a Radio-Canada journalist, said that it was not a budget, that it was a political document and that it was not a plan for governing a country.

Nathalie Elgrably-Lévy best expressed the unanimous views of the media when she said “Like PM, like budget”: empty

Let us remember the atmosphere in the House during the hours and minutes that preceded the budget presentation. All parliamentarians on this side, and probably some on the other side, were frustrated by the Prime Minister. Why? The Prime Minister does nothing, is nonchalant, careless, and arrogant. Furthermore, he fails to show leadership, respect, and vision. He is irresponsible. He acts like a dictator. Take, for example, his reform of House of Commons rules. That is another matter, however, one I will not get into.

Let us not forget that this is the same person who once said that budgets balance themselves. Better yet, he said it was the right time to borrow money because interest rates were low. He is not wrong, but what are we going to do when the interest rates go up? There is no money left. We have our Prime Minister to thank for that.

The Liberals are maxing out the credit card. Worse yet, they are filling out a form to apply for a second credit card because they can no longer pay off the first. That is where we are headed and it is unacceptable.

Let me sum up the budget. The Liberals blindsided public transit users by getting rid of the public transit tax credit. They increased the cost of insurance for Canadian farmers. Not much has been said about that, but it is written in the policy paper. Canadian farmers will see their taxes go up because the Liberals eliminated the income tax exemption for insurers. Insurance companies gave our farmers and fishers some breathing room. The government is creating 40,000 child care spaces. It is interfering in provincial and territorial jurisdictions. What will happen in Quebec? Will the province lower its costs? It likely will, but there is nothing that will go directly into the pockets of our Quebec and Canadian families.

Since I do not have much time left, I will skip to the end of my speech even though I have a lot of interesting notes to share with my colleagues. There is nothing here to support Canadian families, seniors, or youth. There are measures that will do nothing for our small and medium-sized businesses. This government has no idea where it is headed, unless it realizes that it is headed straight for a brick wall. The deficit has gone up exponentially for 2017 and is now at \$28.5 billion. Talk about putting things off. Our children and grandchildren will be on the hook. Any individual who behaved like this would have to declare bankruptcy.

This government is irresponsible. It is mortgaging the future of this great country. Farmers will face additional costs. There is nothing for the regions. There is nothing to help the people and businesses of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, nothing to support family centres. Today I presented an e-petition in support of people who are working hard to help the families of our soldiers who fight every day to protect this country. There is nothing about that in this budget.

We will not be silent. The Prime Minister is irresponsible. He is spending like crazy, but he has nothing to show for it. That is the problem with this budget. As I said, I have a lot more information to share with the House, but unfortunately, I am out of time.

● (1255)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member that we do not use the last names of other hon. members in the House. The member referred to the Minister of Finance by name.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I would like some clarification, since I was quoting a title. Are we allowed to say the name of the person in such cases?

● (1300)

The Deputy Speaker: The rule regarding using the names of members of the House also applies to quotations. Members must substitute the title of the individual or the name of the riding he or she represents in place of the name.

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

The Budget

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way needs to have a bit of a reality check and to maybe get outside of the Conservatives' speaking points to get a better appreciation of what the member across the way actually voted against.

Let me give specific examples. He said that this government has not been helping Canadian families. The tax cut for the middle class helped millions of Canadian families. By the way, the Conservatives voted against it.

The member said we are not helping seniors. We lifted literally tens of thousands of seniors out of poverty through the substantial increase to the GIS, again which the Conservative Party voted against. There is a very long list.

Does the member not feel at times he should get out of the Conservative speaking points and see if there is some truth or reality to the situation?

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. We often hear him speak in the House, and it is always nice. He is a good parliamentarian, and I would like to congratulate him on his service.

Now let us talk about the facts. During the election campaign, the Liberal Party promised a modest deficit of \$10 billion. It is in their platform. However, in 2016-17, the deficit was \$23 billion, and it will reach \$28 billion this year. The Liberals said that they would balance the budget in 2019, but the individual responsible for budgets here in Parliament indicated in his forecasts that we will not return to a balanced budget until 2055.

If the Liberals are going to quote facts, they should look in the mirror instead of accusing the Conservatives.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that my colleague from Winnipeg North was listening to my colleague's speech. I was in fact going to thank my colleague for citing several independent sources on the budget. My colleague from Winnipeg North certainly missed a big part of his speech.

My question has to do with the government's penchant for announcing large sums spread out over several years, quite often beyond an election cycle. In the most recent budget, that of 2017, we even see some spending that has been pushed to 2027-28, or 10 years from now, in the middle of a third Liberal government term, should it be re-elected until then.

Could my colleague speak to the increasing use of this practice of announcing major investments over ridiculously long periods of time? These large figures that are bandied about tend to mislead the public. The public gets the impression that the government is spending a lot of money, when in fact it is not. It is promising money that will not be invested until after the election.

Mr. Joël Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. As I said, my colleague opposite is a good parliamentarian, but he should try to listen a bit more.

To answer my colleague's question about the government's approach to making announcements, there was the example in

2016 when the government promised billions of dollars in investments in infrastructure. In 2017, have my parliamentary colleagues seen any cranes, construction sites, or diggers in their ridings? No, there is nothing.

As I said in my speech, the Liberals' approach is nothing more than window dressing. The Liberals are irresponsible and all over the map.

• (1305)

People are not being taken seriously. They are being disrespected. The Liberals say they are planning for the future, but they have already caused so much damage to Canada's economy in a single year.

Indeed, dear colleague, I do not believe this to be acceptable. We should put our foot down and compel the government to keep its promises after presenting the budget, lest we, the parliamentarians, begin to lose all credibility. Naturally, not everything can be accomplished in one year, but this government has dismantled many things in that time. It has contradicted itself on many issues. It has passed the buck from one department to another, and nothing is materializing for Canadians.

To answer my colleague, I hope that this practice will stop. My colleague mentioned three Liberal terms of office. I hope we will convince Canadians that the best thing for them is to elect a Conservative government next time.

[English]

Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just as budget 2016 was a budget built of broken promises, so budget 2017 is an insubstantial rehashing and doubling down on last year's bad ideas, replete with the shameless repetition of catchphrases rendered meaningless by the government's actions to date.

It is no secret that this budget was widely panned. I talked to a number of people in Calgary who could not understand how the government could run these large deficits without having anything to show for them and without any economic justification.

One constituent said that the budget presented by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance under the guise of support for the middle class is a hoax, an insult to the intelligence of Canadians. She went on to say that the Liberals are not building a stronger middle class, so they should stop with this insulting, embarrassing, foolish facade.

Andrew Coyne called it a "nonsense-filled budget".

Perhaps the quote from last week's *National Post* sums it up best in describing the budget as "278 pages of flowery verbiage dressed up in the thin veneer of marketing speak. The whole thing will be forgotten by the weekend."

While it is mostly true that this budget is so thin on substance that the news cycle has already forgotten it, the debt that this budget piles on certainly cannot be forgotten that easily.

The Budget

I mentioned the government's penchant for meaningless catch-phrases, so I will remind members of this House that the government promised unprecedented transparency, sound economic stewardship resulting in greater rates of growth, fairness for the middle class and those working hard to join it, and attentive consultation with all Canadians—all empty platitudes coming from the Liberal government.

In the last election, Liberals also promised maximum deficits of \$10 billion and a return to the balanced budget that the parliamentary budget office confirmed that the Liberals inherited when they formed government.

What are these so-called modest deficits that were promised? Hearing any talk of anything modest from the Liberals should have been a red flag, but Canadians elected them anyway on a promise that the maximum \$10 billion deficits would be incurred strictly in order to fund infrastructure projects that would immediately facilitate economic activity and real GDP growth.

It did not happen. This budget with its \$28 billion now structural deficit and no hint of even a timetable to return to surplus, along with downgraded growth projections, leaves no room for the government to deny that it broke the central promise of the last campaign. Liberals make no apologies for breaking their promise, and they have no intention of even trying to keep it. They are simply hoping nobody noticed.

Canadians have noticed, and while Canadians are forgiving people and will forgive an honest mistake, they will not forgive a broken trust. It is widely known that when the Liberals do get thrown out of office, they are historically brought down by their own arrogance and corruption, yet arrogance and corruption are at the core of the Liberals' big government, government-knows-best political philosophy: arrogance in the technocrats' conceit that a small group of self-styled experts know better than millions of individuals making choices in their own interest; and corruption, which inevitably crops up when a small group of insiders has the power to control economic activity through regulation and to pick corporate winners and losers.

The latter point is evident by the budget 2017 corporate welfare agenda. It boasts almost \$1.3 billion over six years of investment in six main economic priorities, like clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and agrifood. To be clear, these may well be important fields of economic development, assuming these fancy-sounding terms can be defined and actually mean something. However, when it comes to business, when a government says invest, it actually means spend, which actually means subsidize.

Likewise, when it says it will spend over \$1.7 billion over six years on, among other things, spawning superclusters, offering state-supplied venture capital to favoured firms, and twisting procurement policy to let taxpayers bear the risk of testing out Canadian products, it means that the government will try to steer the economy toward its pet priorities with no regard to the desires of Canadians free to choose their own priorities in a free market.

This opens the door for economic distortion and corruption, since interested firms will inevitably try to curry favour with the government in order to get their share of its subsidies, perhaps doing so at cash for access fundraisers. However, I digress.

Returning to the main point about the budget, it is laced with simplistic, idealistic depictions of a world that the Liberals wish existed, instead of the complex reality at hand. Even the cover art on budget 2017 suggests a possible Freudian slip, showing the Liberals know that their promises are merely illusions.

● (1310)

We have the illusion of useful infrastructure actually being built by a government that is simply making endless project announcements. We have the illusion of timely medical care for the elderly under a government that ignores real threats to the sustainability of the single-payer system and has yet to deliver on its palliative care promises. We have an illusory guitar and a recording system in the hands of a creative young woman, apparently put there by the same government that eliminated the children's arts and fitness tax credits. We have the illusion of solar-powered fishing boats and effective wind power production under a government whose senior PMO advisers were the architects of the Ontario Liberals' disastrous Green Energy Act.

The back cover doodles also depict the Liberals' vision of the world and their idealized economy. There is scientific equipment, wind turbines, bicycles, happy families, and recreational fishing boats, but there are no mines, no oil rigs, no farms, and no cut timber. There is no primary industry and no recognition of the millions of jobs that depend on natural resources.

Speaking of wishful thinking, budget 2017 contains many aspirational phrases that ring hollow when set against the government's record. For example, on page 179 it says that "In Canada, we have made the choice to build an economy that works for everyone" even as the Prime Minister and his party can barely contain their disdain for the resource and agricultural sectors.

Budget 2017 says on page 204 that "The Government remains committed to building a fair tax system that benefits the middle class and those working hard to join it", yet the government cannot and will not define what that even means because it has no definition of "middle class".

One of my personal favourites is on page 214 of budget 2017. It claims that "The Government is committed to enhancing the transparency and accountability of federal borrowing activities to Parliament and ultimately Canadians"—this from a government that as we speak is trying to change the Standing Orders of the House of Commons without all-party consent.

The Budget

The ability of the government to speak of transparency with a straight face in the midst of an unprecedented attack on democratic parliamentary privilege would be hilariously ironic if the stakes were not so high. The Liberal government's vision of transparency would centralize even more powers into the hands of a small executive, would diminish Parliament's ability to hold the government to account, and would allow the party in power to unilaterally change parliamentary procedure for its own convenience.

The government sees members of Parliament and their democratic prerogatives as a nuisance, oblivious to the fact that every member of Parliament, regardless of the caucus in which he or she sits, won an election to represent their constituents. The ones on this side of the House were elected by people who do not share the government's views, and those people have the right to have their voices heard in the House through the members of Parliament that they elected.

I still cannot figure out whether the timing of this budget was meant to distract attention from the Liberals' power grab at PROC or the other way around. Both the budget and their actions at PROC are surely embarrassing to the government and would be better covered up by a stronger news story. The question is, which embarrasses the Liberal government more? Again, I digress.

Instead of offering trendy buzzwords that signify nothing, the government should serve Canadians through practical and tangible measures. This budget repeats the word "innovation" some 200 times, but Canadians know that just repeating a word over and over again will not get unemployed Canadians back to work. Saying the words "venture capital", "catalyst", "supercluster", or "infrastructure bank" on the cocktail party circuit might make a Liberal feel clever, but words will not balance a budget, grow the economy, or lift anybody out of poverty. Merely announcing or reannouncing infrastructure projects will not get shovels into the ground.

Instead, the government should rein in its out-of-control spending and the tax increases that it requires. It should reverse course on taxes like the carbon tax and follow the example of Conservatives, who brought federal tax to its lowest point in 50 years while returning to a balanced budget on schedule.

The government should reduce regulation to unleash the creative and innovative energy currently trapped in red tape. It should fulfill its own broken promise and reduce the small business tax rate, and it should reverse its ill-conceived and poorly timed job-killing payroll tax.

Lastly, the Liberals should quit trying to think of new ways to nickel-and-dime money out of Canadians while flailing in a sea of red ink, broken promises, and rhetorical nonsense, all against the backdrop of an ethics investigation and an unprecedented attack on democratic accountability.

This budget may well have been designed to be forgotten quickly. I wish it were so.

• (1315)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is not much that was just said that I would agree with, but it is always nice to hear some other opinions, no matter how wrong they might be.

One of the things that the member tried to get across, and one that I am a little sensitive to, is the issue of rural Canada, especially the Prairies. Pipelines are important to the Prairies. This was an issue that impacted all of Canada, but especially the Prairies. It is important that we recognize that the Stephen Harper government failed to build one inch of pipeline to tidewater. Let us compare that to what we have done in 18 months, or let us take a look at the canola farmer and the crisis that was taking place in China and the threat of hundreds of millions of dollars. It was this government that dealt with that.

Why is it that the Conservatives were unable to get the job done when it came to servicing rural communities, especially those in the Prairies, while under this Liberal administration we are now seeing significant gains in jobs and—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Rocky Ridge.

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, I am not even sure what to make of that intervention and what it seems to be telling us. As my colleague said before, I have a strange admiration for the member for Winnipeg North and his ability to stand in the House and defend anything, including this budget.

After many members of the Liberal caucus specifically campaigned to oppose any and all oil and gas activity, especially pipelines to the west coast, and sent out signals to the international market about phasing out oil sands, the hostility of many members of the Liberal caucus to that industry cannot be denied. The member's own government unilaterally set aside the previous approval of the northern gateway and imposed the northern tanker ban to kill the northern gateway project. For the member to still want to take credit for pipelines—none of which have been built yet, by the way—is quite unbelievable.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the rare times that Conservatives and New Democrats agreed on how to tackle climate change was through the home energy retrofit program that the Conservatives had in the last Parliament. Although we wished it had lasted longer and was not cut short, we know that it was one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce emissions and help Canadian households reduce their monthly bills while creating good local jobs.

In my community recently, Brian Glennie and Clair Schuman in Parksville hired a company out of Cumberland, which is in the Comox Valley, called Hakai Energy Solutions to install a solar roof so that they could reduce their energy costs, help tackle climate change, and be a partner in doing this. It creates jobs for local contractors and supports small business.

Was the member surprised that the budget does not include any home energy retrofit program, so that people and homeowners in our communities can be partners in tackling climate change?

The Budget

Mr. Pat Kelly: Mr. Speaker, the extent to which we find agreement across these opposition benches is indeed unusual, but such is the budget at hand that it seems to bring everybody but the Liberals together.

I am not actually surprised that the Liberals did not include that. This is the same Liberal government that has repealed all kinds of useful tax credits in a variety of fields, including the public transit tax credit. I guess Liberals are trying to nickel-and-dime Canadians in any way possible, whether it is on the retrofit of a home for energy efficiency, the transit tax credit, or the arts and fitness credits. They have never met a tax credit that they would not gladly take away in the interest of generating more revenue for the state.

● (1320)

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say how thrilled and pleased I am to stand here in the House and speak to budget 2017. It is a budget that gives much hope and promise for middle-class Canadians.

Let me digress and go back to when I started to run in the past election and started going door to door in communities, going from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. I started in one of our priority neighbourhoods, Crescent Valley. The work that is being done in Crescent Valley is absolutely magnificent. The Crescent Valley association, led by Anne Driscoll, is doing a fantastic job.

One thing that was loud and clear to me going door to door in Crescent Valley was that the housing needed upgrading and rebuilding and in many instances a total overhaul. The families were and are living in conditions that certainly needed to be upgraded. There were many people who talked to me about their current situations. I went back and talked to non-profit organizations in Saint John and surrounding areas, and there was concern that a lot of the operating agreements with the housing co-ops were expiring and there was uncertainty in the future.

First and foremost with respect to housing, I want to commend and compliment people in my riding and in my region who are doing outstanding work on housing and helping those who need affordable housing to attain it. They include people like Kit Hickey, Randy Hatfield, Narinder Singh, Brian Marks, and many others who are working tirelessly every day to help those who are looking for housing in my riding.

I am not proud to stand here today and talk about the fact that there are 1,300 people from my riding on a wait-list for affordable housing. That is not acceptable, so I am absolutely delighted to speak in support of budget 2017. I am excited about the commitment of \$11.2 billion for a national housing strategy for our country. This is something that I advocated for and something we have worked tirelessly toward. I am a proud member of the HUMA committee, which has just finished travelling from coast to coast to coast. Certainly one thing that was very evident travelling across this country was the need for affordable housing, and the fact that as a country we need a national housing strategy.

Our government signalled its intention to re-establish a federal leadership role in housing in budget 2016. As hon. members will recall, in addition to the existing baseline annual funding of over \$2 billion, our first budget included funding of \$2.3 billion over two years to address urgent housing needs across this country. This

included a doubling of the investment in affordable housing, as well as targeted funding to improve housing for seniors and low-income households, northerners, indigenous people, and those fleeing situations of domestic violence. I am proud to say that this funding has already benefited more than 58,000 households across Canada. That is significant and transformational.

Budget 2016 also provided funding for low-cost loans and new financing tools to encourage municipalities, housing developers, and non-profit housing providers to develop more affordable rental housing units. This funding will significantly expand the stock of affordable rental housing in Canada.

I want to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Brampton South.

We made it clear a year ago that these investments were only a first step as we took the time needed to develop a new, inclusive national housing strategy to help guide the way forward.

● (1325)

Budget 2017, I am thrilled to say, affirms this. Let me be clear. This is the largest single spending commitment in our budget. It is historic, and it will be transformational for many, many families across our country.

To be formally launched later this year, the national housing strategy would provide a road map for governments and housing providers across the country, as well as focused support for those who need it the most, those living in poverty.

In the coming weeks and months, we will be meeting with provinces and territories, housing stakeholders, and indigenous leaders to discuss how we can best work together to ensure a coordinated and truly national strategy. This is key and is of utmost importance.

The strategy would be delivered by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation through a number of initiatives, which I would like to highlight for hon. members. Let me begin with our commitment to a renewed housing partnership with the provinces and territories.

Our government recognizes that housing needs vary across the country, and we are committed to working with provinces and territories to ensure that the unique needs of all communities are met. These priorities may include the construction of new affordable housing units, the renovation and repair of existing housing, rent subsidies and other measures to make housing more affordable, and initiatives to support safe independent living for seniors and persons with disabilities.

The Budget

The national housing strategy would also include a new housing fund to address critical housing issues and prioritize support for vulnerable citizens, including seniors, indigenous peoples, victims of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, and veterans. Administered by CMHC, the fund would receive \$5 billion in federal funding over the next 11 years. It signals the government's renewed role, finally, in a housing policy for our country. Further details will be announced when the national housing strategy is launched later this year, but it includes a new co-investment fund to encourage greater collaboration and investment among diverse partners to prioritize large-scale community renewal projects.

It would also support innovative approaches to housing development and a strong, sustainable affordable housing sector. CMHC's direct lending activities would be expanded to include low-cost loans for renewal of social and affordable housing. This is in addition to the budget 2016 lending program I mentioned earlier, which will support construction of new rental units.

In addition to these new investments of \$11.2 billion, the government is also preserving baseline funding related to the expiry of long-term social housing operating agreements. The use and renewal of these funds will be determined over the next year.

Hon. members who represent northern ridings will know that the housing challenges in that region are unique and complex. Budget 2017 proposes to invest \$300 million, starting in 2018-19, to provide stable and predictable funding to the territorial governments, to help offset the higher cost of construction, and improve housing conditions across the north.

Budget 2017 also includes an additional \$4 billion over 10 years, starting in 2018-19, to build and improve housing, water treatment systems, health facilities, and other community infrastructure in indigenous communities. This builds on the \$554 million provided in last year's budget to address urgent housing needs on reserve and the more than \$10 million we are investing in new shelters for first nations families affected by domestic violence. We will be working with first nations, Inuit, and Métis partners in the coming months to determine how the budget 2017 funding will be allocated.

Finally, budget 2017 includes a proposed investment of \$241 million through the national housing strategy to help CMHC improve housing data collection and analytics, expand housing research, and strengthen our ability to make informed policy decisions. Long-term funding would also be provided to Statistics Canada to develop and implement a new housing statistics framework.

• (1330)

I have talked primarily about the proposed investments in budget 2017 that relate specifically to the national housing strategy. It is key and critical for my riding to have this national housing strategy. I was proud to travel the country from coast to coast to coast to help in implementing this. I am proud to stand today and say that our government is actually backing a national housing strategy which will be good for all Canadians.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to listen to my colleague from Newfoundland. I

appreciate the fact that as a businessman, he knows what he is talking about. I have some issues that I would like to address.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the NHL's decision to cancel participation in the Olympics, but unfortunately that is not the issue today.

What I would like to know is, as a businessman, what does my colleague think about the Minister of Finance having no plan for a zero deficit?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, I would like to stand today to talk about hockey and certainly the Saint John Sea Dogs hockey team that is blowing through the first round of the playoff series and on to the second round in chase of another Memorial Cup for the organization.

To answer my friend and colleague's question, investment over the past 10 years in infrastructure, in particular, before we were elected, was at a deficit. We saw it in Saint John—Rothesay. We saw a lack of investment in a lot of our critical infrastructure. That was investment that needed to be done.

I stand behind our finance minister. He is doing a fantastic job. He has a vision for our future, a vision for our country, and I have absolutely no problem justifying how we are moving forward.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are organizations in the riding of Courtenay—Alberni working hard to end homelessness, such as the Comox Valley Coalition to End Homelessness, Dawn to Dawn, the Port Alberni Shelter Society, and the Oceanside Task Force on Homelessness. These organizations are all working hard to get people off the street and into housing so we can save money, reduce costs in our health care system and our criminal justice system, and to help support our economy.

The member talked about historic investments in affordable housing. Right now we are learning that the Liberals have committed to over \$8 billion in housing, but in fact, 90% of the money for housing will not go out the door until after the next election.

Why are the Liberals playing political games on this file while there are thousands of vulnerable Canadians who are struggling to find affordable housing, especially in rural communities which are being forgotten?

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. People who run shelters in Saint John—Rothesay and are involved in the non-profit sector are absolutely thrilled with this budget.

What was needed was a long-term investment. We are committing to a 10-year investment. One can say that it is back-end loaded, but I would say it is front-end loaded. When one pays rent over 10 years, it depends on which way you want to look at that.

Our investment is strategic and historic. The fact is that we are making this investment, as opposed to the party opposite that was going to run in austerity and would not have had a cent to invest in affordable housing or those living in poverty. I am very proud to stand and support our budget.

The Budget

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to pick up on a point made by my friend from Courtenay—Alberni. I am not out of sympathy with the efforts of the government to emphasize affordable housing. It is really nice, after 10 years of the previous government, to have a government that understands affordable housing. I certainly know there are many members opposite who care about it as passionately as we do on the opposition benches. It really is difficult to have it described as a long-term vision when it is so clear in all the categories, whether it is spending on climate change, infrastructure, child care spaces, or help for the homeless, that very little money will be spent before the next election.

If it had been described differently, if the government were making a historic contribution to fight homelessness of \$300 million before the next election, that would be honest. I have to say it seems to be a bit of a shell game to say that the government is spending \$11 billion on helping to deal with the homelessness crisis, but only \$300 million will be spent before the next election.

• (1335)

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Speaker, again, to run a government, to look at the big picture, there has to be a long-term investment. I am absolutely thrilled that our finance minister and our government stood up and put their money where their mouths are with a long-term 10-year investment, a strategic investment in a national housing strategy. I just came back from travelling coast to coast to coast. If one talks to people across the country on the front lines, those dealing with people in need day in and day out, they are absolutely thrilled with our commitment. They are thrilled with our investment. This is going to change the lives for tens upon hundreds of thousands of families living across the country.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu (Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to budget 2017, our government's next step to building a Canada that works for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Take Noor and Kate, a young couple who are headed toward settling down, getting married, and having their first child. Let us say they live in my riding of Brampton South. For them, our budget means that if they choose, Kate can receive EI maternity benefits up to 12 weeks before the due date, which is up from the previous eight weeks. Once the baby is born, there are more flexible EI parental benefits available, including the choice of stretching the benefits period over 18 months.

To respond to one of the biggest costs for parents and families, we will be investing \$7 billion in affordable child care spaces. We are looking to create 40,000 spots for children like Noor and Kate's little one.

Kate takes the GO Train to work, and Noor takes a bus. We will be investing \$20.1 billion in public transit over the next 11 years, which means that the buses and GO Train that Kate and Noor use will improve.

These are the kinds of investments that make a difference in the day-to-day lives of hard-working families in Brampton South. This is on top of all the things for families that came in budget 2016, like the more generous, automatic, monthly Canada child benefit.

According to data from the Department of Employment and Social Development with approximately 23,500 children in Brampton South, there was an average monthly payment of \$680. This totals over \$9 million being sent to low- to middle-income families in Brampton South in 2016 to help with the cost of raising kids.

On top of the approximately \$8,160 that Kate and Noor will be getting once the baby is born, they also benefit from the middle-class tax cut we unveiled in 2016. On average, single individuals who benefit will see an average tax reduction of \$330 every year, and couples who benefit will see an average tax reduction of \$540 every year. For Kate and Noor, that is \$540 more in their pockets.

All of these things focus on putting more money in people's pockets and investing directly in our best Canadian resource, our middle class.

If things get tough for Noor and Kate, budget 2017 has a number of measures that build a stronger safety net for them. We are thinking of how to get people back on their feet solidly and quickly, so they can get back to supporting their family, building towards their retirement, and contributing to the Canadian economy.

In fact, we have already seen in the seven months preceding the budget, a quarter of a million new jobs created in Canada. The unemployment rate dropped from 7.1% to 6.6%. Our plan is working.

Budget 2017 has measures to help those who are struggling. In the case that Kate unfortunately loses her job, our budget has committed a significant amount, \$2.7 billion, to the provinces and territories to help those unemployed or underemployed access training or employment supports to find and keep good jobs.

Our EI benefits for the unemployed are also geared towards those like Kate so they can go back to school to get the training they need without the fear of losing the critical benefits they depend on to support themselves and their families. We are increasing the EI in total by almost \$900 million over five years to make it more flexible for families like Kate and Noor's family. If Kate has any issues with her EI claim, we are putting tens of millions into improving access to EI call centres and to improve claims processing times.

As Canadians know, to be successful in this day and age, there need to be opportunities for lifelong learning, so that their next job is also a better job. We will better support adult workers returning to school who face the high cost of post-secondary education along with the financial pressures associated with daily life and raising their families. If Kate goes back to school part-time in order to get the skills she needs for a good job, her EI benefits will still be there for her.

The Budget

● (1340)

Under budget 2017, she also now qualifies for financial assistance from the federal government, unlike under the previous system, which did not support students with dependent children or part-time students. Therefore, she can apply for Canada student loans and grants to help with the cost of going back to school.

We are investing \$225 million over four years to identify the skills gaps to be best prepared for the new economy. Kate will be able to find a place where she can make a long career because it is something that we are lacking enough talent in right now. This will help to promote job security for her. She will be a needed commodity in a field that needs more people who are newly trained and ready to work.

In fact, as a student again, Kate will also possibly be able to get a co-op position, something in which budget 2017 is investing \$221 million.

We hope to create 10,000 work-integrated learning placements that link people from their education into an industry in which they can succeed.

So far I have talked about how budget 2017 speaks to the experience of many in my downtown riding with young kids, who commute into work and who need flexibility in how they decide to arrange their life when things get difficult.

On top of that, we are thinking about how families actually work. When times get tough, they turn to family and they turn to those around them. In my riding of Brampton South, family and community go hand in hand.

That is why we are making significant measures for caregivers. We are creating the Canada caregiver credit to better support those when they need it most. This is a new, non-refundable credit to help caregivers, whether or not they live with their family member, to help pay for the burden of caregiving responsibilities. There is \$310 million in total tax relief for families with caregiving responsibilities over the next five years.

If Noor's mom lives up the street and he goes there to take care of her and he has to take time off work when he could have been at work making money, he can get credit on his taxes for that important work.

More than that, if Noor and Kate think it is best to bring in a medical caregiver to Canada from elsewhere, in budget 2017 we have eliminated the \$1,000 LMIA fee.

Also, since Noor and Kate's total income is less than \$150,000 altogether, they do not have to pay the LMIA fee for caregivers anymore either. Then Noor's mom can have regular medical attention, which means he can be at work while Kate is at school.

As their current living space is draining their savings, they put in a request to be placed in affordable housing. With our historic investment of \$3.2 billion in affordable housing, we are going to bring down the long wait times for a placement and help the provinces and territories to build new projects to increase access.

Over the years, their little one will grow up doing things we would not have imagined, like learning code in elementary and high school. We are investing \$50 million over the next two years for that.

Also, the opportunities of the future will be global leading, through our investments in strategic innovation, superclusters, clean tech, artificial intelligence, smart cities, and future entrepreneurs.

While the budget has so much for infrastructure, veterans, public safety officers, community infrastructure, and other important measures, and I could speak about so much more, I find myself thinking about how it will help people like Noor and Kate. There are so many people like them across Canada who are at the core of our success.

People in my riding will benefit greatly from budget 2017 now and into the future. I am so pleased to have had the opportunity to talk about this, and I look forward to continuing to share this news in the weeks and months to come.

● (1345)

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member spoke a lot about young couples and the benefits for them. However, these young couples will be watching the government, and it has no understanding of fiscal responsibility and no idea of when it will balance the budget. In fact, some of these new parents she was speaking of might not see the current government balance a budget by the time they become grandparents. What kind of a lesson does this member think the government is providing to those young families who are now learning to balance their own family budgets?

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, what my constituents should really be focused on is the number of things in budget 2017 that will benefit my riding. On top of the Canada child benefit and the middle-class tax cut, among dozens of other measures in budget 2016, budget 2017 will make a real difference for the middle class and all those working to join it. Also, budget 2017 will affect everyone, with such measures as affordable housing, which also has an effect on the member's riding.

The Budget

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one thing that the Liberals have failed to mention in this budget is their promise to close the stock option loopholes for the wealthiest CEOs in our country, which cost Canadian taxpayers over \$750 million a year. They talk about their record investments into housing, and how they will spend over \$8 billion. However, when we find out the details, we see it will only be \$20 million this year. That is about 20 homes in Toronto and Vancouver. People are living on the street in my riding. Canadians are not fools. They see what the government is doing in its choices. The government has said that budgets are about decisions and about making choices. Why is the government choosing CEO tax loopholes over people living on the street? That is the question I have for the government.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, this budget is focused on the middle class and how to grow the economy. I think our government did a very good job. Budget 2017 helps to build a stronger Canada. It also helps us invest in things that were neglected by the previous government for 10 years. It will help build up our infrastructure. It will also help all of our communities thrive.

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Brampton South for her speech and interventions today, as well as for all of the work she is doing on behalf of her constituents. I wonder if she could comment on the investments made in support of Canadians. She has mentioned housing, day care, the Canada child benefit, and the need to build up our country by making sure Canadians are successful, wherever they are living in the country, whatever their background is; that everyone has a chance to be successful within the country given the investments that budget 2016 and now budget 2017 are putting forward.

Ms. Sonia Sidhu: Mr. Speaker, this is a historic budget, and I will tell members why. We have put \$5 billion on the table for mental health, which is really needed by our communities. I am thrilled, and I think everyone is thrilled, about that investment, and I applaud the health minister for that. That is something we can all come together to support. Every year, on the Bell Let's Talk and World Mental Health Day, we speak up about the issue that one in five people are affected with.

Also, there is a historic investment into affordable housing and child care. Medical caregivers also have a big effect on our communities, and there are so many co-op placements. It is really a historic budget, and we should all support it.

• (1350)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

The Liberals claim that this budget is all about the middle class and those working hard to join it. Let us talk about precisely that subject and examine some of the systematic wealth transfers the government is undertaking, to move money from the middle class and those working to join it to the most wealthy and well-connected people in Canada.

Let us start with the carbon tax, which will charge \$30 a tonne at the beginning and rise to \$50 a tonne of emitted CO₂ by the time it is fully implemented. That will undisputedly increase the cost of almost everything. According to finance department documents, it

will increase the cost of gas, home heating, and groceries, and create a “cascade” of higher prices throughout the economy.

Who will that affect? According to Statistics Canada, poor families spend a third more of their household income on the things that tax applies to than do rich households. That is because many of the costs I just laid out are fixed for families. It does not matter if people are rich or poor, they have to heat their homes and turn on the lights, and they have to eat.

The more discretionary products that people enjoy, like going on long vacations or enjoying a luxurious time with their family at a fancy resort, would not consume nearly as great a percentage of the resources that are taxed under this regime, so the percentage impact on the incomes of poor families is much higher than on the incomes of rich families, the very definition of a regressive tax.

Who will get the money? We know that in none of the provinces across the country will this tax be revenue neutral. Even British Columbia, which has the least damaging regime, is taking more in taxes than it is giving back in tax relief. Other provinces have convoluted schemes that require lobbyists, consultants, and political influence for anyone to get that money back.

For example, in Ontario, people can get some of their carbon tax money back if they apply for a rebate on a \$150,000 electric car. Now, that is going to be great for the millionaires and billionaires who drive Teslas, but not so great for minimum wage-earning secretaries or hairstylists struggling to pay for their kids' basic needs.

We know that those who are well lobbied for, well organized, well connected, and just plain wealthy will get the lion's share of the proceeds of this tax. It is a wealth transfer from the middle class and those working to join it to the wealthiest one per cent.

Then let us move to the national debt. This budget adds \$25 billion to the national debt. What does that bring? It brings interest. To whom does it bring interest? It brings interest to those who can afford to buy government bonds. Who are those people? Are minimum wage-earning people buying governments bonds? Are single mothers struggling to pay for their groceries setting aside money to buy government bonds? No, of course they are not.

In fact, the budget gets rid of the Canada savings bond, which used to be a vehicle of savings for Canadians, and that is an acknowledgement that it is not everyday Canadians who lend to the government anymore; it is wealthy institutional investors who like the risk-free return that government bonds offer, because they are backed up by a taxpayer guarantee.

Therefore the higher-income people will necessarily benefit more from the billions of dollars in interest payments taxpayers will fund on this year's \$25 billion deficit.

Statements by Members

Then there is the infrastructure bank. The Liberals have proposed an infrastructure bank that would offer loan guarantees and subordinated equity to large institutional investors building public infrastructure in Canada.

• (1355)

I have no problem with the private sector building public infrastructure. I do not even have a problem with the idea that it might benefit from the value it adds to the economy. However, profit cannot come without risk. At the end of the day, the profit-maker must be the risk-taker. However, the infrastructure bank is designed to lift the risk off the balance sheets of the wealthy investors and put it on to the backs of taxpayers. That is what loan guarantees do. If the project fails and it cannot repay its funds, there is a guarantee from the taxpayers to pay it back. A subordinated equity position would ensure that the taxpayer contribution to an infrastructure project would be the first dollar lost and the last dollar to get a return on.

For example, if the infrastructure bank led to the construction of a toll bridge and that toll bridge made money, the private investors would get the profit of that money. However, if that bridge lost money by going over budget or coming in under revenue, then the taxpayer would take the loss. That is what subordinate equity means. It means the taxpayer would be subordinate to the wealthy interests that profit from this program.

Then there is all this talk about innovative, accelerated, synergistic, supercluster, all the science fiction in the budget. They give as an example of that the \$372 million taxpayer funded loan to Bombardier that was supposed to be really innovative, create lots of innovative jobs. In fact, 4,500 Bombardier's Canadian employees have lost or will be losing their jobs, while six executives are sharing \$32 million in current and deferred compensation.

If the government had required that the executives only make \$200,000 a year, which is the Liberal definition of "rich" out of its platform, then there would have been enough money to hire hundreds of additional employees at the median income rate that is defined by the budget to which I am speaking right now.

If this corporate welfare were really about jobs and not about lining the pockets of well organized, well lobbied for, well lawyered, and well connected insiders, then there would have been guarantees for that public money to translate into real jobs for middle-class workers. There were no such guarantees. In fact, precisely the opposite occurred. The 1% of the 1% of the 1% made off like bandits. The billionaire Bombardier-Beaudoin family got reinforced with the taxpayer dollars funded by middle-class people in our country.

These are but four examples of how this big and growing government has created a feeding frenzy with those who have the influence and the money to benefit from all the proceeds that are going out the door.

We know that if we want to help the middle class and those working to join it, we do it by lowering taxes, opening up free enterprise, getting rid of all the favours, and allowing people to achieve great things based on their merits

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 1:52 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, April 3, the question on the amendment to the amendment is deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested and deferred until later this day at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Great Lakes are, indeed, one of our greatest natural resources. Twenty per cent of the world's surface fresh water exists in our Great Lakes and represents drinking water for 10 million Canadians and 25 million Americans. That is why I am so proud that in this budget, the government has committed \$70.5 million over the next five years for our Great Lakes.

I want to highlight for the communities of Ajax and Durham just how important that is. The watersheds in my region are the Carruthers Creek and Duffins watersheds. Durham is home to some of the most dynamic watersheds in the country. They are important in cleaning out and remediating water before it gets into Lake Ontario and playing an essential role in water quality.

I am proud of the government's commitment and that Ajax is home to such an important resource.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tax on tax. It sounds like a taxpayer's worst nightmare, and the Liberal government is the bogeyman.

Budget 2016 projected GST revenues to increase by 21% over five years. Budget 2017 projects GST revenues to increase by 24%. The reason? When the Prime Minister said that carbon taxes would stay with the provinces and territories, he forgot to tell Canadians that GST collected on carbon taxes would go to Ottawa.

I am proud to be working with Vernon city councillor Bob Spiers, promoting e-petition 713 to fight this tax-on-tax plan. I also thank the member for Langley—Aldergrove for introducing his private member's bill, Bill C-342, to end the Liberals' tax on taxes.

While the government searches for ways to extract taxes, Canadians can count on the Conservatives to stand up for what is right. Help us fight tax on tax, support e-petition 713, and support Bill C-342.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

PALLIATIVE CARE HOME

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend all of the volunteers who participated in the fundraiser for Maison des Collines on March 15. Since 2009, the steering committee has been working tirelessly toward its goal of building Maison des Collines, a six-bed palliative care home in the Collines-de-l'Outaouais RCM.

This facility will meet the needs of patients and seniors, their family members, and the entire community. The organization partnered with the Au Vieux Duluth restaurant in Gatineau to serve 620 meals and raise over \$20,000 in donations.

Congratulations to the volunteers, particularly Dr. Richard Gold and Denis Joannis, as well as to the entire organizing committee. Thank you to all those who donated to Maison des Collines.

* * *

[English]

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last break week, I took the opportunity to go door knocking and canvass constituents in my great riding of Vancouver Kingsway.

I visited one of the many co-operative housing complexes in Vancouver, the Still Creek/Kaslo Gardens Co-op. Folks raised a variety of issues with me, ranging from climate change to child care to public transit, but by far the most common was the pressing need for affordable housing and the solution that co-operative housing offered as a proven model of providing quality homes in a community setting at reasonable prices.

Still Creek and Kaslo Gardens are shining examples, with spacious two-, three-, and four-bedroom units, grouped around common green spaces. They provide safe play areas for children, foster close neighbours, and mix residents of every age, income level, family type, and culture.

Co-op housing is a fabulous way to provide stable, affordable, and attractive housing. I call on the federal government to invest land and funds to bring this outstanding model to as many Canadians as possible, as soon as possible.

* * *

[Translation]

SÉBASTIEN LAPIERRE

Mr. Denis Lemieux (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is one of the best days of my life because, this morning, I have had the privilege of accompanying Sébastien Lapierre on his visit to Parliament Hill. On January 9, 2017, Mr. Lapierre became the first Canadian to reach the South Pole on a solo expedition.

Imagine travelling 1,200 km over 42 days and five hours with all that equipment, facing howling winds and temperatures of -50°C, completely alone.

The people of the Quebec City region are lucky to benefit each day from the courage of this exceptional man who works as a

firefighter there. Like Mr. Lapierre, I am originally from the beautiful Saguenay region and I too was a cadet when I was young.

Most importantly, we both share the desire to promote the vital importance of living a healthy lifestyle.

I congratulate Mr. Lapierre on behalf of all Canadians.

* * *

● (1405)

[English]

RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week, my first great-grandchild was born. My granddaughter Stephanie and her husband Justin welcomed Emma-Rose Muss into this world.

Baby Emma-Rose had some internal problems, and her birth needed close monitoring. Like so many rural Canadian families, her parents stayed at the Ronald McDonald House in Vancouver. Baby Emma-Rose is doing fine.

Fifteen Ronald McDonald Houses across Canada give families a place to stay close to a hospital where their children are being treated. Ronald McDonald family rooms are located at strategic hospitals, giving families a place to rest and recharge. McDonald's supports these facilities by contributions from every happy meal it serves across Canada and through McHappy Days.

From my family and all Canadians, I want to thank the Ronald McDonald foundation for the help, compassion, and family support it gives to rural Canadians.

* * *

SLEEPING GIANT BREWERY COMPANY

Mr. Don Rusnak (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, I visited Thunder Bay's own Sleeping Giant Brewery Company and learned about its campaign to support women in business and the arts.

On International Women's Day, the company invited women to come in and brew their Camperino beer. One dollar from every Camperino beer will be donated to start an education bursary for female entrepreneurs in memory of Jeannine Ross-Armstrong, who was tragically taken from us all far too soon. Jeannine contributed a great deal to the community of Thunder Bay, and this is the start of what will become an annual tradition to honour her.

I thank Sleeping Giant Brewery Company for giving back to our community and supporting women in Thunder Bay and north-western Ontario.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, I had the honour of hosting a town hall on our government's national housing strategy with the member for Spadina—Fort York.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]*

People are very grateful for the historic investment of \$11.2 billion set out in the budget for affordable housing because it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to afford housing in Toronto and Don Valley East.

The government listened to Canadians, the provinces, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. We hope that the provinces and the municipalities will be quick to take advantage of this.

[English]

The residents of Don Valley East were very happy with our government's commitment to improving housing across the country. My constituents know that the national housing strategy will have a positive impact not only on millions of Canadians but on their neighbourhoods and communities.

* * *

CANADIAN CHIROPRACTIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I invite colleagues to join me in welcoming the Canadian Chiropractic Association, whose members have come to Parliament today to meet with decision-makers and raise awareness of the role that back pain and other musculoskeletal conditions play in Canada's opioid crisis.

Currently, Canada is the second-highest consumer of prescription opioids. Every year, over 2,000 Canadians die from the overuse of opioids, which accounts for 50% of all annual drug-related deaths.

Canada's new draft opioid prescribing guidelines call for all health providers to prioritize non-pharmacological alternatives before making the decision to prescribe. With back pain as a key driver of opioid prescribing and excellent evidence supporting the use of clinical alternatives as first-line therapy, Canada's chiropractors are here to talk about a better approach to pain management for Canadians.

Canadian chiropractors, as spine, muscle, and nervous system experts, play an important role in helping relieve the burden of back pain and MSK conditions.

* * *

MANITOBA FLOODING

Mr. Doug Eyolfson (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share my thoughts and concerns, and indeed those of all members of the House, for the communities of Manitoba affected by flooding of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. For the first nations communities impacted, our first priority is ensuring they are safe, secure, and out of the path of floodwaters.

Over the weekend, with the aid of the Canadian Red Cross, community members impacted by rising waters were evacuated to Winnipeg, Brandon, and other local centres until levels recede. Officials are in contact with the communities in the region and are providing additional support for ongoing flood preparation.

The thoughts of all Canadians are with the residents of Manitoba affected by the flooding, as well as with the first responders who

have been working to keep them safe. As Manitobans, we are resilient, and have a strong tradition of community and co-operation.

* * *

● (1410)

CANADIAN PORTS

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is exciting to recognize Canada's 18 world-class port authorities in recognition of Western Hemisphere Ports Day, because our ports create 250,000 direct and indirect jobs and are responsible for \$400 billion in trade each and every year. Half of that, \$200 billion, flows through Vancouver, creating \$6.1 billion in wages for Canadians. Recently a Deloitte report benchmarking European maritime hubs against global leading maritime hubs named Vancouver, for the first time in our history, as a global giant. Vancouver is becoming a maritime investment hub and a competitive jurisdiction for maritime companies to locate jobs and make investments.

Canada is a Pacific nation, it is and always has been a trading nation, and our ports benefit Canadians each and every day.

* * *

*[Translation]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Juno awards gala was held on Sunday evening to recognize the efforts of Canadian artists who stand out in the music industry and who shine a light on our beautiful Canadian culture.

I congratulate all the winners and I thank the Minister of Canadian Heritage for her impassioned, heartfelt, and emotional speech, which she delivered in French, the language of Molière.

That is what I would have liked to say in the House today, but I cannot.

The Minister of Official Languages did not bother to speak French, but then again that part of her title was eliminated. A minister from Quebec who boasts about defending both of our country's official languages fell short of her duties and obligations. What a missed opportunity. Defending French takes more than hiding behind fine words. Every time she speaks publicly, she has to do so in both official languages—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Fredericton.

Oral Questions

[English]

ST. PETERSBURG METRO EXPLOSION

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the St. Petersburg metro was the scene of a terrible bomb attack that killed 14 people and injured many more. Many remain in critical condition. We strongly condemn the use of violence in any form.

Canada is home to over 550,000 Canadians of Russian descent and with Russian ties. I rise today to share our deepest condolences with the families and friends of those killed in this cowardly attack, as well as our thoughts and prayers with all those injured and of course with the Russian people.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Scott Duvall (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, starting today, the City of Hamilton and Vibrant Communities Canada are hosting the third annual poverty reduction summit. The summit will bring together major business leaders; community organizers; mayors; municipal, provincial, and federal governments; indigenous leaders; and, most importantly, persons who have experienced poverty.

We all know that one of the most important pieces of poverty reduction is safe, affordable housing. There are 5,700 families on the waiting list for affordable housing in Hamilton.

A recent United Nations committee report called on the government to substantially increase the availability of affordable housing. In Hamilton, 5,700 families on a waiting list is unacceptable. I am encouraged by the government's promise to fund affordable housing, both in Hamilton and across the country. Let us hope this is a promise the government can actually keep, but the funding has to start now and not after the next election. In Hamilton, 5,700 families are counting on it.

* * *

BY-ELECTIONS

Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, spring has sprung and the snow is melting, and Alberta is still true blue.

The residents of Calgary Heritage and Calgary Midnapore sent a clear message to the Liberal government yesterday. The voters said goodbye to the Liberals' so-called sunny ways, which for many Albertans have only led to darker days, and looked ahead with hope in their eyes to many more days of clear blue skies.

In yesterday's by-elections, Albertans broke through the buzzwords, ignored the selfies, and took a strong stance against the Liberal government. Albertans clearly rejected the Liberals' massive deficits, reckless spending, and plans for a job-killing carbon tax.

I know that running in an election is incredibly gruelling. I want to thank Stephanie Kusie, Bob Benzen, and their teams for all their hard work. Congratulations go to Bob and Stephanie. I know they will both be outstanding representatives for their ridings and strong voices for the Canadian taxpayer.

● (1415)

BY-ELECTIONS

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, soon five new members will join us here on Parliament Hill and take their seats in this place. I will take this moment to speak to all the candidates and the campaigns that have been working so hard on behalf of their constituents, to congratulate them for their hard work, their diligence, and their commitment to public service.

[Translation]

I myself was elected in a by-election. Like other parliamentarians, the time, energy, and commitment we put into a campaign are tremendous.

[English]

To all the volunteers who knocked on doors and made phone calls, thank you. To all the candidates who called and listened to the people of their ridings, thank you.

[Translation]

I would like to congratulate our five colleagues, three of them women, who will soon be sworn in. Now it is time to get to work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims he is frustrated with Bombardier for using tax dollars to boost the paycheques of its executives. Frustrated? This is his deal. This is actually the Prime Minister's deal, so if he is frustrated with anyone, he should look in the mirror, because he is the one who did the deal with no strings attached. He gave Bombardier hundreds of millions of dollars while it was laying off thousands of people.

Why is the Prime Minister giving millions of dollars to CEOs and leaving taxpayers with the bill?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the investment that was made, the repayable contribution of \$372.5 million, was to promote research and development, and the strings were very clear. It will help create 1,300 good-quality, high-value-added jobs. That is exactly what our government has committed to doing.

We are focused on innovation and on the aerospace sector. We want to support the small- and medium-sized ecosystem of businesses that are connected with that industry. We are going to continue to invest in the sector and make sure we create good-quality, high-value-added jobs.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did this while he was telling Canadians to send more of their tax dollars to Ottawa. His latest budget nickel-and-dimes Canadians for everything from beer to their bus passes.

Oral Questions

It would be one thing if we knew that the money was being used to create jobs or maybe to balance the budget, but instead part of it is going to Bombardier so that it can pay its CEOs millions of dollars.

Why, with all of this, should Canadians give one more cent to the Prime Minister? Why should they trust him with their money?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a plan, and it is working for Canadians. That plan is to make sure that we focus on jobs.

Since the member opposite talked about jobs, in the last seven months there were 250,000 good-quality jobs created from coast to coast to coast. There were 900 jobs at Bell Helicopter, plus an additional 100; GE Welland, 220 jobs; Thomson Reuters, 1,500 jobs; GM Canada, up to 1,000 engineering jobs. Most recently, at Ford, 800 good-quality jobs were secured because of this government's investment in the automotive sector.

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can this minister or the Prime Minister continue to defend this deal? They gave public money to a company that is giving millions of dollars in bonuses to its executives while it is laying off 14,000 people. How can he possibly continue to defend this deal?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we always have and we always will continue to defend the aerospace sector. This sector is so critical to the Canadian economy. It contributes \$28 billion to our national economic prosperity. Over 211,000 jobs are connected to the aerospace sector.

That is why we made a repayable contribution worth \$372.5 million in research and development, which will help secure up to 1,300 good-quality jobs. We will never shy away from focusing on investing in Canadians, focusing on supporting the aerospace sector, and growing the economy and creating good-quality jobs.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, people are outraged by the arrogance of the deal between Bombardier and the Liberals and the lack of respect for taxpayers. Thousands of Bombardier workers have lost their jobs. The Prime Minister is responsible for the deal, and he continues to defend it.

How can the Prime Minister give millions of dollars to corporate executives and stick taxpayers with the bill?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand Canadians' concerns. At the same time, it is very important for our government to support the aerospace industry. That is why we invested \$372 million in research and development. That investment will create jobs and help small and medium-sized businesses. That has always been one of our government's priorities.

[*English*]

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the arrogance is staggering when it comes to this issue, but now we are seeing it here in Parliament, where the Prime Minister has decided that question period in Parliament is nothing more than an inconvenience for him. He does not like the idea of being questioned or being held to account for his actions. That is why he is now trying to use his majority power to ram through changes to the rules of the House, and the only purpose for those changes is to make his life easier.

Why is the Prime Minister so scared to face the accountability that every other prime minister before him had to face?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we committed to modernizing Parliament and making it a 21st century workplace.

As a direct result of the Harper government's approach to Parliament over 10 years, we promised Canadians we would bring a new approach to Ottawa to ensure that their voices were also heard in this place. In our discussion paper, we put forward some ideas that would bring about this change. I have been meeting with the other House leaders and am hopeful that we can build on these conversations. As promised to Canadians, we are committed to modernizing the House of Commons.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister committed to forming a government that, unlike the Conservatives, would be "open to discussion and debate". He also vowed that he wanted to end the concentration of power initiated by his father.

The Liberal proposals include the Prime Minister showing up just once a week. Imagine that.

I am forced to ask the government House leader a question that she will likely get a lot if the Liberals force through their parliamentary power grab. How does she feel having to cover for the Prime Minister?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am actually very proud to be serving alongside a Prime Minister and a team that have taken a different approach to doing government. I am proud to stand with a government that has taken on unprecedented levels of public consultations—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, order. We cannot hear the answer. We need to hear the answer. The government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is listening to Canadians and actually responding to the very real challenges that they are facing.

Oral Questions

On the discussion paper that we released, that I released, it is a conversation worth having. We all know that this place can function better. We know what the previous government's attempts were in this House. We believe that we can improve the conditions in this place so that every member of Parliament has the opportunity to be part of a conversation, to be part of a debate. I will continue to advance, and have, those important conversations.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government could have simply said that it would not unilaterally change how our democracy works. Instead, it is about to force this power grab on us.

Does the Liberal government at least understand the precedent it is setting?

Is it really ready to abandon the traditional rule of consensus, only to advance its own short-term interests?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, during the election campaign, we committed to modernizing Parliament and making it a workplace worthy of the 21st century.

As a direct result of the Harper government's approach to Parliament, we promised Canadians that we would bring a new approach to Ottawa and ensure that their voices were heard in the House.

In our discussion paper, we put forward some ideas that would support this change. I encourage all members to work together.

* * *

• (1425)

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of Liberals helping themselves, there is more news today regarding the Prime Minister's illegal vacation to a private island.

[Translation]

We have learned that the Liberal government gave taxpayers' money to a close friend of the Prime Minister in order to cover the expenses of a technician on the private island. This payment proves that the rest of the trip was actually a gift accepted by the Prime Minister and several other Liberal friends.

Will the Prime Minister rise today, finally take responsibility, and admit that he broke the law?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been the case for previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister is always in contact with his office and routinely receives documentation during all travel, domestically and internationally, whether on personal or government business.

The Prime Minister must always be ready to carry out his official duties. As was already mentioned, the Prime Minister was on a family holiday with a long-time friend.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals initially tried to hide the details of this illegal vacation. When it was revealed, the Ethics Commissioner started not one but two official investigations.

The Prime Minister continues to claim it is all okay, move along, nothing to see here, because the Aga Khan is a close family friend. Are Canadians supposed to believe that the trip would have been more inappropriate if they were not so close?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has always been the case for previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister is always in contact with his office and is routinely provided with necessary resources during all travel, domestic and international. Whether on personal or government business, the Prime Minister must always be ready to do the important duties he has as Prime Minister, and this has been the case for that office always.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating our country's 150th anniversary. Never before has a prime minister been subject to an investigation like the one being conducted at present.

When the Liberals came to power, they talked about doing things differently. They are not walking the talk. They talk a lot about sunny ways, transparency, and co-operation. The majority is imposing what is in its own interest on Parliament. That is not how Canada has functioned for 150 years. That amounts to a lack of respect for the opposition.

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary of Confederation. This is a really important year.

For the first time in the history of our country, we have gender parity in our cabinet. For the first time in the history of our country, we have a woman in the role of the government House leader. For the first time in our country, we have people working together, a government responding to the very real challenges that Canadians are facing.

We will continue to work hard for Canadians. We will continue to respond to the very real challenges they are facing. I am very proud of the leadership of the Prime Minister and the work this government is doing.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

FINANCE

Hon. Denis Lebel (Lac-Saint-Jean, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the House of Commons, the place where Canadians send their elected officials to speak on their behalf, and we are getting answers like that.

We all know that this year marks the 150th anniversary of Confederation. The Liberals do not seem to realize that because they are abandoning the approach taken by all former prime ministers. No prime minister has ever shown such disrespect for the opposition as the Liberals are demonstrating right now.

The member mentioned the election campaign. The Liberals said that they would run a deficit of \$10 billion and would balance the budget by 2019. They also said that they would reform the electoral system. They do not do what they say they will. They are not being consistent.

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Our government's top priority is to make wise and responsible investments to strengthen the middle class, grow the economy, and prepare Canadians for the economy of today and tomorrow.

We can see that our plan is working. Over the past seven months, the economy has created over 250,000 new jobs and the unemployment rate has dropped from 7.1% to 6.6%. We are moving forward and we are happy with the progress being made.

* * *

● (1430)

[English]

STANDING ORDERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are outraged and they are expressing their concerns about the Prime Minister's power grab. Even the media has condemned his actions.

Today after question period we will be voting on a motion calling on the Liberals to finally commit to not changing the Standing Orders unless they have agreement from the opposition parties.

Will the Liberals do the right thing and once and for all stop this attempt to ram these changes through? Will they agree to our motion?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned time and time again, in the election campaign, we committed to modernizing Parliament and making it a 21st century workplace. As a direct result of the Harper government's approach to Parliament over 10 years, we promised Canadians that we would bring a new approach to Ottawa to ensure that their voices were also heard in this place.

We respect the work of the committee. We respect that the Conservatives yesterday wanted to have a debate on the Standing Orders, something we have been asking for for quite a long time, rather than discussing the very good budget that we introduced,

budget 2017, that will be helping middle-class families and those working hard to join it.

We look forward to working with members opposite. We will continue to work—

The Speaker: The hon. opposition House leader.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is those kinds of non-answers that are eroding our democracy.

What gives the Prime Minister the right to disrespect Parliament and ram these changes through? What gives him the right to silence anyone who dares criticize him? What gives him the right to trample all over this House of Commons?

At a minimum, will he allow his backbenchers a free vote on this motion that affects them so directly, or will he trample all over your rights too?

The Speaker: I remind the opposition House leader to always direct her comments to the Chair.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we encourage all members to have a voice in this House. We encourage them to represent their constituents. That is exactly what we were elected to do. That was not the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: We want to encourage the voice of the person who has the floor, not everybody else's voice.

The hon. government House leader has the floor. Let us have a little order.

Hon. Bardish Chagger: Mr. Speaker, we will always encourage our members of Parliament to represent their constituents. That is exactly what we were elected to do. That was not the approach of the previous government. We know that the Harper government did not take that approach when dealing in this House. We believe that we can modernize this place. We will continue to work better together. We encourage all members on all sides to have this very important conversation. However, we will not give a veto to the Conservatives over our campaign commitments.

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ETHICS

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ethics of the Prime Minister's bohemian billionaire island holiday bash are getting murkier by the day. We now know that the government reimbursed the Aga Khan for at least one government employee's stay on this private island. Why are government per diems being paid to the Prime Minister's billionaire friend?

Will the Prime Minister admit finally that his middle-class boasting does not wash when he treats the public purse like his personal piggy bank?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have answered this question, I will remind the member that, as has been the case for previous prime ministers, the Prime Minister is always in contact with his office and is routinely provided with necessary resources during all travel, domestic and international, and whether on personal or government business.

What Canadians have elected this government to do is to deliver on a plan to grow the economy and to create jobs. In the last seven months, over a quarter million good, full-time jobs have been created for Canadians. That is exactly the growth they are expecting. We will continue to advance what they have mandated us to do.

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister brought a government technician with him on his trip to the Aga Khan's billionaire island. We also know that the employee's per diems were paid out to the Aga Khan, which is of course flying in the face of accountability.

Did the employee actually do any work for the taxpayers? That is what we want to know. Are the taxpayers on the hook or is the government's position that the Aga Khan is merely an Airbnb?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government was elected on a plan to grow the economy, to support middle-class Canadians, and those working hard to join them. That is exactly why we lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians.

Irrespective of the Prime Minister's schedule or planned events, the Prime Minister must always be prepared to carry out his official duties. That is why he is always given the necessary resources, regardless of when he is travelling, whether for personal or business reasons.

* * *

• (1435)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess this island was an all exclusive.

[Translation]

People are tired of seeing the wealthy hide their money in Barbados or the Cayman Islands. If the Liberal government were serious about tax havens, we could get at least \$8 billion. With that, we could offer university studies to our students or pharmacare to everyone.

Getting this money back is a priority for the NDP because it is our money. The Liberals voted in favour of our motion on this, but they have done absolutely nothing since then. Is this the old Liberal tactic of putting on a show while continuing to help their millionaire pals?

Hon. Diane Lebovillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see that the party opposite is aligning its thinking with ours. In the last budget, which we have just tabled, we invested \$524 million to continue to fight tax evasion and

tax shelters. Last year, we got \$13 billion with the \$444 million we invested. We will continue with our work.

* * *

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, reports were released that CIBC is cutting 130 Canadian jobs and outsourcing them to India in a move to save money. This comes from a bank that made \$1.4 billion in profits last quarter.

Will the minister agree with me that this is completely unacceptable when so many Canadians are still looking for work? With a budget with investments that are ringing hollow for many, what is the government doing to create jobs in Canada?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we presented a budget that focused on Canadians, that focused on skills and innovation, to create opportunities and to create jobs. This is to build on the first successful budget that has really shown a clear indication that the job market is getting better in Canada. More than 250,000 jobs have been created over the last seven months. In particular, this budget is going to focus on additional opportunities built on the past, which is about creating jobs and opportunities. I am confident that we will continue to see positive trends going forward in the economy, in trade, in the retail sector, and in the job market.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the defence minister was in Iraq in 2015, he said, "I haven't had one discussion about the CF-18s". However, an email from Global Affairs states that at a December 2015 meeting, the Iraqi defence minister pleaded with the Liberal government to reconsider withdrawing Canada's fighter jets, on numerous occasions.

How can the defence minister blatantly ignore the requests of the Iraqi government and then turn around and knowingly mislead Canadians about it?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have revamped our mission in Iraq. Whenever we send troops on operations, our government and I take it very seriously. That is why I spent two separate trips going into the region, talking to our coalition partners, talking to the regional leadership there, to make sure we have a plan that is actually going to have an impact. That is the plan that we had: making sure we have the right troops on the ground, the right intelligence. The results are showing that the work of defeating ISIS in Mosul is happening on the ground now. That is the plan that we had, and I am very proud of that.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when we hear the minister talk about the withdrawal of CF-18s from Iraq, it is as if the request came from the allies.

In a heavily redacted report from the Department of Foreign Affairs, we learned that the Iraqi defence minister was very concerned about the withdrawal of the CF-18s and asked Canada to reconsider its decision several times. The response of the Iraqi government in an official document of the Canadian government is very different from what the minister said.

Who is telling the truth, the Minister of National Defence or the officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had numerous discussions with my coalition partners and the Iraqi leadership, including the peshmerga, to get a good understanding of what is happening on the ground, to look at what we needed to do in the future. That is exactly what we have done. We put a plan in place that actually provides value to the coalition, and those are the results that we are having right now. We will continue to be a responsible partner to any coalition we belong to.

• (1440)

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not listening to our coalition partners. Nobody can believe him anymore.

Let me read a direct quote from the foreign minister of the Kurdish regional government. In November 2015, he said:

We would like to tell [Canada] that the air strikes have been effective.... They have saved lives. They have helped destroy the enemy.

...if it were for us [to decide], we request that to continue.

Only in the defence minister's fairytale land of alternative facts could this be interpreted as support.

Why is the defence minister blatantly misleading Canadians yet again?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that, when it comes to being a good coalition partner, we have to talk with the coalition and look at the situation on ground to be able to actually understand what the needs are. They asked for intelligence. We are making sure we have the right type of trainers.

I would also like to be able to respond to the member opposite by saying this is the reason we are having an impact on the ground, the reason we are having the good results in the Mosul operation, because of the great work we have done on the ground and because of the right intelligence we have put on the ground.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not asking if the mission is going well or if the soldiers currently on the ground are doing a good job; we know they are doing a good job. We want to know whether the Iraqis asked to keep the CF-18s in Iraq, yes or no. The minister is saying no, but the Iraqis are saying yes.

Who is telling the truth?

[English]

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, I had many discussions with the previous minister of defence from Iraq, as well as the current one. We spoke with the coalition partners and have also taken a regional approach, because that is what we need to do to be a responsible coalition partner. I have worked in coalitions before. We need to be able to provide the right resources at the right time, and that is exactly what we have done.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, no one understood that the expression “Canada is back” could also mean “Canada is lagging behind”. However, this is absolutely the case when it comes to international aid.

Instead of joining the leading group of countries that devote 0.7% of their GDP to the fight against extreme poverty, the Minister of Finance is plunging us into an era of austerity whose mantra is the age-old refrain, “Do more with less.”

Does the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie approve what her colleague from the Department of Finance is saying, or will she stand up to demand more?

Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau (Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you know, we conducted a broad consultation last year. Our partners asked us for three things: leadership, good policies and funding.

We have already proven our leadership on several occasions. Just think of the global fund: with our partners, we have managed to amass \$13 billion to wipe out AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We were asked for good policies, and \$650 billion was committed to sexual and reproductive health. We are congratulated the world over for this. In addition, we are showing leadership in innovative funding.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the escalating humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria and the growing famine in Africa, it is hard to imagine how the government is going to provide leadership with no new humanitarian funding in its budget.

Last Friday, the Liberals quietly announced in a press release that our mission in Iraq would be extended in a way that draws Canadian Forces further into combat. Had Canadians been asked, many would have called for a larger and more urgent focus on humanitarian assistance and stabilization efforts, rather than on new contributions to combat operations.

Will the minister commit to a debate and a vote here in the House before extending our mission in Iraq beyond June 30?

Oral Questions

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as stated earlier, we want to make sure we have the right information on the situation on the ground before we make a decision. That is the reason why we made a decision to extend the mission three months to make sure that we have the right information, that we have good discussions with our coalition partners; it allows us to make an appropriate plan so that we continue to have a good impact on the ground, as we have done in the past.

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[Translation]

FAMILY, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Eva Nassif (Vimy, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is national family caregiver day. Those who help sick or dying relatives deserve great recognition for their dedication. Budget 2017 sets out new measures to support these people, who sometimes have to take time away from work to care for their family members.

Could the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development tell us about the new program for family caregivers?

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vimy and congratulate her on her work in support of family caregivers. We are pleased to honour our commitment to supporting those who help their loved ones through more inclusive and flexible benefits. It will soon be easier for Canadians to take time off to care for family members experiencing health problems. These improvements will provide financial support to caregivers and protect their jobs during these difficult times.

I hope I can count on the support of all members of Parliament when our proposed changes are presented to them.

* * *

●(1445)

[English]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the salary for the Canada Post CEO is set out in a cabinet order at \$523,000 a year, yet Bombardier executives will earn 10 times that amount each in current and deferred compensation, just as the Prime Minister hands them \$400 million in tax dollars. If these executives had earned the same amount as the Canada Post CEO, the company would have saved enough money to hire more than 500 middle-class Canadians.

Why did the government not require it to do that before handing over such a big chunk of change?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the investment that we made, the repayable contribution of \$372.5 million, will help secure 1,300 good-quality jobs and will help position the aerospace sector to create new technologies and new solutions, so we create additional jobs as well. This investment was not only about one company, but it was about a supplier base to help the small businesses that support the aerospace sector.

We will continue to support the aerospace sector. It is important to our national economy. It creates good-quality jobs. We will always defend this sector.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the company is actually laying off jobs after it received taxpayers' money. In fact, these six executives will earn more than the average 600 Canadians. That is what the Liberals meant, I guess, when they said they were going to help the middle class and those working to join it.

This budget forces middle-class taxpayers to pay higher taxes for groceries and gas, for beer and bus passes, for almost everything, while the wealthiest one per cent make off like bandits.

Will the Liberals finally admit that their whole middle-class agenda was a fraud?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that it is this government that has lowered taxes for nine million Canadians and increased taxes for the wealthiest one per cent. We have also introduced the Canada child benefit program, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. We have also increased the guaranteed income supplement by 10%. That certainly will help many Canadians.

We are pleased with our plan. It will continue to go ahead.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the budget was tabled, the government was awfully proud of how feminist and green a budget it was. However, by eliminating the public transit tax credit, which had a direct impact on Canadian workers, it is dismantling the Conservative government's green policies and taking aim at some of society's least fortunate. Yes, I know my colleagues will balk at the notion of Conservative green policies, but that does not make them any less real. It is also interesting to note that 53% of the people who benefited from this credit were women.

Why is the government attacking green policies and women?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Oral Questions

Our government will be giving the provinces and territories \$20.1 billion to improve public transit. The public transit tax credit benefited wealthier people the most but did little to alleviate the tax burden on low-income Canadians. That is why we are investing in public transit to transform the way Canadians live, travel, and get to work.

Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we just heard is unbelievable.

The green credit for public transit benefited the rich? I have never seen any one of Bombardier's board of directors using public transit, even though the company made great subway cars at its La Pocatière plant.

Will the government finally acknowledge that targeting this excellent initiative for public transit and for the average Canadian is an incredible mistake on its part?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, it was our government that lowered taxes for the middle class and that increased them for the rich. It was also our government that introduced the Canada child benefit, which helped lift thousands of children out of poverty. We continue to make investments to help the middle class and we are working hard to support it. We are moving forward.

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•(1450)

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, time is marching on, and we still do not have a plan B in place on the softwood lumber issue. The budget represents a missed opportunity to protect the industry and the workers. By April 24, an additional surtax of up to 30% will be added to Canadian lumber sold in the United States.

The Union des municipalités du Québec is asking for loan guarantees to deal with the economic impact this will have on our industry. We have to act before the industry is brought to its knees and thousands of jobs are lost.

Will the government stop talking and take action?
[English]

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my hon. colleague that the Government of Canada has been in very close conversation and co-operation with all of the regions that would be affected by that action. I am particularly impressed with the co-operative spirit that has been displayed by the Quebec government in this matter, because the government understands that working co-operatively with Canada is the best way that we can protect very important jobs in the forestry sector.

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NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the military ombudsman has reported that DND retaliates when reports critical of the department are released by his office. DND has also called the ombudsman “low influence, low interest” in initiatives to fix the failed transition process. It is unacceptable for

a department to interfere with the work or be dismissive of the ombudsman. Will the minister honour the ombudsman's request and make the office independent from the department so he reports directly to Parliament to fulfill the mandate and effectively serve the military and veteran communities?

Hon. Harjit S. Sajjan (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the ombudsman's office does really good work for men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, I met with the ombudsman on a number of occasions based on his report. A lot of his recommendations we put into place, especially when it came to the Valcartier cadet incident from 1974 and some of the great work that has also been done regarding the transition. We have incorporated a lot of those recommendations into the defence policy. The independence of his office is very important for that office to do the work and continue to do so.

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GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jennifer Stebbing has been named the director of the Hamilton Port Authority. She is a failed Liberal candidate and has already said she is going to run again. She is also a self-described politico and outdoor enthusiast. While that might make her a wonderful Liberal candidate, it is not clear how she meets the job requirements, as posted on Transport Canada's website.

Will the Minister of Transport tell us what accepted stature within the transportation industry this failed Liberal candidate has?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, our government has adopted an open and transparent process that aims to recognize that it is important to find the best-qualified people to ensure—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I had no trouble hearing the question. I would like to hear the answer. I am sure members would like to hear the answer. The hon. Minister of Transport has the floor.

Hon. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, our government has adopted an open, transparent system that identifies the best people and also takes into account diversity and gender balance. That is what we have achieved.

On the member's specific question concerning Jennifer Stebbing, she has vast legal experience, serving in leadership positions in the Halton County Law Association, the Hamilton-Halton Women's Lawyers Association, and the Hamilton Taxpayer Coalition, of which she is president.

We are very pleased—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Oral Questions

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how can anyone believe the Liberals are being open and transparent in filling appointments? Liberal appointments are like a fixed back-room poker game, and on this Western Hemisphere Ports Day, Jennifer Stebbing and Darin Deschamps seem to know how to play the game, after being appointed to port authorities. Stebbing ran for the Liberals in the last election, while Deschamps played his cards right, pushing over \$5,000 into the Liberal Party pot.

Why do the Liberals not just come clean and admit that only donors are getting appointments?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, of course, nothing could be further from the truth. We are adopting a system that identifies the best and most qualified people. It is an open and transparent process, and I am glad to say that lots of very well-qualified people are applying.

We look at it from that point of view, open and transparent. We are trying to achieve diversity and gender balance. I think we are doing a great job, if we look at the people who have been appointed.

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order. I ask the member from Brantford—Brant to restrain himself so he can hear his friend, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil, who has the floor.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ante on Liberal patronage keeps going up.

Jim Spatz, a developer who paid \$1,500 to attend a Liberal cash for access fundraiser with the Minister of Finance, is also in on the game. Last week he had the winning hand and was reappointed to a three-year term as a director of the Halifax Port Authority.

The Liberals' press release said the new appointments “follow the Government of Canada's open, transparent...appointment process”. When it comes to appointments, should the Liberals not be using the disclaimer, “only donors to the Liberal Party need apply”?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I love this opportunity to talk about Jim Spatz. Jim Spatz has vast community experience serving, for example, on NDP Premier Darrell Dexter's advisory council on the economy, and also, for five years, as chair of the board of Dalhousie University. He was voted an outstanding businessman in Halifax.

We are very honoured and lucky to have him on the Halifax Port Authority.

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TRANSPORT

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all know how vital the transportation system is to Canada's economy. Continually improving our transportation system is crucial.

Can the minister please update Canadians on how investments in budget 2017 will strengthen communities like the ones I represent in Central Nova, help Canadians move faster across our country, and get goods to markets more efficiently?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, trade corridors are vital to Canada's economy and are a very important part of our mandate. In fact, in the 2017 budget, \$2

billion was identified for a national trade corridors fund. We are using that money for prioritizing important transportation investments that will minimize congestion and remove bottlenecks in our vital trade corridors. We want our trucks and our trains and our planes and our ships to move across this country as efficiently as possible and out to world markets. That is what we are doing.

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JUSTICE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, each day the Liberals are allowing more and more criminals to go free because they are incapable of making judicial appointments. While we were in office, in one month we appointed more than the Liberals have appointed in 16 months. Those appointments were inclusive of Canadian society.

What is it about the government that makes it so comfortable with endangering the lives of Canadians by allowing dangerous offenders to go free? Can the government answer that?

The Speaker: Order. I would encourage the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt to restrain himself.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Jody Wilson-Raybould (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand up to speak about the new judicial appointments process that our government has instituted to ensure openness and transparency.

I am pleased to talk about the new judicial advisory committees we have put in place to ensure that our judiciary reflects the diversity of Canada and is merit-based. We have made substantive appointments to the superior courts, and we will continue to do so.

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TAXATION

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal budget removed an important transit rebate. In Nanaimo—Ladysmith, coastal ferry users were greatly aided by this tax credit. Given that the B.C. Liberals have hiked coastal ferry fares at over ten times the rate of inflation, the federal rebate cut the cost of daily ferry travel and helped make ends meet.

For a government that talks a lot about how it supports the middle class, this move does not make any sense. Will the Liberals reconsider and restore this important rebate?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government will provide \$20.1 billion in funding to provinces and territories to improve public transit. This funding will make it possible for Canadian communities to build a new urban transit network and service extensions.

The public transit tax credit delivered the highest benefits to the wealthiest while providing little or no relief to the lowest-income Canadians. That is why we are making the investments in transit that will transform the way Canadians live, move, and go to work.

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know that transit is very important and critical to a high quality of life, getting to work on time, and getting home after work to meet their families. In British Columbia, many communities rely on ferries in order to do this kind of communication and transportation. Could the Minister of Infrastructure tell us how and what the government is doing to increase connectivity and safety for ferry users.

● (1500)

Hon. Amarjeet Sohi (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member and all the B.C. MPs, including the members of the NDP, for advocating changes to the new Building Canada fund to include ferry infrastructure, which was excluded by the Harper government from funding.

Working with the Province of British Columbia, we are funding \$201 million toward three ferry projects. Once completed, these projects will increase safety, make it faster and easier for passengers to travel, and promote tourism and economic growth in British Columbia.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the criteria and objectives of the Canada 150 fund changed in summer 2016. In question 50, part G, of the general application form, applicants must provide a 20-line summary of their project and indicate how it meets the objectives previously described. Then, like magic, the form changed in the summer of 2016, disqualifying hundreds of projects from organizations wanting to take part in the festivities.

Will the minister confirm the changes to the criteria and objectives of the Canada 150 fund in the summer of 2016?

Hon. Mélanie Joly (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are excited about the Canada 150 celebrations.

We have received thousands of applications worth almost \$2 billion, for a fund that is only \$200 million. We want celebrations and projects across the country that are specifically based on four themes. Members of this House are, of course, aware of that. These include youth, diversity and inclusion, the environment, and

reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Our goal is to achieve equitable regional distribution. It will be a great year for all.

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AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are angry about the greediness of Bombardier executives. After cutting jobs and begging for handouts, these executives are giving themselves a 48% pay raise. This goes beyond cynicism. It is obscene. Quebecers have every reason to be outraged.

Will the Prime Minister join Quebecers in asking Bombardier executives to forgo their pay raises for 2016?

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand Canadians' and Quebecers' concerns. At the same time, it is very important that our government support the aerospace industry. That is why we invested \$372 million in research and development. This investment will create jobs and help small and medium-sized businesses. That is a priority for our government, and we are going to continue to work hard for the aerospace industry.

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CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mrs. Marilène Gill (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again, Ottawa's negligence and laissez-faire approach are hurting Quebec.

Ottawa has shown once again, through negligence, that Quebec would be much better off on its own. Until February 17, a Rio Tinto ship was stuck in the ice for two days, because of a serious shortage of icebreakers on the St. Lawrence. There are five, when there should be 11 of them.

Will the government stop tarnishing Quebec's reputation internationally and start listening to the Quebec government, which wants to see twice as many icebreakers on the St. Lawrence?

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Coast Guard icebreakers keep our waters safe and accessible to vessels carrying people and goods to and from Canadian ports.

The Coast Guard works closely with the marine industry, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation to meet all our clients' ice breaking needs. With its fleet of 17 icebreakers and hovercraft, the Coast Guard provides essential ice breaking services on the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, as well as in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. We will continue to ensure that those waterways are navigable at all times.

Government Orders
(Division No. 239)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. As we know, we are debating in this place changing the Standing Orders, but I would like to refer, for my point of order, to our existing rules, Standing Orders 16(2) and 18. The combined effect of these two Standing Orders is that interrupting members or speaking disrespectfully of them violates the rules of this place.

The amount of heckling, which I know many members say they would like to curtail, is getting completely out of hand from my little corner. The Liberals no longer heckle, but the Conservatives and the New Democrats are heckling fiercely, and it is a violation of this place.

• (1505)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for raising this point of order and referring to Standing Orders. I remind members that those are the rules. The member is quite correct that those are the Standing Orders and I ask members on all sides to abide by them. Members will know that I, in fact, have called upon members from at least two sides today to restrain themselves, but I would like if everyone did it all the time.

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Mr. Speaker, during my member's statement earlier, I talked about the five candidates who were elected in yesterday's by-elections. Unfortunately, I said there were only three women, when there are actually four. I wish to apologize and, with the permission of the House, correct that in my statement.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for making that correction.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**NATIONAL SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE
COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ACT**

The House resumed from March 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-22, An Act to establish the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians and to make consequential amendments to certain Acts, be read the third time and passed, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: It being 3:07 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, April 3, 2017, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-22.

Call in the members.

• (1515)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

YEAS

Members

Albas
Ambrose
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeschen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk
Finley
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Liepert
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
McColeman
Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Rayes
Richards
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

NAYS

Members

Aboultarif
Albrecht
Anderson
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseault
Eglniski
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Genius
Gladu
Gourde
Hughes
Johns
Kent
Kniec
Lake
Laverdière
Leitch
Lobb
MacGregor
Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Motz
Nantel
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pauzé
Poilievre
Rankin
Reid
Ritz
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 129

Aldag
Alleslev
Anandasangaree
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Bennett
Bittle

Alghabra
Amos
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Baylis
Bibeau
Blair

Government Orders

Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Footé	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)	Maloney
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
May (Cambridge)	
McCrimmon	McDonald
McGuinty	McKay
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendès	Mendicino
Mihychuk (Soeurs)	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef	Morrissey
Murray	Nassif
Nault	O'Connell
Oliphant	Oliver
O'Regan	Ouellette
Paradis	Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poissant
Qualtrough	Ratansi
Rioux	Robillard
Rodriguez	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
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Virani
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wrzesnewskyj
Young	Zahid— 166

PAIRED

Members

Freeland

Moore— 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.*[Translation]*

The next question is on the main motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1520)

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

*(Division No. 240)***YEAS**

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Baylis
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Bratina	Breton
Brison	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Casey (Charlottetown)	Chagger
Champagne	Chan
Cormier	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
DeCoursey	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Drouin
Dubourg	Duclos
Duguid	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dzerowicz	Easter
Ehsassi	El-Khoury
Ellis	Eyolfson
Fergus	Fillmore
Finnigan	Fisher
Footé	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Goldsmith-Jones	Goodale
Gould	Graham
Grewal	Hardie
Harvey	Hehr
Holland	Housefather
Hutchings	Iacono
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Khalid
Khera	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)	Lebouthillier
Lefebvre	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Lightbound	Lockhart

Long
Ludwig
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
May (Saanech—Gulf Islands)
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Soeurs)
Monsef
Morrissey
Nassif
O'Connell
Oliver
Ouellette
Peschisolido
Philpott
Poissant
Ratansi
Robillard
Romanado
Rudd
Rusnak
Saini
Samson
Sarai
Schieffe
Serré
Shanahan
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
Sikand
Sohi
Spengemann
Tan
Tootoo
Vandenbeld
Virani
Wilkinson
Wrzesnewskyj
Zahid — 167

Longfield
MacAulay (Cardigan)
Maloney
McCrimmon
McGuinty
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Murray
Nault
Olliphant
O'Regan
Paradis
Petitpas Taylor
Picard
Qualtrough
Rioux
Rodriguez
Rota
Ruimy
Sahota
Sajjan
Sangha
Scarpaleggia
Schulte
Sgro
Sheehan
Sidhu (Brampton South)
Simms
Sorbara
Tabbara
Tassi
Vandal
Vaughan
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Young

NAYS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Anderson
Aubin
Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies
Diotte
Donnelly
Dubé
Dusseau
Eglinski
Fast
Fortin
Garrison
Genuis
Gladu
Gourde
Hughes
Johns
Kent
Kmieć
Lake
Laverdière
Leitch
Lobb
MacGregor

Albas
Ambrose
Arnold
Barlow
Beaulieu
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen
Deltell
Doherty
Dreeshen
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Falk
Finley
Gallant
Généreux
Gill
Godin
Harder
Jeneroux
Kelly
Kitchen
Kwan
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Liepert
Lukiwski
MacKenzie

Routine Proceedings

Maguire
Marcil
Mathysen
McColeman
Mulcair
Nater
Nuttall
Paul-Hus
Plamondon
Quach
Rayes
Richards
Saganash
Saroya
Schmale
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Sweet
Tilson
Trudel
Vecchio
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Yurdiga

Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
Motz
Nantel
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pauzé
Poilievre
Rankin
Reid
Ritz
Sansoucy
Scheer
Shields
Sorenson
Stewart
Stubbs
Thériault
Trost
Van Loan
Viersen
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Wong
Zimmer — 128

PAIRED

Members

Freeland
Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from April 3 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion for concurrence of the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

● (1530)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 241)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif
Albrecht
Anderson
Aubin
Benson
Berthold
Blaikie
Block
Boulerice
Brassard
Brown
Chong
Christopherson
Clement
Cullen

Albas
Ambrose
Arnold
Barlow
Bergen
Bezan
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boucher
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Carrie
Choquette
Clarke
Cooper
Davies

Routine Proceedings

Deltell	Diotte	Hardie	Harvey
Doherty	Donnelly	Hehr	Holland
Dreeschen	Dubé	Housefather	Hutchings
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)	Dusseault	Iacono	Joly
Duvall	Eglinski	Jones	Jordan
Falk	Fast	Jowhari	Kang
Finley	Gallant	Khalid	Khera
Garrison	Généreux	Lametti	Lamoureux
Genuis	Gladu	Lapointe	Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Godin	Gourde	Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Harder	Hughes	Lemieux	Leslie
Jeneroux	Johns	Levitt	Lightbound
Kelly	Kent	Lockhart	Long
Kitchen	Kmiec	Longfield	Ludwig
Kwan	Lake	MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengary)	Laverdière	Maloney	Marcil
Lebel	Leitch	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)	
Liepert	Lobb	May (Cambridge)	
Lukiwski	MacGregor	McCrimmon	McDonald
MacKenzie	Maguire	McGuinty	McKay
Malcolmson	Masse (Windsor West)	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)	McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mathysen	May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	Mendès	Mendicino
McCauley (Edmonton West)	McColeman	Mihychuk	Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Érables)
Motz	Mulcair	Soeurs	
Nantel	Nater	Monsef	Morrissey
Nicholson	Nuttall	Murray	Nassif
Obhrai	Paul-Hus	Nault	O'Connell
Pollièvre	Quach	Oliphant	Oliver
Rankin	Rayes	O'Regan	Ouellette
Reid	Richards	Paradis	Paupé
Ritz	Saganash	Peschisolido	Petitpas Taylor
Sansoucy	Saroya	Philpott	Picard
Scheer	Schmale	Plamondon	Poissant
Shields	Sopuck	Qualtrough	Ratansi
Sorenson	Stanton	Rioux	Robillard
Stewart	Strahl	Rodriguez	Romanado
Stubbs	Sweet	Rota	Rudd
Tilson	Trost	Ruimy	Rusnak
Trudel	Van Loan	Sahota	Saini
Vecchio	Viersen	Sajjan	Samson
Wagantall	Warawa	Sangha	Sarai
Warkentin	Watts	Scarpaleggia	Schiefke
Waugh	Webber	Schulte	Serré
Weir	Wong	Sgro	Shanahan
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 120	Sheehan	Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)
		Sidhu (Brampton South)	Sikand
		Simms	Sohi
		Sorbara	Spengemann
		Tabbara	Tan
		Tassi	Thériault
		Tootoo	Vandal
		Vandenbeld	Vaughan
		Virani	Whalen
		Wilkinson	Wilson-Raybould
		Wrzesnewskyj	Young
		Zahid — 175	

NAYS

Members

Aldag	Alghabra
Alleslev	Amos
Anandasangaree	Arseneault
Arya	Ayoub
Badawey	Bagnell
Bains	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Bennett	Bibeau
Bittle	Blair
Boissonnault	Bossio
Boudrias	Bratina
Breton	Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes	Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Cormier
Cuzner	Dabrusin
Damoff	DeCoursey
Dhillon	Di Iorio
Drouin	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dzerowicz
Easter	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Fergus
Fillmore	Finnigan
Fisher	Footé
Fortin	Fragiskatos
Fraser (West Nova)	Fraser (Central Nova)
Fry	Fuhr
Garneau	Gerretsen
Gill	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Graham	Grewal

PAIRED

Members

Freeland

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.*[Translation]*

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.**Some hon. members:** No.**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.**Some hon. members:** Yea.**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.**Some hon. members:** Nay.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Mr. Gordon Brown: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, it is clear that some members said no. I know there was a bit of noise in the House, but there were a number of members who did indicate that they wanted to oppose the motion.

The Speaker: In fact, I only heard a very faint no, and when I asked a second time, there were none. Some members are insisting they said no, so I am going to accept that. If there are more than five who rise, we will have a vote.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1540)

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

(Division No. 242)

YEAS

Members

Aboultaif	Albas
Albrecht	Aldag
Alghabra	Alleslev
Ambrose	Amos
Anandasangaree	Anderson
Arnold	Arseneault
Arya	Aubin
Ayoub	Badawey
Bagnell	Bains
Barlow	Barsalou-Duval
Baylis	Beaulieu
Bennett	Benson
Bergen	Berthold
Bezan	Bibeau
Bittle	Blaikie
Blair	Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Block	Boissonnault
Bossio	Boucher
Boudrias	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brassard
Bratina	Breton
Brisson	Brosseau
Brown	Caesar-Chavannes
Carr	Carrie
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)	Casey (Charlottetown)
Chagger	Champagne
Chan	Chong
Choquette	Christopherson
Clarke	Clement
Cooper	Cormier
Cullen	Cuzner
Dabrusin	Damoff
Davies	DeCoursey
Deltell	Dhillon
Di Iorio	Diotte
Doherty	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Drouin
Dubé	Dubourg
Duclos	Duguid
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Dusseault	Duvall
Dzerowicz	Easter
Eglinski	Ehsassi
El-Khoury	Ellis
Eyolfson	Falk
Fast	Fergus
Fillmore	Finley
Finnigan	Fisher
Footé	Fortin

Fragiskatos	Fraser (West Nova)
Fraser (Central Nova)	Freeland
Fry	Fuhr
Gallant	Gameau
Garrison	Généreux
Genius	Gerretsen
Gill	Gladu
Godin	Goldsmith-Jones
Goodale	Gould
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Harder
Hardie	Harvey
Hehr	Holland
Housefather	Hughes
Hutchings	Iacono
Jeneroux	Johns
Joly	Jones
Jordan	Jowhari
Kang	Kelly
Kent	Khalid
Khera	Kitchen
Kmiec	Kwan
Lake	Lametti
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Lauson (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)	Lauson (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Laverdière	Lebel
Lebouthillier	Lefebvre
Leitch	Lemieux
Leslie	Levitt
Liepert	Lightbound
Lobb	Lockhart
Long	Longfield
Ludwig	Lukivski
MacAulay (Cardigan)	MacGregor
MacKenzie	MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maguire	Malcolmson
Maloney	Marcil
Masse (Windsor West)	Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
Mathysen	May (Cambridge)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	McCauley (Edmonton West)
McColeman	McCrimmon
McDonald	McGuinity
McKay	McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
McLeod (Northwest Territories)	Mendès
Mendicino	Mihychuk
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs)	
Monsef	
Moore	Morrissey
Motz	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Connell	Oliphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Paulzé
Peschisolido	Petitpas Taylor
Philpott	Picard
Plamondon	Poilievre
Poissant	Quach
Qualtrough	Rankin
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Rioux	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Saganash
Sahota	Saini
Sajjan	Samson
Sangha	Sansoucy
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Sorenson
Spengemann	Stanton
Stewart	Strahl

The Budget

Stubbs
Tabbara
Tassi
Tilson
Trost
Van Loan
Vandenbeld
Vecchio
Virani
Warawa
Watts
Webber
Whalen
Wilson-Raybould
Wrzesnewskyj
Yurdiga
Zimmer— 297

Sweet
Tan
Thériault
Tootoo
Trudel
Vandal
Vaughan
Viersen
Wagantall
Warkentin
Waugh
Weir
Wilkinson
Wong
Young
Zahid

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made Monday, April 3, 2017, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the amendment to Motion No. 10, under ways and means proceedings.

The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

● (1550)

(The House divided on the amendment to the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 243)

YEAS

Members

Aubin
Beaulieu
Blaikie
Boudrias
Boutin-Sweet
Choquette
Cullen
Donnelly
Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona)
Duvall
Garrison
Hughes
Kwan
MacGregor
Marcel
Mathysse
Mulcair
Pauzé
Quach
Saganash
Stewart
Trudel

Barsalou-Duval
Benson
Blaney (North Island—Powell River)
Boulerice
Brosseau
Christopherson
Davies
Dubé
Dusseault
Fortin
Gill
Johns
Laverdière
Malcolmson
Masse (Windsor West)
May (Saanich—Gulf Islands)
Nantel
Plamondon
Rankin
Sansoucy
Thériault
Weir— 44

NAYS

Members

Aboultouf
Albrecht
Alghabra
Ambrose
Anandasangaree
Arnold
Arya
Badawey
Bains
Baylis
Bergen
Bezan
Bittle
Block
Bossio
Brassard
Breton
Brown
Carr
Casey (Cumberland—Colchester)
Chagger
Chan
Clarke
Cooper
Cuzner
Damoff
Deltell
Di Iorio
Doherty
Drouin
Duclos
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Ehsassi
Ellis
Falk
Fergus
Finley
Fisher
Fragiskatos
Fraser (Central Nova)
Fuhr
Gameau
Genus
Gladu
Goldsmith-Jones
Gould
Graham
Harder
Harvey
Holland
Hutchings
Jeneroux
Jones
Jowhari
Kelly
Khalid
Kitchen
Lake
Lamoureux
Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry)
Lebel
Lefebvre
Lemieux
Levitt
Lightbound
Lockhart
Longfield
Lukiwski
MacKenzie
Maguire
Massé (Avignon—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia)
May (Cambridge)
McCauley (Edmonton West)
McCrimmon
McGuinity
McKinnon (Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam)
Mendès
Mihychuk
Soeurs)

Albas
Aldag
Alleslev
Amos
Anderson
Arseneault
Ayoub
Bagnell
Barlow
Bennett
Berthold
Bibeau
Blair
Boissonnault
Boucher
Bratina
Brisson
Caesar-Chavannes
Carrie
Casey (Charlottetown)
Champagne
Chong
Clement
Cormier
Dabrusin
DeCoursey
Dhillon
Diotte
Dreeschen
Dubourg
Duguid
Dzerowicz
Eglinski
El-Khoury
Eyolfson
Fast
Fillmore
Finnigan
Foote
Fraser (West Nova)
Fry
Gallant
Généreux
Gerretsen
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hardie
Hehr
Housefather
Iacono
Joly
Jordan
Kang
Kent
Khera
Kmiec
Lametti
Lapointe
Lauzon (Argenteuil—La Petite-Nation)
Lebouthillier
Leitch
Leslie
Liepert
Lobb
Long
Ludwig
MacAulay (Cardigan)
MacKinnon (Gatineau)
Maloney
McColeman
McDonald
McKay
McLeod (Northwest Territories)
Mendicino
Miller (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Érables)

Monsef	Morrissey
Motz	Murray
Nassif	Nater
Nault	Nicholson
Nuttall	Obhrai
O'Connell	Olipphant
Oliver	O'Regan
Ouellette	Paradis
Paul-Hus	Peschisolido
Petitpas Taylor	Philpott
Picard	Poilievre
Poissant	Qualtrough
Ratansi	Rayes
Reid	Richards
Rioux	Ritz
Robillard	Rodriguez
Romanado	Rota
Rudd	Ruimy
Rusnak	Sahota
Saini	Sajjan
Samson	Sangha
Sarai	Saroya
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schiefke	Schmale
Schulte	Serré
Sgro	Shanahan
Sheehan	Shields
Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon)	Sidhu (Brampton South)
Sikand	Simms
Sohi	Sopuck
Sorbara	Sorenson
Spengemann	Stanton
Strahl	Stubbs
Sweet	Tabbara
Tan	Tassi
Tilson	Tootoo
Trost	Van Loan
Vandal	Vandenbeld
Vaughan	Vecchio
Viersen	Virani
Wagantall	Warawa
Warkentin	Watts
Waugh	Webber
Whalen	Wilkinson
Wilson-Raybould	Wong
Wrzesnewskyj	Young
Yurdiga	Zahid
Zimmer — 251	

PAIRED

Members

Freeland

Moore — 2

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment defeated.

[*English*]

I have notice of a question privilege. Perhaps the member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman would like to wait a moment. I ask members to leave quietly and conduct their conversations outside in the lobbies.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMENTS OF MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege to address comments made by the Minister of National Defence in the House, and information provided to the House through an Order Paper question.

On January 30, the minister signed and tabled a response to Order Paper Question No. 600, which states:

Privilege

All Canadian Armed Forces personnel serving at all Operation IMPACT Kuwait locations received Tax Relief effective 5 Oct 2014 (date at which the original risk scores became effective) to 1 Sep 2016.

Operation IMPACT (Iraq) has had Tax Relief since 22 Aug 2014, date at which the original risk score for this location became effective.

Operation IMPACT (Baghdad) has had Tax Relief since 17 Apr 2015, date at which the original risk score for this location became effective.

The answers to this question means that the troops that were deployed by the Conservative government had all their danger pay and tax relief benefits.

In response to questions during question period, on March 8, and most recently March 21, the minister contradicted himself.

Specifically, on March 8, the minister said, “I would also like to correct the member in terms of the previous government's actions on this. It actually sent troops into Kuwait without the tax-free allowance, something we had taken up.”

On March 21, the defence minister said, “I just wish he had the same passion when he sent the troops to Iraq without the tax-free benefits” and “the previous government was the one that actually sent our troops to Iraq without the tax-free benefit.”

I have engaged the minister several times in the House attempting to get him to correct the record. Time and time again the minister ignores the fact that he submitted information through the Order Paper question to the House has said one thing, and continues to leave on the *Hansard* record something entirely different.

On February 1, 2002, Speaker Milliken ruled on a matter with respect to the former minister of national defence. The hon. member for Portage—Lisgar at the time alleged that the former minister of national defence deliberately misled the House as to when he knew that prisoners taken by Canadian JTF2 troops in Afghanistan had been handed over to the Americans. In support of that allegation, he cited the minister's responses in question period on two successive days.

The Speaker considered the matter and found that there was a prima facie question of privilege. He stated, “The authorities are consistent about the need for clarity in our proceedings and about the need to ensure the integrity of the information provided by the government to the House.”

The authorities to which Speaker Milliken was referring include the following from page 115 of O'Brien and Bosc, which states, “Misleading a Minister or a Member has also been considered a form of obstruction and thus a prima facie breach of privilege.”

While Speaker Milliken in 2002 accepted the minister's assertion that he had no intention to mislead the House, he stated, “Nevertheless this remains a very difficult situation.”

The Speaker then referred to the first edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at page 67, which states:

There are...affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges...the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; [or that] obstructs or impedes any Member or Officer of the House in the discharge of their duties...

Speaker Milliken went on to state:

The Budget

On the basis of the arguments presented by hon. members and in view of the gravity of the matter, I have concluded that the situation before us where the House is left with two versions of events is one that merits further consideration by an appropriate committee, if only to clear the air. I therefore invite the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar to move his motion.

I would argue that the issue we have before us today is identical. The Minister of National Defence has informed the House that the previous government provided tax relief to our soldiers through an Order Paper question, signed by the minister himself, and has provided oral information in our debates that say the complete opposite.

Page 63, 22nd edition of Erskine May, refers to a resolution passed by the U.K. House. It reads:

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

How can the minister explain signing off on information that is tabled in the House that completely contradicts what he is saying in the House almost on a daily basis? Only one of these statements can be true.

● (1555)

I have given the minister many chances to correct the record, and as recently as March 21, he has refused.

On February 17, 2011, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and other members argued that a minister had made statements in committee that were different from those made in the House or provided to the House in written form. These members argued that the material available showed that contradictory information had been provided. As a result, they argued that this demonstrated that the minister deliberately misled the House, and that as such, a *prima facie* case of privilege existed.

In his ruling on March 9, 2011, Speaker Milliken said:

The crux of the matter, it seems to me, is this: as the committee has reported, when asked who inserted the word “not” in the assessment of the KAIROS funding application, in testimony the minister twice replied that she did not know. In a February 14 statement to the House, while she did not indicate that she knew who inserted the word “not”, the minister addressed this matter by stating that the “not” was inserted at her direction. At the very least, it can be said that this has caused confusion. The minister has acknowledged this, and has characterized her own handling of the matter as “unfortunate”. Yet as is evident from hearing the various interventions that have been made since then, the confusion persists. As the member for Scarborough—Rouge River told the House, this “has confused me. It has confused Parliament. It has confused us in our exercise of holding the government to account, whether it is the Privy Council, whether it is the minister, whether it is public officials; we cannot do our job when there is that type of confusion”.

In a ruling on March 21, 1978, at page 3,975 of *Debates*, Speaker Jerome quoted a British procedure committee report of 1967, which states in part:

...the Speaker should ask himself, when he has to decide whether to grant precedence over other public business to a motion which a Member who has complained of some act or conduct as constituting a breach of privilege desires to move, should be not—do I consider that, assuming that the facts are as stated, the act or conduct constitutes a breach of privilege, but could it reasonably be held to be a breach of privilege, or to put it shortly, has the Member an arguable point? If the Speaker feels any doubt on the question, he should, in my view, leave it to the House.

There are two versions of events before this House by the same source, the Minister of National Defence, and no effort has been made to clarify this matter. I ask that a *prima facie* case of question

of privilege be found, and I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

● (1600)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on all accounts, whenever I witness the Minister of National Defence stand in his place, I have found him to be very clear and transparent on all the statements he makes. At this point, what we would like to do is review the matter and bring it back at a later time after we have had the opportunity to go over what the member has stated.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman for raising this question of privilege, and I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader. I look forward to hearing further from him or someone else on his side, and then I will take the matter under advisement and come back to the House.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

The Speaker: I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 43 minutes.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the late Liberal senator Keith Davey purportedly said this during the 1980 election campaign: screw the west and we will take the rest.

Budget 2017 does not just regurgitate the bad fiscal policies of that period, but it also regurgitates the divisive anti-Alberta policy approach, which defined the Pierre Trudeau government. My constituents are proud Albertans and also proud Canadians. We work hard, we do our share, and sometimes we do more than our share. During good times, that is okay, but Alberta is hurting right now. Unemployment has surged and investment is drying up, partly due to commodity prices but also because of tax increases of every shape and size from multiple levels of government.

The Budget

From the current federal government, before budget 2017, we had all kinds of different measures that have substantively negatively impacted the Alberta economy. We had the introduction of a tanker ban off northern B.C., limiting our export options at the same time as Alaskan tankers are constantly flowing through that area. We had the withdrawal of support for vital energy infrastructure like the northern gateway pipeline. We had the effect of federal small-business tax hikes, which went completely against a commitment made in the Liberal platform. We had the elimination of the hiring credit for small business, an important incentive to help create jobs. We had the expansion of CPP, effectively a significant increase to the tax on jobs, again creating a greater disincentive for prospective employers. We had the introduction of the carbon tax. We had the overall fiscal instability characterized now by a second budget with a deficit of over \$20 billion and the impact that has on investor confidence, but we had that instability even before this budget. Finally, we had a failure of the equalization formula to update in response to the realities on the ground with respect to Alberta.

Those are a number of key ways already, before this budget, where we were seeing the impact of federal policy on Alberta.

The Alberta Conservative caucus recognized these challenges and worked hard through an Alberta jobs task force process. I want to recognize the leadership of my colleagues from Edmonton Riverbend and Calgary Nose Hill on this process. It was a process whereby we presented constructive feedback to the government about what it could do to help Alberta. We did our job as the opposition. We did not just oppose; rather, we proposed constructive solutions. We did that, but all of these suggestions were ignored.

What is in this budget for Alberta? There is nothing, in fact, but more tax increases, targeted punitive tax increases that would negatively affect our energy sector. The government chose this budget at this point in time to remove vital incentives for small companies engaged in energy exploration. These incentives allowed those companies to defer taxation by writing off capital investment in the first year. These incentives were not a subsidy or even a tax break for the energy sector; they were a tax-deferral measure that encouraged investment, which would actually make more money for the government in the long run. The removal of these incentives in this budget, the tax hike uniquely targeted to our energy sector, would not increase revenue. It is a purely punitive measure that would discourage exploration and investment. It would reduce government revenue by reducing investment in the energy sector. It reflects no plausible policy other than the current government's clear anti-energy ideology. There is just no other explanation for the removal of tax-deferral incentives that benefit not only workers but that benefit the government in the long run.

What is the current government's message to struggling middle-class families in my constituency and across Canada? The government's message is this: If they are struggling, it will increase their taxes; if they are unemployed, it will kill off business investment that could have given them a job; if they are down, the government will kick them again.

The budget begins:

The story of Canada is the story of hard-working people—from fisheries workers in Atlantic Canada to forestry workers in Quebec, from the farmers who feed us to

the tradespeople who build our cities to the teachers who give young Canadians the tools they need to embrace their own futures.

It says “from fisheries workers in Atlantic Canada to forestry workers in Quebec”. Even in the government's colourful, fluffy opening paragraph, it cannot spare a mention for the entire western half of this country or for the hard-working women and men who get their hands dirty pulling the stuff out of the ground that the government members use to drive their limousines and ride around in helicopters.

The budget repeatedly talked about a so-called innovation and skills plan, which from the start excludes any investment in or support for our energy sector.

• (1605)

It repeatedly mentions advanced manufacturing, agrifood, clean technology, digital industries, health and bioscience, and clean resources as being the only places where this spending will go, even though our energy sector is one of the most innovative on the planet. Our innovations are helping to create jobs as well as reduce environmental impacts. All discussion of innovation and so-called superclusters highlights these six arbitrarily selected sectors only, and makes no mention of the critical value of Canada's energy sector.

I think the government's approach of state-managed innovation is the wrong way to go about things, anyway. It has not worked before and it will not work now, especially when the government is simultaneously undercutting our competitiveness through tax hikes. However, it is telling that in the midst of this the government explicitly excludes our energy sector from any of its proposals. The exclusion of Alberta and the energy sector from the budget cannot have been an accident. Repeatedly, proposals are discussed, but Alberta is passed over.

A further example on page 93 of the budget proposes the extension of the mineral exploration tax credit, a tax credit for junior companies that invest in mineral exploration. Does this sound familiar? It is exactly the same kind of tax measure that the Liberals are cutting for the energy sector. They are extending exploration incentives for the mining sector while killing them for the energy sector.

What other possible conclusion could Alberta families draw from this than that they were left out of this budget not by accident but on purpose? It is the same old 1980 Keith Davey Liberal election formula: screw the west.

The Liberals' approach harkens back to an old and dangerous view of Canada, which many westerners had hoped had been put to bed, a view that sees Canada as a compact of central and eastern Canadian provinces, which then acquired the territory of western Canada as a sort of colony of which it could decide how to dispose. It is a view that sees the project of national reconciliation and agreement as including only urban central Canada.

The Budget

However, this is a view that, on this side of the House, we firmly reject. We believe in Canada as a union of equal provinces. Some provinces may seek different kinds of accommodation or arrangement, and that is fine, but we believe that the project of national co-operation and reconciliation stretches from sea to sea to sea. We believe that the representation of perspective and culture and support for economic development must include every Canadian in every region from every kind of industry.

When Conservatives were in government, I am proud to say that we did not favour the west over the rest of the country. We presided over the lowest ebb in Quebec separatist sentiment in a very long time. We invested in shipbuilding in Atlantic Canada; we bailed out the auto sector in southern Ontario; we engaged and grew our seat total in Quebec, in part by supporting the forestry sector. We did our best to listen to and govern Canada as one nation, for the common good.

We created jobs from Newfoundland, to British Columbia, to Nunavut, and everywhere in between. We believe in Canada as a union of equal provinces.

That the Prime Minister himself rejects this view is well established. He said during the last government: “Canada isn't doing well right now because it's Albertans who control our community and socio-democratic agenda. It doesn't work.”

We know the Prime Minister's view, but what about the Liberal MPs from Alberta? What about the member for Edmonton Centre and the member for Calgary Skyview, the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Veterans Affairs? Do they at least think that Alberta should have been included in budget 2017?

Oh, wait, there is a heading in the budget that refers to supporting jobs in the resource sector. It says:

The Government understands the challenging economic circumstances arising from weak commodity prices affecting the oil and gas sector. Budget 2017 proposes to provide a one-time payment of \$30 million to the Government of Alberta to support provincial actions that will stimulate economic activity and employment in Alberta's resource sector.

Wow, that is almost 10% of what Bombardier was given. In fact, that is less than the total proposed executive compensation being paid to Bombardier's board chair and top five executives. More for the executives of Bombardier than for the province of Alberta to address the energy sector. Last year, Alberta had a budget deficit of \$10.8 billion. With this spending, it could have been \$10.77 billion. Now that would have made a difference.

This is a screw the west budget, indeed.

• (1610)

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as an Atlantic Canadian, I remember acutely the former leader of that party, the former prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, say that Atlantic Canada had a culture of defeat. Atlantic Canadians certainly did not forget that in 2015 when they elected 32 strong Liberal members of Parliament who, in concert with our colleagues right across the country, are working to ensure that we have a plan that helps middle-class Canadians right across this country and supports those working hard to join the middle class. That has been exemplified through this

government's approach to balancing the economy and the environment and the approval of three pipelines that emanate from Alberta.

I wonder what the member opposite has issue with if we take the totality of our plan, which includes both last year's budget and this year's budget, and supports over 8,000 families and 13,000-plus children in the Fredericton riding, and injects \$4.88 million into a riding. That is just one example. The budget also supports seniors through a strengthened guaranteed income supplement in a province that sees the fastest aging population. It enhances benefits for veterans with a commitment to returning to a lifelong support system.

Why does the member continue to work against this plan that the government has put out that supports Canadians right across the country?

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, I certainly recognize the results of the last election and the work we are doing in Atlantic Canada, but I will say that the investments the government made in Atlantic Canada with respect to shipbuilding were significant. After the last election, it was not that member or that government that was fighting for Atlantic Canada's place on the Supreme Court. It was only after repeated questions from members on this side of the House, who do not even represent ridings in Atlantic Canada, who stood up for the people of Atlantic Canada because they were not getting representation from that side of the House.

However, my speech was about Alberta. That member is a parliamentary secretary in the government. He should have posed a question about the fact that there is nothing in this budget to address the situation in Alberta. There are specific sectors named for a focus of the investments which do not in any way consider the specific sectors that are suffering in Alberta. They do not address at all the energy sector. The government thinks that energy is a dirty word. That is the issue.

The Liberals do not care about Alberta. The best they can do is this paltry discussion of \$30 million to the Government of Alberta. At least in questions and comments, we should have a comment from the government about what it is doing for Alberta. The Liberals cannot even stand up and defend it. That is pretty telling.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for talking about this being a “screw the west” budget. I share those sentiments.

The forecast for salmon on the west coast is critical. A fisheries and oceans bulletin for the west coast of Vancouver Island indicates that for 2017, the recommended management forecast for Somass sockeye, which is in the Alberni Valley, is the critical zone for harvest management corresponding to an expected return of less than 200,000 adult fish. It indicates that key factors in the sharp decline in expected abundance relative to recent return years are very low observed smolt production, and very low marine survival rate for the 2014 and 2015 key sea entry years associated with this year's adult return.

The Budget

Right now would be a really good time to invest in some habitat restoration, salmon enhancement programs, and habitat protection when we are facing what is really a threat to our most important food source on the west coast. Two hundred thousand fish is a steep decline. Just in perspective, typically about 750,00 fish return to that salmon area per year. At the top end it is about 1.9 million. This is so important and it is critical that we do something now.

I would love to hear the member's comments on that.

• (1615)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Madam Speaker, that is precisely the issue when a budget talks about only six sectors with respect to innovation. There are needs across a wide range of sectors, such as, fisheries, the agriculture sector, the energy sector, which I focused on. The member is right that the west just does not get the attention that it should be getting. There are very innovative sectors that are important, and not just to western Canada, and they are being totally ignored.

A member of the Liberal Party said during the opioid crisis, which is ongoing, that if the centre of that crisis was not in the west, perhaps the government would have reacted faster. It is comments like that coming from Liberal members that are very telling about the mentality of the government.

We need a government that governs for the good of the whole country, that considers the national common good, the good of every region. That is just not what we are seeing.

[Translation]

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Madam Speaker, before I begin, I would like you to know that I will share my time with the dynamic member for Shefford.

[English]

We live in a time of amazing change. The rate of change that we see in our society is, quite frankly, mind-boggling. We have supercomputers. It is an era of big data. There is artificial intelligence which now rivals or can surpass human intelligence in so many functions. This all started right after the Second World War. In 1947, William Shockley, along with his team of scientists at Bell Labs, invented the first transistor. That small invention 70 years ago has set us on a course that has not stopped, and will not stop for a long time.

My father is an electrical engineer. He told me that the first computers he worked on would fill a room. He would need all kinds of fans to cool down the systems and the amount of electricity that was drawn was incredible. Today, my cellphone has infinitely more computing power than the computers my father worked on had.

I, too, am an electrical engineer. I remember that at my first job, we had to buy a hard disk. This was a big expense. It had to sit underneath my desk it was so big. We would save our engineering drawings on it. Today, for example, this USB key which someone gave me has three or four times its—

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he cannot use any props during debate.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Yes, Madam Speaker.

My USB key has infinitely more data.

My son, and members will see a pattern here, is also an electrical engineer. He uses a system like Microsoft. He asked me about the image for the save button. It is a floppy disk. He does not know what that is because he has never used one.

That is the rate of change we are living in. That is the speed at which things are happening. I am an electrical engineer trained in this area and I have a hard time keeping up.

When this is happening, we have two courses of action. We can resist change or embrace change.

There are people who always resist technological change. They are called Luddites. “Luddite” comes from the name of Mr. Ned Ludd, who over 240 years ago had smashed what we call stocking frames. These were knitting machines, new machines introduced to automate knitting, and the textile industry picked them up. He was against automation, because it was going to cost him his job.

This is where we find ourselves. We either embrace technology and move forward, or we fight it.

Now, Canadians embrace technology. If we look at the rate of usage, say on the Internet, eight out of 10 adult Canadians are on the Internet regularly, once a day. In fact, Canadians lead the entire world in the amount of time they spend on the Internet. If we look at things today like non-cash payments, cashless payments, whether it be debit cards, credit cards, or online payments, again Canadians are in the top two or three in the world.

Canadians see and understand this need, and they embrace technology. We understand this, too. Our government understands that we must embrace technology. That leads me to our innovation budget.

To embrace technology is to understand that the rate of change is constant. There is the example I gave about changes in my father's career, in my career, and in my son's electronic engineering career. It means we need lifelong learning.

We have to make a commitment to always be learning. This is why I am so excited about this budget. It makes a very strong and clear commitment to help Canadians constantly learn. It starts with this phenomenal investment of \$2.7 billion over the next six years into the labour market transfer agreements. This means people will be able to upgrade their skills. They will be able to gain experience. They will be able to start a business and help plan their careers. It is a phenomenal amount of investment to ensure that they remain up to date.

We are going to create a new organization for skills gaps. We are going to be looking at where the needs are from companies and we are going to be looking at where the people should be studying, and put them together. We have people looking for work and we have companies looking for people. We need to make sure they share those skill sets.

The Budget

We are going to help adults return to school. We are going to do this by looking at new ways to support them. If people are part-time students, we are going to give them access to funds. If people have dependants, we are going to help so that they can go back to school and gain that experience. If, for example, people are receiving employment insurance and find themselves needing to upgrade their skills, they will no longer be in a conflict of interest. They will be able to continue to get their employment insurance and upgrade their skills at the same time.

We are going to invest in co-operative training, a lot more. We are going to seek to put, maybe 10,000 more positions for co-operative training, so that people not only learn from books but they get the experience hands on, working in the field.

Finally, we are going to do something that is particularly close to my heart. We are going to teach children digital skills. We are going to teach them to code. This is close to my heart, because our government underwent a series of consultations. At some point we were criticized for doing too many consultations, but regardless, we did a lot of them.

At one of my consultations on innovation, we did a round table. At the end of two hours of talk, I asked everyone at the table if they could give one message to send to the minister, what would it be. One fellow said, "Teach kids to code. That is it. Do not write anything else. Just teach kids to code." I wrote it down. I sent it up, and sure enough I was particularly pleased to see in this budget a reference to teaching kids to code and an investment of \$50 million to ensure that from kindergarten right up to grade 12, they are going to learn this new language. They are going to have the resources to get that done.

● (1620)

If we look at the ensemble of these innovation training programs, we see that we are capturing adults who need to be retrained. We are capturing older people who have been in the workforce and are maybe on unemployment and need to get back into the workforce. We are going to help people who need to get experience by helping them with their co-operative training. We are going to help young people.

We have an ensemble of products to help make sure that Canadians have access to innovation. That is a fundamental aspect of moving forward in the innovation economy.

The second thing we are going to do is help business innovate. Again, we have brought in a whole platform of programs to help our companies be more successful in this world.

What are we going to do? We are going to support superclusters with an investment of \$950 million in these high-tech areas to ensure that Canadians are always leading in specific areas of high tech.

We are going to put a lot more money into venture capital. As new companies are formed and need to be financed, we are going to put \$400 million toward financing new capital.

We are going to put money into an innovation program. Right now, there are so many programs out there it is hard sometimes to find one's way. We are going to consolidate them, simplify them, and make it easy for our businesses to find these innovative products.

Finally, we are going to invest in clean tech, which is another great opportunity for the future.

As members can see, we live in a world of constant change. We live in a world where what we know today will have to be augmented or learned upon. I have seen that in my own career. My father has seen it, and my son will see it. Each of our careers as electronics engineers will change.

Our commitment to ensuring that Canadians are up to speed and have access to education, in whatever form they need it, and our commitment to helping businesses innovate will ensure that Canadians have prosperity for years to come.

● (1625)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, a fellow engineer, for his speech. He talked about two things, skills and training, which are very important in innovation, and the need to take a quantum leap. I think it is very important as well. However, if I look at the budget document, the spending for skills and training has been delayed until 2018-19. It seems odd that if it is so important, it would be put off like that.

In the same light, although there are a lot of words about innovation in the budget, the additional funding is really a very small amount to get the quantum leap we would like to see to keep up.

I wonder if the member would comment on that.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Madam Speaker, whatever we do in life, someone can always say we could do it faster and we could do more of it. That is fair criticism, a fair critique. Can we do more? Can we do it faster? That is to be seen.

The important thing is that we are doing both of those things. We are doing it, and it is coming. Obviously, when it comes to skills training, a lot of this has to be integrated with provincial programs. We alone do not set the pace. We have to work with our provincial counterparts. However, the good news is that we are moving in the right direction.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, which I must admit was quite a successful piece of marketing. I feel that if my only angle of analysis of the federal budget was that of my colleague, I would almost want to applaud, it was that good. However, the reality is something altogether different.

The Liberals are used to give us window dressing or half-measures. For example, in his speech, my colleague talked about how important it was for workers who had lost their jobs to have access to training to expand their opportunities, without necessarily losing their benefits. We can only applaud the idea. However, we must realize that training is a provincial responsibility. Since that has to be negotiated with the provinces, it is not likely to happen tomorrow.

In addition, employment insurance is strictly a federal jurisdiction. As we speak, 6 out of 10 Canadians who lose their jobs are unable to qualify for EI benefits. The budget is totally silent on this matter.

The Budget

Does my hon. colleague not think that it would have been preferable to first ensure that workers are eligible for EI benefits before they can expand their training?

Mr. Frank Baylis: Madam Speaker, the member is correct when he says this is good news. I was not able to talk about the entire budget, because it is enormous. I decided to talk about issues relating to education.

He is also correct to say that this falls under both provincial and federal jurisdiction. It will take time to negotiate the agreements, but we are going to do that work to ensure that if a person needs social assistance at some point while working to earn a living, they will be able to do that.

[*English*]

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard, as well as the industry committee, where the member is exceptional, with his technical background and what he adds to the discussions, similar to what he has done this afternoon.

I was really surprised to hear the member for Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan comment on how this budget does not apply to all of Canada. One area of the budget is on superclusters, which, by definition, help all regions of Canada in areas where we could be world leaders. There is a \$950-million commitment to develop superclusters. I am wondering if the hon. member could give us his thoughts on the superclusters in the budget.

Mr. Frank Baylis: Madam Speaker, the member for Guelph is perceptive, as always. He is absolutely right that this is a phenomenal investment of \$950 million for superclusters. These clusters are not regionally based. They are going to cover the full span of our country. To say that it is one region or another is patently false on the part of the other member who said such a thing.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton (Shefford, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to rise in the House to speak to the 2017 budget. The title of the budget, “Building a Strong Middle Class”, is actually a very good indication of our government’s intentions.

I think it is crucial that people in my riding of Shefford, and all Canadians, clearly understand that the 2017 budget is an important step in our government’s long-term plan, in order to create jobs and strengthen the middle class and those working hard to join it.

When we formed the government, we promised Canadians that we would make middle-class families our priority. That is what we have done, and today families can clearly see that their government supports them. After the more generous, better targeted and non-taxable Canada child tax benefit was instituted, and after reducing income tax for middle-class people by 7%, a measure that affects 20,000 families in my riding, we will continue helping the people who need it most.

The measures we have taken to date have a positive impact on our economy. The facts are there to show it. We can confirm that our plan is working when we see over 250,000 jobs created in the last seven months and an unemployment rate that has gone from 7.1% to 6.6% since we were elected in 2015.

The International Monetary Fund cites us as an example for the whole world. We are experiencing the best economic growth among the G7 countries. We are on the right track.

The 2017 budget tabled by our government proposes a number of measures that meet the needs and priorities of the people in my riding, and particularly of the middle class.

For example, the budget fosters the success of small and medium-sized enterprises. Job creation enables people to get the skills and tools they need to succeed. The creation of the new strategic innovation fund will enable us to attract, support and grow Canadian enterprises in dynamic and emerging sectors. Sectors like agrifood, digital technology, clean technology, and advanced manufacturing will be particularly targeted, thanks to a \$1.26-billion investment in Quebec. The new strategic innovation fund will be far-reaching in its impact. It demonstrates an immediate intention to strengthen our communities through a long-term vision.

The budget also makes social investments that very directly affect the public. Budget 2017 provides for more support for home care and for mental health initiatives. Through an \$11-billion investment over the next ten years, the government will put an additional \$1.4 billion into improving home care and \$1.1 billion into supporting mental health initiatives.

Another of our government’s social measures is certainly the creation of the federal strategy on gender-based violence, which will help ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to live in a healthy, welcoming, and inclusive community. A \$100-million investment over five years will make substantial progress possible.

The people in my riding also need access to affordable housing. Under the new national housing strategy, which will support the construction, renovation, and repair of affordable housing stock, we will be making historic investments of \$11.2 billion over the next 11 years. These funds will be used to build better communities, with a real increase in the number of affordable housing units in Canada.

I am very proud of our team’s second budget, since it enables us to continue our efforts to improve people’s quality of life and invest where the real needs are for Canadians and for my riding: affordable housing, support in the home, mental health, and combatting homelessness.

As we know, Canadians who care for family members often have to deal with a family caregiver tax credit system that is complex and difficult for families to understand.

The Budget

•(1635)

Clearly, they deserve better than that. The 2017 budget therefore offers a unified tax credit for family caregivers at the time when families need it most. Furthermore, the improvements and increases to the employment insurance system, with more flexible maternity and parental benefits and the creation of a new benefit for family caregivers, are also major steps forward that will provide invaluable assistance to people all across Canada.

What we can take from this is that budget 2017 aims to give everyone a real and fair chance to succeed. This budget also provides for investments in such areas as skills and training, so that all Canadians have access to the opportunities they need in order to succeed now and in the future.

Our government's investments, which are set out in this budget, will help workers upgrade their skills, will help young people acquire the skills and experience they need to launch their careers, and will ensure that more people who are unemployed are able to get training and still be eligible for employment insurance benefits.

In addition, budget 2017 sends our government's clear message that it intends to improve our neighbourhoods and make them healthier places to live, by focusing on investments in infrastructure. I know that the communities in my riding are stronger when we can provide them with cultural centres, sports and recreation facilities, and public spaces that are more accessible for children and families.

When I see the efforts being made by our government and the significant investments it is making in these areas, I am proud of how we are listening to Canadians. We are showing them that we are listening to them. I can attest to the fact that the people of my riding are telling me how pleased they are with the budget and the things being done by our government.

I would also like to talk about the significant progress the budget brings to the agriculture and agrifood sector, something that is particularly important to me, since 80% of my riding is in an agricultural zone. Budget 2017 shows the significant support that our government is providing for the agriculture and agrifood sector, which not only employs one out of every eight Canadians but also generates high-quality jobs everywhere in Canada and in my riding.

It is also worth pointing out that the budget identifies agrifood as one of the three priority areas in terms of growth and the creation of well-paid jobs in Canada. We know that demand for food will continue to grow worldwide. Our agricultural producers already have an excellent reputation on the world stage, and our products are safe and high quality.

However, we must be prepared to meet the growing world demand in the agrifood sector and take advantage of this excellent opportunity. That is why budget 2017 sets an ambitious target: to expand agrifood exports to at least \$75 billion by 2025, an increase of 35% over 2015.

Now more than ever, the agrifood sector is globalized and technology-based. Budget 2017 continues our government's support for science, innovation, and the global competitiveness of the agrifood sector. We are therefore aiming to grow the Canadian

agrifood sector through an investment of \$10 billion for exports and increased investments in value-added processing.

In conclusion, we all know that we can still do more to help the middle class and those working hard to join it, and that is what we will continue to do. Our government knows that it is always possible to do better, and we know that the best way to ensure greater prosperity for more Canadians is to make smart and responsible investments in the economy so that everyone will prosper in the long term.

I know that this budget is an excellent one for the people of my riding. They have told me that it is. On their behalf, I congratulate us, as a government, on this historic progress for our country.

•(1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned standing up for the middle class during his comments. He also referred frequently to the farming or agriculture sector.

I wonder if he has had a chance to look at page 111 of the budget in English, because it talks clearly about advancing agricultural science and innovation, and \$60 million is budgeted there for agricultural science and innovation. However, the fine print shows only \$4 million of that is budgeted for the coming year.

When his colleagues have all agreed to today that this is a budget for all of Canada, does my colleague really think that an investment of \$4 million this year and only \$9 million next year, spread across the country of Canada, will make a significant impact on the ability of our farmers to innovate and improve their operations?

I am hoping he does not, and if he is honest I think he will have to admit that this is a pretty embarrassing budget when it comes to supporting the agricultural sector.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The agrifood and agriculture sector is an extremely important one for our government and we are proud to support it.

As I said just now, \$10 billion will be invested over the next ten years in exports and investments in innovation. Agrifood and agriculture are central to those investments. One out of eight jobs in Canada depends on agriculture; we are proud of that. Demand is going to increase over the coming years and our government will support the farmers and agricultural producers of our country.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am always a little surprised by the pomposity of the presentations made to us. I would like to come back to employment insurance, since my colleague has given me numerous examples to go back to.

The Budget

When we talk about the program, for example, that was going to help people who give birth, which is good news in itself, as well as family caregivers and people who get training, we always have to keep in mind that six out of ten Canadians do not qualify for employment insurance. Also, if I may remind my learned colleague, the employment insurance fund is entirely financed by premiums paid by employers and workers. Where, then, is the government's effort in this regard?

Mr. Pierre Breton: Madam Speaker, this question sounds like the one that was asked a few minutes ago.

Obviously, we can always do better. What is worth noting in the budget that has been presented is that there are substantial improvements in terms of ease of access and flexibility of employment insurance benefits for maternity and paternity leave and for family caregivers. These are very important steps that are taken in this budget. That was part of a number of consultations that took place in recent months. I am proud to announce these excellent initiatives today.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Madam Speaker, I just want to refer to what the government has committed to national defence spending, which is nothing.

Despite the clear need for investments in Canada's national defence, the Minister of Finance stated this week that the government believes the military is appropriately provisioned, and yet day after day in this House we have battled back and forth, with the government saying we have a capability gap.

My question for the member is simply this: what happened to that gap?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Breton: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague is asking very specific questions, and I appreciate that.

Obviously, there are many items in this budget that favour investments for middle-class people. In terms of security, people are very proud of the budget. Today and over the course of recent weeks, the minister has expressed his appreciation of all the security considerations in the budget. Today, I am proud to say that this spending, or these investments, are very important for our national security.

• (1645)

[*English*]

Mr. Majid Jowhari (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Bourassa.

I am honoured to stand in the House to discuss budget 2017 and its potential impact on my riding of Richmond Hill. This year's federal budget follows in the footsteps of budget 2016 and offers a road map to individual prosperity for Canadians and to economic success for Canada. This budget provides detailed provisions as to how the Liberal government has listened to Canadians and is taking action to make the necessary financial commitments that will ensure that each and every Canadian has a real and fair opportunity to improve their lives.

I will focus my remarks today on four key areas. First, I will highlight how budget 2017 provides new opportunities for Canadians, including our youth, to strengthen existing skills, to develop new ones, and to build a qualified workforce of the future, while also providing our seniors with the ability to sustain a better quality of life.

Second, I will explain how budget 2017 encourages business innovation and economic progress for Canada.

Third, I will discuss how this budget will provide infrastructure support for the modernization and resiliency of our neighbourhoods.

Fourth and finally, I will describe how budget 2017 provides for more and enhanced home care, mental health services, child care services, and affordable housing for those who need it the most.

With this budget, the Liberal government upholds the promise of progress that will benefit all Canadians. On the topics of youth and seniors and digital skills, our government will be allocating \$50 million over two years so that digital skills trainers can apply to teach digital skills to students from kindergarten to grade 12. This is excellent news, given that the Canadian economy is rapidly changing, and my colleague before me talked about that change. This commitment will prepare individuals, starting from a young age, to gain the proper skills to prepare for the jobs of the future.

Seniors will also benefit from digital skill training, as budget 2017 will provide \$29.5 million over five years for a new digital literacy exchange program to support not-for-profit organizations to implement initiatives that teach basic digital skills, with a focus on groups that can benefit from acquiring these skills.

As noted in the 2016 Town of Richmond Hill economic development strategy, youth up to age 24 make up 32% of the population. The population of seniors aged 70 and over was 8%. Together, they make up 40% of the Town of Richmond Hill's entire population. Therefore, 40% of Richmond Hill's population could benefit from the federal funding provided in budget 2017 for digital skills training.

On the business innovation side, another aspect of budget 2017 that would greatly benefit Richmond Hill is the provision of funds to encourage business innovation in Canada. The budget allocates \$950 million over five years, starting in 2017-18, to support a number of business-led innovation superclusters that have the greatest potential to accelerate economic growth. By investing in superclusters and also providing the strategic innovation fund, SIF, with \$1.26 billion over five years to consolidate and simplify business innovation programming, including the strategic aerospace and defence initiative, the technology demonstration program, and the auto innovation fund, where there is actually an extra \$200 million over three years in new funding, our government is leading the way.

The Budget

•(1650)

Budget 2017 also provides for a venture capital catalyst initiative, with \$400 million over three years for late-stage venture capital to young, established businesses with revenues to enhance their operations. Budget 2017 has recognized an identifiable need in our economy, and businesses will benefit from it.

This represents the innovative leadership that the government and budget 2017 delivers for Canadians.

On the topic of infrastructure, budget 2017 provides funding for infrastructure support for the modernization and resiliency of our neighbourhoods and communities. The budget has made a significant investment in public transit projects that would shorten commutes, decrease air pollution, and allow Canadians to spend more time with their families, through an investment of \$20.1 billion over 11 years that would be allocated to provinces and transit systems, based on ridership and population.

I am confident that Richmond Hill and York Region Transit will receive a fair share of the funding to put toward local priorities, such as a subway line from Finch subway to the Highway 7 extension for Richmond Hill. This will help a significant portion of my constituency, which will benefit from the expansion of the subway line.

I will now talk about budget 2017's contribution to health care, home care, child care, and affordable housing for Canadians who most need it. I think I speak for all of my colleagues in the House when I say that Canada's publicly funded universal health care system is a source of national pride. It is also an essential foundation for a strong, fair, and prosperous nation.

As of today, the federal government has reached new health funding agreements with 12 provinces and territories that have accepted their share of \$11 billion over 10 years to provide enhanced health care for all Canadians, including as well funding for home care and mental health support. Of this funding, \$1.9 billion will be allocated in support of mental health initiatives in Ontario. Improving mental health services directly impacts the riding of Richmond Hill, giving support where it is definitely needed. In addition, \$2.3 billion will be dedicated to better home care in Ontario, including addressing critical home care infrastructure requirements.

I know this funding will help to break down barriers for individuals, families, and communities, such as mine, that prevent them from receiving better care and reaching their fullest potential.

In addition, the budget allocates \$3.2 billion dollars to provinces and territories for a federal-provincial partnership to support affordable housing. This will be helpful to Canada's seniors, persons with disabilities, and to others needing accessibility modifications, helping them to live independently. Furthermore, \$5 billion will be invested over the next 11 years for a new national housing fund to address critical housing issues faced by the most vulnerable members of society.

In addition, the government proposes to allocate \$7 billion over 10 years to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care spaces across the country. I know many hard-working individuals

and families in my riding who can benefit extremely from this funding by making it easier for them to find safe, adequate, and affordable places to live with quality and affordable child care.

Budget 2017 puts people first. It delivers the help that Canadians need. It is an essential step to restoring prosperity to Canada's middle class. It provides new opportunities for our youth and seniors by equipping them with skills that they need. Budget 2017 encourages job creation, entrepreneurship, and business innovation. The budget also provides much-needed assistance for infrastructure. It also supports more and better home care, mental health support, child care support, and affordable housing for all Canadians.

I am proud to stand behind budget 2017. It is the right road map for our country and the efforts of our government to restore prosperity to the middle class.

•(1655)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was happy to listen to my colleague talk about many things in the budget, but we need to talk about what is not in the budget.

When we look at homelessness, there are zero dollars for this year and zero for next year. For cultural recreation infrastructure, there are zero dollars for this year and zero for next year. For disability accessibility, there are zero dollars for this year and zero for next year. For creating Canada's growth economy, there are zero dollars for this year and zero for next year. For skills training, there is nothing for this year. For skills training and innovation, there is nothing for this year. When we look at the transit tax, it is purported that it is only for the rich.

Then we can look at innovation. I thank the member for bringing up innovation. When the Conservatives were in government, we started the science and tech co-operation agreements in 2007. I am glad the Liberals are building on the manufacturing and auto sector innovation, as well as the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

When we look at all the programs that were under way under the Conservative government, there is a lot of repackaging.

When we look at all the things happening now for the middle class, nothing is going to be funded over the next two years and the budget is back ended. Could the member please comment on that?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, let me focus on what is actually included in the budget. Let me talk about \$1.9 billion for mental health for Ontario. Let me talk about \$2.3 billion for home care. Let me talk about \$3.2 billion for affordable housing. Let me talk about \$5 billion for national housing. Let me talk about \$7 billion for high-quality, affordable child care spaces. Let me talk about \$50 million for youth skills. Let me talk about \$29.5 million for senior digital skills. Let me talk about \$950 million for business-led innovation. Let me talk about \$1.26 billion, plus another \$200 million, for a strategic innovation fund. Let me talk about \$400 million for late-stage venture capital. Let me talk about \$20.1 billion for transit. Let me talk about \$11 billion for home care. They are all coming over the next five years and it is helping us deliver what we committed to deliver.

The Budget

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleague from the Conservative Party mentioned, unfortunately there are some things that are not in the budget. He talked about enabling all Canadians to move forward and have equal access, yet the government has again refused to deliver on what the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has ordered, which is the government ensure comparable access to services by aboriginal families, in particular aboriginal children.

Could he speak, from the bottom of his heart, as to how he could support a budget that still refuses to follow what the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has said and finally give equal opportunity to aboriginal children, so they too can succeed in Canada?

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, I can assure the member that there has been investment made and planned for aboriginals. The focus is on skills training, giving them an education, and giving them an opportunity to have the skills needed to contribute to the development of the economy and their communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, can my colleague tell me how many billions of dollars out of the \$80 billion provided for infrastructure will be invested this year?

[English]

Mr. Majid Jowhari: Madam Speaker, this budget, and the budget before it, has created what I call confidence in the economy, confidence to the tune of over 250,000 jobs in the last quarter, the majority of them full-time jobs. That is the confidence the budget and the \$80 billion have created for the people and the economy.

● (1700)

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Madam Speaker, Canadians have long understood that we are stronger when the middle class and those working so hard to join it can participate in the economy as much as possible and contribute to economic growth that benefits us all.

For example, budget 2017 includes measures to remove barriers that are a drag on our economy and that slow people down. It also includes measures to help the people who need it the most, because we are only worth as much as our most vulnerable fellow citizens.

There are many benefits for the riding of Bourassa, which I represent. I am very pleased with the last two budgets tabled by the Liberal government. I will tell you how this budget helps my riding. First, the riding of Bourassa is enriched by its diversity but faces enormous challenges. Average incomes in my riding are among the lowest. A significant proportion of economic families live below the poverty line. Seventy-three per cent of dwellings are occupied by renters and 43% of tenant households spend 30% of their income on housing. Single-parent families also make up a very large percentage of these people and, needless to say, the unemployment rate is high, especially among young people.

This budget, like last year's budget, is helping middle-class families in my riding. I talked about last year's budget first, but I would like to briefly remind my colleagues that for the 19,000 children in the riding of Bourassa, the Canada child benefit represents

\$8 million per month. This money will stimulate the economy and help families.

In this budget, the Liberal Party government is investing in youth. For example, in January, I announced \$213,000 for Rond-Point jeunesse au travail, a youth employment organization, and \$332,000 for a youth centre called Café-Jeunesse multiculturel to create 26 jobs for young people in the riding. In February, I announced \$850,000 for the Corporation de développement économique communautaire de Montréal-Nord to help 40 young people find jobs or start their own businesses. The month of March just ended, and I announced a \$718,583 investment for summer jobs. The budget is enabling us to invest, so that means 233 new summer jobs this year for young people aged 15 to 30. We did this last year too. Summer jobs are being created not just in the riding of Bourassa, but across the country. These budgets enable us to make investments that help youth.

I am sure that my colleagues have read the budget, but I will just quickly remind them of what is in the budget specifically for young people. We want post-secondary education to be more accessible and more affordable. What are we doing about that? We are investing \$12.5 million over six years in a new project to look at new ways to better market the Canada learning bond and reduce the barriers to higher education for low-income families. We are investing \$38 million over four years to renew federal funding in Pathways to Education Canada, which will help more young people in low-income communities to complete their high school education and successfully transition to post-secondary education and the workforce. There will be a \$59.8-million investment over four years and \$17 million annually thereafter to expand eligibility to student loans and grants for part-time students in order to help even more students become eligible for financial assistance. We also want to develop the skills of tomorrow.

● (1705)

We are investing \$14 million over two years in renewed funding for Futurpreneur Canada in order to continue supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs through mentorship and funding. Futurpreneur Canada, a national not-for-profit organization, will match these investments with funding received from other government and private sector partners.

Again with a view to developing the skills of tomorrow, \$50 million over two years will fund a program to provide coding and digital skills education to more young Canadians. The Government intends to launch a competitive process through which digital skills training organizations can apply for funding.

The Budget

A total of \$10.8 million will be allocated over five years to introduce diverse groups of young Canadians to the power and potential of the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through hands-on learning experiences. We also want to help young people gain work experience. We need to break the cycle of no job without experience and no experience without a job.

I just talked about jobs for youth and, as it happens, my colleague, the Minister of Finance provided additional amounts to help young people in budget 2017. This time, we are talking about \$395.5 million over three years under the youth employment strategy to create job opportunities and help young people develop the skills they need. That is in addition to the \$330 million a year that is already being invested in the youth employment strategy.

The measures that I mentioned are just some of what is contained in the budget. I wanted to highlight those measures to show how the budget will specifically impact people in the riding of Bourassa and all across Canada. However, the Minister of Finance presented many other measures to stimulate the economy and protect the environment. A total of \$11 billion will be allocated over 10 years for affordable housing. I gave some statistics on housing in the riding of Bourassa. A total of \$527 million will be invested in innovation, \$723 million in training, and \$900 million over six years in workforce development agreements.

Let us not forget that, last year, the Minister of Finance allocated \$444 million to combat tax evasion and avoidance. The minister just increased that amount. He allocated \$523.9 million to the Canada Revenue Agency so that it can continue that fight.

I was surprised to see on page 183 of the budget that the government included a measure that will result in \$17 million in forgone tariff revenues to enable developing countries to participate in the market. The Minister of Finance made a special note of this in the budget. Haiti is one of the least developed countries. Haitian merchants and producers can take advantage of this measure to pay the lowest possible tariffs when exporting their products so they can show that Haiti produces quality goods and get Canadians interested.

Time is running out, so I will end with this. The budget will help newcomers to Canada with foreign credentials overcome barriers to getting those credentials recognized.

The budget includes \$27.5 million over five years plus another \$5.5 million thereafter to help them.

• (1710)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Bourassa the same question I asked his Liberal friend from Richmond Hill: of the \$80 billion in infrastructure spending pledged in the 2016 budget, how many billions of dollars have actually flowed since then, including in this budget?

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question.

I believe it is a question that he had the opportunity to ask the minister, who literally did not have the time to list all the amounts invested in each county or province. What is important for Canadians is that we are making significant investments to stimulate

the economy and ensure that everyone can participate in and contribute to Canada's economy.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the passionate speech of my colleague from Bourassa on the budgets of 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2024, 2026 and 2027, if I have properly understood the spread of the measures. To see the millions and billions of dollars gush forward, well, we felt rich for a few seconds, while the reality is that this government has dragged us into a colossal deficit, which was to be modest at \$10 billion, but is at least moderate at \$29 billion.

Since we started our debate, we have heard all of our Liberal colleagues provide a list of expenditures, but never a list of new revenues.

The question I am asking is simple: what are the new revenues that the government thinks it will get to be able to fund all these requests without raising taxes and fees of all kinds for middle-class Canadians?

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague who talked about a passionate speech in his intervention.

Before addressing the revenue component that my colleague spoke of, let me say that as a fellow Quebecker, he clearly sees these investments in his riding. When it comes to summer jobs in his riding, there are two, or three or four times as many jobs that he can announce. There is also the millions of dollars that have been allocated to middle class families in his riding through the Canada child benefit. More specifically, I told him earlier that the government is investing \$595 million in the Canada Revenue Agency to fight tax evasion and avoidance. That is just one of the sources of revenue that we will have.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I noticed throughout the budget that it is to build a strong middle class, and it has “middle class” right through it. I am not a proponent of defining people within class systems. However, would the member define for us exactly what the middle class is, and who those are who are trying to join it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

What I can tell him is that the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada has been talking about the middle class for a long time. There are certainly some factors that come into play with regard to revenues. However, one thing is for certain, and that is that we have long been talking about the middle class. We campaigned on the middle class. We are in government today with more than 180 MPs because people in the middle class understood that they had to elect a Liberal government to get help, new jobs, and a better situation.

The Budget

• (1715)

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Madam Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak here today. I will be sharing my time with my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock. I am starting to learn the names of all the ridings.

It is a great honour and a great privilege to rise in the House today, because it is my birthday. I am 31 years old, and this is probably the best gift I have ever received in my life, namely, to be able to deliver a speech in this democratic chamber on my birthday.

My colleagues likely knew what I was getting at when I asked my friends from Richmond Hill and Bourassa how much of the \$80 billion allocated for infrastructure would be invested this year. The reason I asked the question is that, in fact, of the \$80 billion that was supposed to be invested in infrastructure as announced by this Liberal government in 2016, almost nothing has been invested. In my mind, then, budget 2017 is a vote-seeking sham, and that will be more or less the subject of my speech today.

In fact, this budget is a false budget, a chimera. According to the dictionary, a chimera is defined as a thing that is hoped for or wished for but in fact is illusory or impossible to achieve. This budget is nothing more than an ideological agenda. It is filled with endless meaningless rhetoric. For instance, on page 11, it talks about keeping Canada's promise of progress. That is rather interesting. I do not really understand exactly what that means. It talks about innovation on nearly every page, and it also talks about a feminist budget and a green budget.

Today, in rather exceptional fashion, my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent said that even though they called it a feminist budget and a green budget, the Liberals nonetheless eliminated the public transit tax credit in their budget. He also rightly pointed out that 60% of the people who claim this credit are women, in particular elderly women. Thus, the Liberals are not walking the talk.

In terms of procurement, no significant investments have been made. Nothing has been said about balancing the budget. In fact, there are reports that we will be in a deficit position until 2051, which is shocking considering that Canadian families cannot be in the red at year's end.

Expenditures for National Defence alone are deplorable. Just in budget 2016, the Liberals deferred \$3.7 billion in spending until 2020-21. This \$3.7 billion was included in our Canada first program, which was inspired by the Conservative Party of Canada's plan, under the leadership of the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, to bring Canada out of the decades of darkness of the Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin governments in the 1990s, and to revitalize the army, ensure that military infrastructure returns to good working condition, and to make significant acquisitions to meet all military needs. Instead of getting back on track, the Liberals announced in the 2017 budget the deferral of \$8.4 billion in spending to 2035-36.

As I mentioned at the beginning, almost nothing has been spent on infrastructure to date. I suspect that the Liberals will invest the entire \$80 billion in 2019 so that there will be construction cranes right across the country. We are going to be tripping over cranes and Canadians will think that this government is incredible.

The Liberals also broke their promise. They said that they would run a small deficit of \$10 billion when they are actually running a deficit of about \$30 billion a year. What is more, they have no plan to balance the budget, and they did not lower taxes for small and medium-sized businesses as promised during the 2015 election campaign.

• (1720)

Budget 2017 also significantly raises taxes.

When we, the Conservatives, had the opportunity and honour to govern the country, we were the advocates and defenders of taxpayers. We lowered taxes in many ways, first by decreasing the GST from 7% to 5%. We then created the universal child care benefit, the children's fitness tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, and the post-secondary education and textbook tax credit. We instituted income splitting for families, which the Liberals unfortunately did away with. We did all of that with the exceptional result of making taxes lower for Canadian families than they had been since the 1960s. That means that, under our government, after 10 years under a Conservative government, Canadian families were paying about \$7,000 less in taxes a year than they were prior to 2004. That is not to mention the fact that we created 1.2 million jobs in 10 years, with the best employment rate of all OECD countries.

Unlike us, the Liberals are raising taxes for families, small businesses, and children. In budget 2016, they already increased taxes on gas and heating, increased taxes on Canadians' savings accounts, increased payroll taxes for businesses, and cancelled many of the tax cuts that I mentioned earlier.

Canadians, thinking it was going to stop there, were very saddened last month to see that the tax increases would actually start all over again. The government is going to tax public transit users by eliminating the public transit tax credit, Uber and ride-sharing, beer and wine, which basically comes down to introducing a weekend tax, as my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent so aptly put it. Donated medicine will be taxed, as will childcare, and small business owners will be saddled with an increase in payroll taxes. Oil and gas companies will be taxed, and so will tourism. In short, this is a disgrace.

I am an elected official from Quebec City, from Beauport—Limoilou. We can see that there is nothing in this budget for Quebec City, which is as surprising as it is appalling; there is nothing there for the Port of Québec, which needs \$60 million to attract private investment and launch the Beauport 2020 project. There is nothing for the Institut nordique du Québec for political, social and anthropological research on northern Canada, research that remains very important. There is nothing for the National Optics Institute, a technology innovator in the heart of the Parc technologique du Québec. There is nothing for the Quebec Bridge, which was supposed to be dealt with before June 30, 2016. Finally, there is nothing about the SRB, the bus rapid transit system and there is nothing about the third link.

The Budget

Conversely, in the last 10 years, the Conservative government, under the fantastic leadership of the Right Hon. Stephen Harper, invested almost \$1 billion for the Quebec City region alone: in Gilmour Hill, in community infrastructure, in the Port of Québec, in l'Anse au Foulon and in the Ross Gaudreault terminal. A number of investments were made then, to be sure.

In closing, I would like to say that the government should focus on what will really give Canadians a vision and help them 100 years from now by balancing the budget, eliminating the deficit by the end of the year, and paying off the debt. How can we be one of the richest countries in the world and still have so much debt? We need to cut Canadians' taxes, not raise them.

If the economy were going well, MPs could take care of the important things, the things that help us all get along. We could talk about the Constitution, community, and Canadians' rights, but because of this government, we keep talking about the economy when we should be talking about other issues.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member says that we should be supporting tax cuts. All we need to do is take a look at one of the most significant, sizable tax cuts given on personal income tax in decades. It was just last year. Hundreds of millions of dollars were put back into the pockets of Canada's middle class. Millions of people were affected.

How did the Conservatives vote on that? They voted no. They did not want that middle class to get a tax break.

Then we can take a look at what the government has done additionally, which the Conservatives are criticizing. The government chose to work with the provinces and got all the provinces to agree that we should invest in workers' retirement. What did the Conservatives do? Completely out of touch with Canadians, they voted against that too. They know no limits.

Why does the member not recognize that it is time to start listening to what Canadians want and investing in Canadians, and recognize that there were a lot of good things they could in fact have voted for, including something else Conservatives voted against—putting a special tax on Canada's wealthiest 1%?

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, any academic could tell us that the whole concept of the 1% is false. This is incredible. It is demagoguery.

We did not vote against a tax cut. We voted against a fake tax cut. It was nothing but a vote-seeking ploy, just like this budget and the whole Liberal agenda.

When I go door to door every week, I listen to Canadians. I would like to know if my colleague ever does that, ever listens to Canadians. He wants to take away our right to speak in the House now. They have been doing this for two months now.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

He raised an obvious and very important issue, namely the deficit. When the Liberals tell us they are handing out money left and right, to the rich and the poor, they fail to mention that they are doing so at the expense of future generations. They are putting us into an incredible amount of debt. They have lost complete control of spending. That is the Liberal reality.

During the election campaign, the Liberals clearly stated that they would run two small deficits of \$10 billion each. The deficit has already reached \$60 billion and will reach between \$100 billion and \$125 billion by the next election. As my colleague said, it is a complete sham.

I would like my colleague to take this opportunity and continue talking about this issue, because it is important.

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I fully agree with my colleague. It is an appalling sham.

The Liberals had told Canadians that they would run a deficit to invest in infrastructure. By the way, we, the Conservatives, had created the largest infrastructure program in Canadian history, worth \$120 billion. The Liberals told Canadians that they would run a deficit of only \$10 billion, when it is now \$28.5 billion.

They also said that it was to invest in infrastructure, but two years after their election, almost zero dollars have been invested in infrastructure. It is a vote-seeking sham. They want to dole out the money in 2019.

[English]

Mr. Ken McDonald (Avalon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned it was their party that brought in such a wonderful Canada child benefit program.

I would like to ask him if he is still as proud of it today as he was before, taxing the benefits that were going to families who needed them while allowing millionaires who did not need it to keep their cheques. Could you please explain that, if you are so proud?

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I want to remind the member that he is to address questions to the Chair and not directly to the member.

[Translation]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, I remain very proud of the benefit we created because it was reasonable. Yes, it was taxed, but that was so that people would be responsible. I am very proud of it.

[English]

Mr. Ken McDonald: Give it with one hand, take it back with the other.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): I just want to remind the member that he had his time to ask the question. Please allow for the answer.

The Budget

• (1730)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alupa Clarke: Madam Speaker, it was universal. We knew how to do the calculations, and we knew how to index it. The Liberals, though, have not been able to get the math right. They will have to spend another \$4 billion on an ill-conceived benefit.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): Before we go on, I want to wish the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou a happy birthday.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

[*English*]

Ms. Dianne L. Watts (South Surrey—White Rock, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the drama lessons on this side of the House are paying off.

I am pleased to rise and speak to the 2017 budget that was tabled in the House on Wednesday, March 22.

During the election—and everybody knows this, including members on this side of the House—the Liberals went door to door promising they would run a small temporary deficit of \$10 billion for two years and would then balance the budget in 2019. In 18 months, the Liberals have given Canadians a debt of \$100 billion and no plan to balance the budget. Even if they started to try right now, they would not balance the budget until 2055. They have missed the target by 38 years.

Since budget 2016 was tabled, the Liberals have failed to deliver on a majority of the allocated infrastructure funds. Ninety-five per cent of the announced infrastructure projects are still not under construction.

As the critic for infrastructure, communities, and urban affairs, I had hope and optimism for budget 2017. I really thought the government had a chance to introduce a new infrastructure plan, a plan that would actually get infrastructure projects built instead of just announcing and reannouncing them; a plan that included transparency measures to ensure Canadians could clearly see where the infrastructure funds were going and how their tax dollars were being spent; a plan that included performance measures, a framework to measure progress and to ensure that the promised announcements were actually creating jobs and growing the economy; a plan that included clear funding commitments for Canadian municipalities; a plan that was transparent and accountable. After two parliamentary budget officer reports that identified these shortfalls, a Senate committee report that identified these shortfalls, two independent reports that identified these shortfalls, we see budget 2017 has included none of these measures. What we have is a back-ended budget. Canadians must wait. They must wait for child care dollars, housing, and transit projects.

The Liberal government is the government of announcements and reannouncements.

Several initiatives that support the most vulnerable will not start this year. They will not start next year. In some cases, they will not start until after 2022, well after the next election.

Let us just leave that piece for now.

I would like to switch gears for a moment and discuss infrastructure banks. Both the Prime Minister and the minister stated that we needed desperately to set up an infrastructure bank. Why? It was to leverage private sector dollars.

In 2009, the Conservative government set up PPP Canada specifically to leverage private sector dollars for infrastructure, and it worked. We leveraged almost \$7 billion. The infrastructure is in place, the expertise is in place, and there is a proven record of success. Why does the government need to take \$15 billion from Canadian communities, from rural communities, from projects that have already been announced and reannounced? In fact, \$1.3 billion in committed funds from PPP Canada was already leveraged in public infrastructure.

As well, last August, during the Prime Minister's visit to China, he announced that Canada intended to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This is an institution, backed by the Chinese government, is based out of Beijing, and it is specifically designed to build infrastructure projects in Asia. Upon its inception in 2014, both the Conservative government and the Obama administration decided that this bank was not the best way to use taxpayers' dollars, and both administrations decided to decline joining the bank.

• (1735)

Fast-forward to 2017, and it is clear that times have changed. This clearly shows where the Liberal government's priority is, so it was no surprise that this budget included \$256 million committed from Canada for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. However, what the budget conveniently left out is that Canadians will actually be on the hook for approximately \$1.3 billion if the projects default, not just the \$256 million that had been promised. Nowhere in the budget is this mentioned.

Going back to Canadian infrastructure, 95% of the announced infrastructure projects in Canada have not started construction. Instead of focusing on building projects here at home, the government is spending billions of dollars to build roads and bridges in Asia. Canadians need a government that is focused on their needs first, not spending their hard-earned taxpayer dollars overseas. Note that Liberal commitment spending outside Canada has exceeded \$9 billion. The Liberal government members excel at telling Canadians how much they are spending on infrastructure, how they are creating jobs, how they are growing the economy, and how they are growing the middle class. Words are only words if there are no actions to back them up.

The Budget

Furthermore, budget 2017 announced that the public transit tax credit will be eliminated starting July 1, 2017, Canada's 150th birthday. This common sense tax credit makes public transit more affordable for low-income workers, for students, and for seniors. In the budget, the Liberals have taken away the public transit tax credit that helps make public transit more affordable for Canada's most vulnerable. Their argument was that this tax did not help low-income Canadians because those who make less than \$12,000 per year could not use the credit. Today we heard from another parliamentary secretary that the tax credit was for the rich. This is astounding, because I have never seen billionaires take a bus.

The rationale for slashing the tax-free savings account was that it was only for rich people. In my riding, seniors, the disabled, and youth are the ones using the TFSA and transit passes.

The Liberals took away income splitting, which allowed parents to stay home with their children, because it was only for the rich. This is a similar Liberal brain trust that believes "budgets will balance themselves".

I now want to go back to my earlier point. There is a significant disconnect between Liberal announcements and reality, and let me give some examples. Page 120 of the budget lists five upcoming transit projects across Canada. On the list is the Vancouver Broadway subway project in the Lower Mainland, which I would note has no dollar figures attached, nor do any of the five transit projects. Just two hours after the budget was announced, the mayors said that the federal government had told them that \$2.2 billion is committed toward their projects. Where did they get the information, and where are the funds coming from?

The budget states there is no new public transit spending this year, and most of the new public transit dollars will not flow until 2018-19. It is funny; that is just in time for the next federal election. The truth is that the Liberals will use existing Conservative infrastructure programs and the stacking of other green infrastructure programs to fund these projects, which is to the detriment of other promises they have made to Canadians.

Furthermore, this "announce now but delay funding" budget is not just related to public transit but also social infrastructure. When it comes to day care, billions of dollars were announced in the budget, but none of these new dollars will be forthcoming this year and 70% of the new money will not be spent until after 2022. The same thing goes for affordable housing.

● (1740)

As I am running out of time, I would also like to point out that there is no new funding in the 2017-18 budget for early childhood learning and child care, homelessness, home care infrastructure, housing research, northern housing, or indigenous programs, and there is no mention of funding for the RCMP or the Canada Border Services Agency at all.

I note that the Liberal government has allowed nearly \$1 billion in infrastructure funding in 2016 to lapse. That means the government is unable to fund announced projects.

I could go on, because the budget is very thick, and on each and every page there is something missing, but I have run out of time.

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

Mr. Speaker, one thing with which I do concur with the member across the way is that there is just not enough time to talk about the budget in terms of the things we would like to talk about. For me, it is full of wonderful things that will make a huge difference in the lives of all Canadians.

I want to go to the tax credit issue that the member made reference to and, if I may, put it in the form of a question. Hundreds of millions of dollars have actually been allocated to build transit infrastructure, including everything from buying buses to extending routes, which are significant investments that will improve the number of people actually riding on public transit, and that is something we all want to see.

Could the member across the way give us any sort of indication that the tax credit the Conservatives brought in had anything to do with increasing the amount of ridership? In other words, is it better to have the tax credit or to spend the types of money necessary in order to expand the transit to all individuals, even individuals who do not get the monthly passes or the weekly passes, who buy and purchase the daily tokens or put the change in the meter itself?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, clearly fairyland is going on over here, because the budget clearly states that transit infrastructure is going to be built according to ridership. If we have a community that is fast-growing, there is no ridership because there is no transportation. Therefore, the funding does not go to the growing communities.

Second, if we actually look at the budget, we see that 95% of the transit projects are not under way, they are not under construction, and they are not even going to be under construction until past the next election.

What about the people now? What about the people who need to function and live now without all of the taxes that the Liberals have put into this budget and into the lives of everyday Canadians? They need help now. They need help now when it comes to homelessness. They need help now when it comes to affordable housing. They need help now when they need to get to work. They need it now when they are struggling from paycheque to paycheque. They need those tax credits now.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent a community that felt the double hit of the cancellation of the public transit tax rebate. On the marine side, ferry fares have gone through the roof in my province over the last 12 years of a user pay philosophy around public transit. Commuters were able to apply for a 15% tax rebate. Public transit commuters also use buses and so on. The working poor who rely on this transit rebate are very disappointed. It is all over social media how many people are disappointed about this.

The Budget

I would like to hear more from the member, from her local government leadership experience, on her perspective on whether the transit tax program was sufficiently communicated and what the government might have chosen to do to increase ridership and increase take-up of this tax rebate.

● (1745)

Ms. Dianne L. Watts: Mr. Speaker, as a former mayor, in dealing with the community and dealing with public transit, I heard very clearly. When we have students who need to get to school or to university, when we have people who do not have vehicles, who cannot afford vehicles, taking public transit when that is their only option, I find it absolutely outrageous that the members on this side of the House have categorically stated that the tax credit was only for the rich and that is why it was taken away. I find it outrageous. I have disabled people in my community who have depended on that tax credit and who have used it.

In fact, I go back to the tax-free savings account. There are several disabled people in my community and several seniors in my community who were depending on that. When I hear that all of these tax credits are gone because only the rich get them, I do not know what their definition of rich is, but I think they had better redefine what rich is and redefine what the middle class is, because they are clearly out of touch.

Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and gives me pleasure to talk about budget 2017, as this is our government's next ambitious step toward investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for the middle class and those working hard to join it.

Budget 2017 is focused on fairness for families, workers, and taxpayers. It is critical that we continue to invest in affordable housing, infrastructure, high-skilled job training, and the economy as a whole. Particularly, budget 2017 brings a lot of good news for my riding of Brampton North and the city of Brampton itself.

I have received numerous messages from many of my friends who are about my age, who have young families or families on the way, who were really excited to hear about the maternity leave plan. They were excited to learn that they can claim up to 12 weeks now before their due date, and that is up from the current eight weeks. This provides a lot of flexibility for a lot of women who may work in dangerous jobs, may have different health conditions, and need to take time off before their due date.

Budget 2017 also provides an extended leave beyond the 12-month parental leave. This provides a lot of families with flexibility. Now one can claim up to 18 months, with job security. I know that the overall amount is not different, but that is because we need to factor in many things. We need to factor in how this affects small to medium businesses, and we also need to provide families with the capability of staying at home with a loved one. In budget 2017, we were able to reach a good, comfortable position where families can take advantage of the extra time when child care costs are very high, before 18 months. After 18 months, they can have that job security, go back to work, and go back to growing our economy.

Also, as co-chair for the entrepreneur caucus, I have been hearing from a lot of business people who were worried at first, but are now relieved that they will be able to provide their workers with leave, be

able to secure good workers, and allow them to have leave without it costing them a whole lot more. I commend budget 2017 for taking those steps, because it really is helping parents who are in the workforce and also have families. We do not have to sacrifice family for work.

There are many other changes that came in budget 2017, and tax fairness is one of them. Our government has continued to improve tax fairness for Canadian families by closing loopholes, eliminating measures that disproportionately favour the wealthy, and cracking down on tax evasion so that every Canadian has a real and fair chance at success.

The government's plan in budget 2017 is to close tax loopholes that result in unfair tax advantages at the expense of others. It has also invested \$524 million to support the CRA in its continued efforts to crack down on tax cheats. It has taken steps toward eliminating tax measures that disproportionately benefit the wealthy.

Many taxi drivers in my riding have come to my office and shown their appreciation for the tax on the ride-sharing program. I know that it may be unpopular, but tax fairness is what we are talking about. If taxi drivers have to pay HST to the government, so should Uber drivers. It is only fair that those who provide equal services pay their fair share. I am very pleased to say that a big group of taxi drivers will be coming tomorrow for the budget vote, a group of 40 to 50 people who want to show the government their support because finally someone has listened to them, looked at our tax regulations, and figured out that there were those who were evading taxes, who should not have been. I applaud budget 2017 for doing that.

● (1750)

The EI caregiver benefit is another wonderful thing budget 2017 would give Canadians. It would provide up to 15 weeks for individuals to provide care for adult family members who require significant support as they recover from critical illnesses or injuries. Previously, one had to have a medical note from a doctor stating that a family member was at the near-death stage. In many cultural communities and in many places, it is very difficult for people to declare that family members are near death, even if they are. There are a lot of superstitions around doing so. Budget 2017 has struck the right chord again by providing flexibility.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention at the beginning of my speech that I will be splitting my time with the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

The Budget

As I was saying, there is more flexibility for families. Parents of critically ill children would continue to have access to up to 35 weeks of benefits, with added flexibility for other family members as well. This is fantastic news, because after all, this is what our government is about. It is about supporting families while growing our economy.

I am very excited about budget 2017, because Brampton will soon have a university, and this will help our city greatly. Seven hundred and forty-one million dollars is proposed for investments to accelerate infrastructure projects for universities and colleges through the post-secondary institutions strategic investment fund. This is a key tool for my city of Brampton, as we are looking to expand Ryerson to our city. We have a very young, vibrant community. The average age is 34.5. We have a very smart workforce in Brampton, and this university is going to allow us to develop our innovation. There are going to be a lot more businesses brought into our city because of this. The funding would also help the university progress.

Budget 2017 would also provide health care relief that is long overdue in my riding of Brampton North. I cannot tell members the number of conversations I have had with people who are seeking mental health support. Mental health is a serious issue in Canada today. Mental health has been underfunded for years. I know that our provinces understand the need for mental illness funding, but they have not always had the means to fund that area. More than \$6 billion over 10 years would be provided for home care, and more than \$5 billion over 10 years would be provided specifically for mental health.

We have been underserved in Brampton for a long time. We have a population of 600,000, but we have very few support workers in this area. Budget 2017 would give us the relief we need.

Also, I am very excited to say that budget 2017 has announcements about AI, artificial intelligence. We had the Prime Minister in Brampton just recently making AI announcements. These are jobs of the future, and they are jobs of today. We are allowing current companies and manufacturers to advance their skills and technologies and to be leaders in the world. They can provide the types of jobs our youth are craving.

I am also very happy to announce that today the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship and the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour are in Brampton to announce that there will be a lot of help provided through budget 2017 to help internationally trained newcomers to Canada, who often face challenges in getting their credentials recognized so they can find work.

● (1755)

People come to my office all the time who are working in labour jobs, and we are losing those skills. We are losing the skills we can use and benefit from in Canada.

I am thankful for the opportunity to highlight some of the key issues for my city and how budget 2017 is going to improve the lives of Canadians and Bramptonians.

Mr. Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member seems to be very proud of this budget, and she

is hearing things from her constituents. I am also hearing things from my constituents, especially when I mention the fact that GST revenues are projected to increase by 24% over the next five years. There will be 24% more in GST that the government expects to draw from taxpayers.

I would ask the member opposite how her constituents are reacting when she gives them that news. Has she given them that news? I highly doubt it.

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, the answer, quite simply, is that our government's top priority is to strengthen the middle class and grow our economy, and we are doing exactly that. That is what the residents of Brampton talk about as they open their newspapers daily to see reports showing them that we have the best fiscal position among the G7 countries currently. We are also seeing positive signs of the government's plan working for Canadians. In the last seven months, the Canadian economy has created a quarter of a million new jobs. Since December 2015, Canada's unemployment rate has dropped from 7.1% to 6.6%. This is what the residents of Brampton are proud of.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a couple of the parental and family issues the member mentioned in her speech.

I give them credit for the new employment insurance caregiver benefit. That is something New Democrats also promised in the election, but we are discouraged that the Liberals are committing less than they campaigned on. I am pleased to see the extended parental leave, but I am discouraged that there is no new money for families. People would have to be pretty well off to live on one-third of their salaries for a year and a half. It would be nice if they could do it, but it is not a way to bring more people out of poverty.

The most disappointing part, and I would like to hear from the member on this, is that during the election campaign, Liberals said that the New Democrats' child care plan was inadequately funded. Had New Democrats had the honour of forming government, there would have been \$1.2 billion for new child care spaces. In fact, last year's Liberal budget and this year's Liberal budget have zero for new child care spaces. Why?

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Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, this budget has provided flexibility for families. We have continued the Canada child benefit, and it will continue throughout our mandate. This provides families with the opportunity to use that money as they see fit. There have been investments in child care spaces as well. This combination provides families with flexibility in all types of situations. The child care benefit also no longer goes to the wealthiest Canadians and millionaires. It is given proportionately to those in need. Families with young children are receiving up to \$2,500 more a year under our plan. It is providing relief for families in Canada.

• (1800)

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has chosen to focus on the things she likes in the budget, but I believe that the member has forgotten that the Liberals' promise to Canadians was to run just a \$10-billion deficit and to balance the budget by the end of the mandate. The point of that was to try to create growth. Although I hear a lot of talk about growth, the numbers in the budget show that GDP growth is actually less, now that we are spending all of this money, than it was projected to be before. There is talk about new job creation, but we have lost more jobs than we have gained.

Could the member please comment on that?

Ms. Ruby Sahota: Mr. Speaker, I feel that I need to remind my colleague that a quarter of a million new jobs have been created by this government's plan. We are going to stick to this plan, because this plan is showing results. The government is committed to providing the support the economy needs in a fiscally responsible way while maintaining Canada's fundamental fiscal strength by ensuring that our debt-to-GDP ratio remains low. This is what the Liberals do. We are fiscally responsible. We have balanced budgets before, but we also know how to take the opportunities that are in front of us.

The IMF has recently stated, "Look at Canada.... They're using all possible levers to move the needle towards positive"—

The Deputy Speaker: The time has expired for the hon. member for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am excited to talk about some of the many merits of the budget tabled last week by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance.

Budget 2017 represents the next step of our government's ambitious plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities to the middle class and those working hard to join it.

This budget puts Canadians at the very centre of an economy of tomorrow that is more innovative, an economy that will create jobs for now and for the future. As hon. members probably know, Canada's greatest strength is its highly skilled workforce. However, innovation is changing the way we live and work, creating new challenges and new opportunities. The dramatic technological changes and advances in artificial intelligence and computer

technology means that we must invest in training the workforce of the future.

The government is introducing our innovation and skills plan, a plan that focuses on people and addresses the changing nature of the economy to ensure it works for all Canadians. Through this plan, the government aims to build Canada as a world-leading innovation economy; direct resources towards people and ensure that Canadian workers have the right skills to succeed in the future economy; launch a pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy to retain and attract the best minds in academic research and increase the number of graduates and researchers studying artificial intelligence; and promote educational opportunities for digital skills development from kindergarten to grade 12.

First of all, our government wants to make Canada a leader in the global economy. To achieve that, we are making investments in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agrifood, clean technology, digital industries, health and bio-sciences, and clean resources. The government will make it easier for Canadian innovators to access these programs, which will increase the funding available to support them in turning their ideas into thriving businesses.

Second, our government is committed to focusing on people and giving Canadian workers the right tools for the future economy. The government wishes to launch an ambitious initiative that will support up to 10,000 new work-integrated learning placements and co-op placements, which will allow more young Canadians to get the skills and work experience they need to begin a well-paying career after their studies.

In addition to equipping young workers, our government plans to provide increased support to adult workers who want to go back to school and must deal with the high cost of post-secondary education, while also dealing with the financial pressures of everyday life and providing for their families.

Plus, our government will create ongoing learning opportunities so that the next job is always a better job.

• (1805)

Various measures have been put in place in order to meet that goal. These include a significant increase in federal support to the provinces and territories through an investment of \$2.7 billion over six years in order to help more unemployed and underemployed Canadians get access to the training and employment supports they need to find and keep good jobs; an investment of \$225 million over four years to identify and address skills gaps in the economy and help Canadians to be as prepared as possible for the new economy; and the assurance that Canadians who are receiving employment insurance benefits are able to get the training they require without fear of losing the benefits they need to support themselves and their families.

Private Members' Business

The third aspect that I would like to mention is the launch of a pan-Canadian artificial intelligence strategy. This strategy will position Canada as a world-leading destination for companies seeking to invest in artificial intelligence and innovation. It will also help to retain and attract top academic talent, drive innovation, create jobs, and potentially improve the quality of life of Canadians.

This kind of initiative is critical to attracting and retaining top academic research talent and increasing the number of post-graduate trainees and researchers in artificial intelligence with an investment of \$125 million.

The government's strategy will promote collaboration between Canada's main centres of expertise in Montreal, Toronto-Waterloo, and Edmonton. It will position Canada as a top destination for scientists and entrepreneurs who want to collaborate in achieving the kind of astounding breakthroughs that can vastly improve our lives.

Our government is proud of what Canada's talented scientists and innovators have achieved. They are contributing to a promising and more prosperous future for all Canadians.

Lastly, I would like to talk about digital literacy among youth. In addition to supporting the development of a skilled, college- and university-educated labour force, our government is promoting digital skills and coding education for girls and boys from kindergarten right through high school to prepare young Canadians for the impact of digital technology on their future.

In summary, the budget tabled by the hon. Minister of Finance is a sensible and future-oriented budget. The investments in research and innovation show that our government is investing in the Canada of tomorrow. What is more, this budget is a compassionate budget because it invests in technology companies and innovation and ensures that Canada's labour force of today and tomorrow remain on the cutting edge of that technology and that they have the skills they need to become world leaders in a leading-edge sector.

I am pleased that I had the opportunity to rise. I believe that I am the last one to speak this evening. I would therefore like to wish all of my colleagues in this honourable House and all the staff a good evening. I thank them for their support.

• (1810)

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Liberals decided to invest a lot of money or rather increase the investment in innovation and research and development. My colleague really emphasized the word “increase”.

In my riding, there is a company that is preparing to launch a multimillion dollar agricultural project. I look forward to seeing whether the money that will be invested in innovation will also be spent outside the major centres. I hope it will. We know that it is always a little more difficult for those in the regions to obtain funding, particularly large amounts of funding.

I would therefore like to ask my colleague whether he can confirm today that this money will be spent not only in the major centres but also in the regions.

Mr. Nicola Di Iorio: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

My riding is the only riding in Canada that has been home to two saints. We are blessed. It is easy to remember us. Speaking of blessings, I would like to recognize the work our government has done. Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that we are the government of all Canadians. We are deeply committed, and one example of our commitment is the infrastructure bank, one of the most ambitious, generous, and visionary programs in the history of Canada.

I want to reassure my colleague that, every day, our government makes decisions in the best interest of all Canadians, for urban centres and rural regions alike.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:13 p.m., pursuant to order made Monday, April 3, the question on the amendment is deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested and deferred until Wednesday, April 5, at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions.

[English]

The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1815)

[Translation]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC) moved that Bill S-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (drug-impaired driving) be read a second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise in the House today to debate Bill S-230, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (drug-impaired driving). This bill is critically important in the effort to protect Canadians from the growing scourge of drug-impaired drivers who get behind the wheel. It is a matter that is becoming more pressing given the Liberals' plan to legalize marijuana.

I want to begin by thanking Senator Claude Carignan and his entire team who worked extremely hard on drafting this bill and had the vision to get out ahead of the House of Commons by introducing this legislation in the Senate last year. I also want to take this opportunity to commend the work of all the senators who studied this bill and passed it unanimously. That is the collaborative, constructive, and non-partisan approach that I hope to see here in the House for this bill.

Private Members' Business

In fact, this bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code to authorize police officers to use a drug screening device, not unlike a breathalyser, which is not possible under current legislation.

To clearly explain the problem, I will talk about a study on drug-impaired driving conducted by the Canadian Centre for Substance Abuse. The centre published a report indicating that the percentage of Canadian drivers fatally injured in vehicle crashes who had taken drugs is 40% and exceeds the percentage of drivers fatally injured who had consumed alcohol, which is 33%. Furthermore, this study indicated that a driver who has used marijuana is six times more likely to have a motor vehicle accident than a sober driver. After using opioids, a driver is eight times more likely to have an accident, and after using cocaine is 10 times more likely to have an accident.

Therefore, it is obvious today that drug-impaired driving is an issue that is just as important if not more so than drunk driving. It would be understandable to believe that the number of arrests of drug-impaired drivers is similar to the number of arrests of drunk drivers. That is not the case and that is where the real problem lies.

In Canada, despite the fact that the number of drug-impaired drivers is about the same as the number of drunk drivers, the number of arrests is not. According to the Government of Canada, in 2013, 97% of prosecutions for impaired driving were alcohol related, while only 3% were drug related. This is completely out of line with the real statistics. Why?

Simply because there is currently no roadside screening device to detect drug-impaired driving. For example, as we all know, police officers who suspect a driver of being under the influence of alcohol can easily ask that person to take a blood alcohol test to check his or her level of intoxication. However, a police officer who believes that a driver is on drugs cannot use such a device because current legislation just does not allow it.

Here is how Canada's Criminal Code works now. If a police officer suspects a driver is impaired, he or she administers an initial blood alcohol test. If the individual's test result is negative, but the police officer has reason to believe that the driver is under the influence of a drug, the officer can ask the suspect to take the standardized field sobriety test. In other words, the person is simply instructed to walk, turn around, and balance on one foot.

Based on the results of the roadside test, the officer decides whether to take the suspect to the police station for evaluation by a drug recognition expert. If the driver is taken to the police station, he or she will undergo a series of 12 clinical indicator tests including blood pressure, pulse, and pupil dilation, as well as other tests related to behaviour and divided attention, such as standing up straight, feet together, arms extended, eyes closed, balancing, and so on. The tests take 45 minutes.

● (1820)

After these tests, if a drug recognition expert detects the presence of a drug, he or she will require a urine or blood sample. If the tests confirm the presence of the drug in question after a lab analysis, the driver could be charged with impaired driving under the Criminal Code and will stand trial.

That being said, in the absence of a device similar to a breathalyzer that would allow police officers to easily determine at

the side of the road whether or not a driver is impaired by marijuana, the process is far too complex, not to mention the cumbersome administrative procedure that follows. More worrisome yet is that not every police station in Canada has a drug recognition expert. We hope to have one, or two at most, per police station in Canada.

Without a screening device to help easily and quickly detect errant drivers, the problem of drug-impaired driving will persist and continue to be the cause of countless deaths in Canada. That is why Bill S-230 is timely because it addresses this problem directly by making the necessary amendments to the Criminal Code.

First of all, Bill S-230 will give the Attorney General of Canada, and not the government or any political parties, the power to authorize the use of certain roadside screening devices to detect the presence of drugs in the body. The device would be approved by the Attorney General of Canada based on consultations with forensic science experts. The same process is already used to approve alcohol detection devices.

Furthermore, under this bill, a police officer who has reasonable ground to suspect drug-impaired driving can ask the driver to submit to a test using a drug screening device. The device would not be used without reasonable grounds. This approach is similar to the one used when impaired driving is suspected. This is no different than what police officers already do in the case of alcohol.

Lastly, in obvious cases of drug-impaired driving, a police officer could ask for a urine or blood sample at the police station without having to go through the 12 stages, since the evaluating officer will have already done the test with the screening device. This last part of the bill means that the physical coordination test, observations, and results from the screening device would give the police officer reasonable grounds to suspect impaired driving.

Private Members' Business

I was lucky enough to speak with a senior official at the school that trains police officers in Quebec. I can assure the House that the current approach is very complex and that there are not enough evaluation officers to meet the demand. The screening device would be welcomed with open arms and would be an additional tool that would allow officers to save precious time. These changes would essentially help make drug detection closer to how alcohol is detected, thanks to the use of a screening device. This process would allow police officers to detect impaired driving more quickly.

Time is an important factor when drugs are involved. The more quickly a driver is stopped, the more quickly we can determine his exact state of intoxication because drugs are quickly absorbed by the body.

It is also worth noting that Canada is not the first country to adopt this approach. In fact, Australia, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, Finland, Germany and several other western countries that are not even considering legalizing marijuana have been using this tool for about 10 years. In these countries, this device allows police officers to better do their jobs and to prevent many accidents and deaths. Ultimately, public safety is improved and lives are saved.

Even more important, the use of this kind of drug detection device by police would deter drivers who are thinking of driving their vehicle after using drugs. At present, many people use drugs instead of alcohol because they believe their chances of being caught are lower.

• (1825)

That being said, if the introduction of a drug screening device increases the chances that users will be caught, it will likely have a deterrent effect and reduce the number of drug-impaired drivers. That is what happened when breathalysers were introduced to test alcohol levels. Although awareness campaigns and education are important, the risk of being arrested and charged with a criminal offence for endangering the safety of the public is certainly more convincing than an ad on television.

This evening, I invite those who are watching to talk to their teenagers and ask them what their friends think about drug-impaired driving. Surveys of teenagers and marijuana users show that many people do not believe that they are a threat on the road if they drive after taking drugs. The various studies that have been done show that over 50% of people who admit to using marijuana or other drugs say that they do not consider themselves to be a risk or danger to the public on the road.

This bill is necessary and will address a very real problem. I hardly need to point out that the Liberal government's bill to legalize marijuana by July 1, 2018, makes this issue and the need for this law all the more pressing. As alarming as the numbers are now, we can imagine how much more so they will be once Canadians can legally buy, grow, and use marijuana. It is not a stretch to suppose that the number of people using it and the number of drug-impaired drivers will go up. That is what happened in places that legalized marijuana. I would like to share some examples.

According to Washington State toxicology lab manager Brian Capron, since the state legalized marijuana, over a third of impaired

drivers tested positive for the drug. They test over 13,000 drivers every year.

According to Dr. Chris Rumball of the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, the Prime Minister's plan to legalize marijuana should take into account sobering U.S. experiences. In Washington State, fatal crashes among drivers who tested positive for marijuana doubled from 8% in 2013 to 17% in 2014 after legalization. In Colorado, the number tripled from 3.4% to 12.1%

Kevin Sabet, a former drug policy adviser to Barack Obama, was very clear. He said that Colorado experienced an increase in road accidents directly related to marijuana use.

Even a Department of Justice Canada document obtained through access to information, even though it is hard to access certain documents, reveals some troubling facts. Here is what the minister's briefing notes say: "On Colorado highways, for instance, in the year following the legalization of marijuana, road fatalities linked to drug-impaired driving increased by 32%." We do not make things up on this side of the House.

Colorado police officers have also issued a warning. They have said that law enforcement officials should be prepared for an increase in drug-impaired driving if the government legalizes cannabis. When Colorado legalized marijuana in 2014, police forces were not prepared for the challenges they faced.

A lieutenant colonel of the Colorado state police hit the nail on the head. After legalizing marijuana, Colorado was not prepared to deal with the sharp rise in drug-impaired driving, and this led to a 32% increase in fatalities in that state due to road accidents.

The bill has already been passed in the Senate and it could become law in a few months, perhaps in a few weeks, if the government so desires. If we wait for another bill to make the same changes, we will delay the implementation of these measures that will prevent fatalities.

Police forces are asking for detection devices. They do not want these devices on July 1, 2018, they want them this year before the government legalizes marijuana.

For that reason we need this bill now. That is why I am asking my colleagues opposite to put aside partisanship and support this bill, which will save lives.

Private Members' Business

• (1830)

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the evidence is very clear that Canada has the highest rates of cannabis use among its young people of any country in the world. Drug-impaired driving has been an issue in our country for literally decades, and certainly now as we do the important work of turning our attention to ensuring that law enforcement agencies have not only the technology but the legislation, the tools, training and the resources they need to keep our roads safe.

I wonder if the member has any comment or wants to expand on what additional things he believes law enforcement and our prosecutors will need, and the public will need, in order to make more socially responsible and safe decisions with respect to this very important issue, which has been with us for decades but is one that I think public safety requires that we address in a very urgent way.

Does he have any comments on not just the legislation before us today for discussion, but other things that might appropriately be provided to the police, to our courts, and to the public?

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, the first step should be to equip police vehicles and to train police officers across Canada.

Despite what Liberal MPs may think, at this time police officers are asking for help. There are not enough trained people in Canada to take action in the event that the government legalizes marijuana. In any event, after the government announced its plan, the number of users increased.

No one is denying that Canada has the largest number of youth who use drugs. Therefore, let us imagine what will happen when marijuana is accessible. The use of marijuana has increased in every state and jurisdiction where marijuana has been legalized.

On February 8, the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police released an urgent report indicating that it is worried about the situation and that we must not wait. Whether or not marijuana is legalized, we have to equip police vehicles even before we go any further or consider anything else.

[English]

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's efforts in bringing the bill forward. I have recommended to my caucus that we support the bill. We think it deserves further study at committee.

The backgrounder that was handed out to all MPs in the House extensively quoted from Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada. However, when my office contacted the organization, its members stated that this kind of piecemeal approach that the legislation brought did not make sense. They would rather see a more comprehensive approach from the government in dealing with drug-impaired driving and all that.

While I support the bill in principle, I wonder if the member could comment on the reaction by Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada on the need for a more comprehensive approach to this issue from the government side, rather than a piecemeal approach.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Rayes: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his entirely relevant question.

We do indeed need a comprehensive approach. This illustrates the complexity of legalizing marijuana. I am a member of the House of Commons. I am not in the government, but I have the authority to sponsor a bill from Senator Claude Carignan that would first and foremost help equip our police officers and provide them the necessary training.

The Liberals have the majority. They can go ahead if they want, but it would be wholly irresponsible to legalize marijuana before training people, raising awareness, and implementing an education strategy. In our society we are fighting to reduce the number of smokers and promote healthy lifestyles, but I have before me a Prime Minister whose current priority for this Parliament and this session is to legalize marijuana.

That is what I wanted to say. That is all I had to add to this great debate to ensure that we equip our police officers. I have met with them and heard what they had to say. They say that they are not trained and that the action plans to train police officers are not in place. There is nothing in the budget to equip them. The budget allocates \$9.6 billion over five years for legalizing marijuana, including \$1 billion annually for prevention and education across Canada. It is totally ridiculous.

There ends my small contribution. Let us hope that the government does better to help Canadians.

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill S-230.

I would like to begin by expressing my very sincere appreciation to the hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska for sponsoring this bill in the House to bring impaired driving to the attention of members for this important discussion. I would also like to express my respect and gratitude to the senator for Mille Isles, who sponsored the bill in the other place.

We can all agree that drug-impaired driving is a serious and growing problem. Like alcohol and driving, drug driving is present in all age groups and socio-economic groups. It is seen particularly, but not exclusively, in young males in their twenties who are driving after smoking cannabis. Frequently, they combine this activity with the consumption of alcohol. The scientific evidence indicates this to be significantly more dangerous than driving after consuming alcohol alone or cannabis alone.

Private Members' Business

Impaired driving, whether by drugs or alcohol, is a serious crime. We are all too aware of the cases of death, injury, and property damage resulting from people who make the decision to drive while impaired. This is not a victimless crime but a crime that can quickly victimize other drivers on the road and the innocent without warning. The difficulty is that too many people seem to think that this will not happen to them and they go ahead and drive while impaired by a drug, or alcohol, or both. We need to become a society in which the attitude is to never drive while impaired by a drug or alcohol.

On that note, I am pleased to advise that our government is firmly committed to strengthening appropriate laws and enforcement measures to deter and punish serious offenders on the road.

While we support the intentions behind the Senate public bill, I know my friend from Cowichan—Malahat—Langford will be pleased to hear that the government will be bringing forward its own comprehensive response to the issue of drug-impaired driving as part of its approach to the legalization and strict regulation of cannabis, which we will bring forward in the spring of 2017.

The issues to be resolved in developing a comprehensive strategy to combat drug-impaired driving are complex, and it is far too difficult to address through amendments to the non-government Senate public bill.

On that note, the Department of Justice has requested the drugs and driving committee of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science, which is its scientific adviser on drug-impaired driving, to assess the validity of oral fluid drug screening technology. The drugs and driving committee has reported that the technology reliably detects tetrahydrocannabinol, the active ingredient in cannabis, as well as for cocaine, methamphetamines, and several opioids. The DDC is in the process of establishing evaluation standards that would be used to evaluate drug screening equipment submitted by manufacturers for the approval of the Attorney General of Canada for use by police across the country. The DDC's research and advice will help guide the government in designing a system of regulation built upon evidence-based policies and science.

However, oral fluid drug screeners alone are not a sufficient response, and Bill S-230 is simply not sufficiently comprehensive to address the very complex drug driving problem in a significant way. The final report of the federal Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation indicated that drug-impaired driving was a major concern for witnesses who appeared before the task force and suggested that the government address the matter of a cannabis "legal limit" for driving.

The difficulty is that Bill S-230 only proposes authorization for police to use an oral fluid drug screener at the roadside as a tool to investigate the existing crime of driving while impaired by a drug or a drug-alcohol combination.

Currently, there is no legal limit in the Criminal Code for a drug other than alcohol, and Bill S-230 proposes no drug legal limit offence. If enacted, this bill would provide police with a new drug screening tool that would only be used to investigate the existing offence of driving while impaired by a drug.

It is quite understandable that this bill, in its limitations, does not propose any drug legal limits for driving. The Task Force on

Cannabis Legalization and Regulation itself chose to defer to the work being done by the drugs and driving committee of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science.

Therefore, I respectfully question the sense of Bill S-230 proposing oral fluid drug screeners without proposing some mechanism to create legal limit offences for drugs, at least for the most prevalent drugs found in drivers, which of course includes THC, the psychoactive ingredient that is present in cannabis.

• (1840)

The drug screener has a disposable, oral fluid collection kit and an analyzer phase. It checks for the presence of particular drugs in the oral fluid and not for impairment. The oral fluid drug screener would be used by police at the roadside under Bill S-230 for the sole and limited purpose of investigating the current drug-impaired driving offence.

By contrast, in 2016 the United Kingdom adopted legislation that created legal limits for drugs and introduced oral fluid drug screeners at the same time that would aid in the investigation of the THC and cocaine legal limit offences. The media have reported that drug driving charges in the U.K. have increased about tenfold in the year following the implementation of that far more comprehensive and effective legislation.

In the U.K., as implied earlier, only two drugs are in the panel of drugs searched for by the oral fluid drug screener. They are THC, which is the active chemical in cannabis, and cocaine. These are the two drugs most prevalent as impairing drugs found in drivers.

Even if THC or cocaine is detected by the oral fluid drug screen, there is no criminal charge based on that evidence alone. What happens is that the U.K. police will demand a blood sample from the driver and it will be analyzed in a laboratory for drug concentration levels, including some drugs that are not detected by the drug screener. Only if blood analysis shows that the driver exceeded a U.K. drug "legal limit" will there be a "legal limit" charge.

Now, we all know that there is a vast array of other impairing drugs besides tetrahydrocannabinol and cocaine. Therefore, other investigative methods are needed for the drugs that are not searched for by the drug screener.

Private Members' Business

In Canada, Parliament enacted its Criminal Code reforms in 2008, which gave police a roadside drug screening tool that was used to investigate the offence of driving while impaired by a drug. If police officers have a reasonable suspicion of a drug in a driver's body, they may demand that the driver participate in standardized field sobriety testing, or SFST. This is physical testing and includes, for example, walking a line, turning, and doing a one-leg stand at the roadside.

After the SFST, if the driver has performed poorly, the police have reasonable grounds to believe that the driver committed the offence of driving while impaired by a drug, or a drug-alcohol combination. The police can then demand that the driver participate in a drug recognition evaluation, or DRE as it is commonly referred to in our country, conducted by a specially trained evaluating officer.

This officer checks vital signs, performance of physical tests, observations of eye movement and pupil size, and an alcohol breath test on an approved instrument. When I say approved instrument, that is approved and listed in regulations approved by the drugs and driving committee. If the evaluating officer identifies a class of drug as causing impairment, the driver is then given a demand to provide a bodily substance to be analyzed in a laboratory for the presence of a drug, either blood or urine.

Bill S-230 has an aspect that parallels the SFST because a positive result on the drug screener could lead to a demand that the driver participate in DRE at the police station. However, I do not believe that enacting authority for police to use a drug screener is sufficient, by itself, to address adequately the very serious problem of drug-impaired driving. It would be far more effective if coupled with legal limits of drugs in the system.

Hence, the government is firmly committed to bringing forward a comprehensive response to drug-impaired driving. I think we can all agree that Canadians would be better protected from impaired drivers, including those impaired by drugs, by this more comprehensive approach.

Unfortunately, Bill S-230, though well-intentioned, does not provide a workable, new, legal framework to address drug-impaired driving. Therefore, I would encourage all members to await the introduction of that more comprehensive bill, so this Parliament can bring forward a more adequate response.

In my experience, and I have considerable experience in keeping our roadways safe in the policing community, what the police and our prosecutors need is the legislation, technology, training, and resources necessary to keep our roads safe. We need to invest as well in greater public education so all our citizens can make safer and more socially responsible choices not to drink or use drugs and drive.

• (1845)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on Bill S-230. I would like to thank the leader of the opposition in the Senate for crafting this bill and shepherding it through the Senate, and also the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for bringing it forward in this House.

As the NDP critic for justice and the Attorney General, I have recommended to my caucus that we support this bill so that it can get

further study at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I also appreciate the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice for his remarks tonight. It is indeed heartening to all members in this House to see that with the government's plans for legalization and regulation of marijuana, there is a comprehensive approach forthcoming.

When this bill was brought forward and introduced to members in this House, it was accompanied by an extensive handout. I have recommended that we support this bill because I believe that we need to do everything we can to ensure Canadians are safe on the road. The statistics that were provided in that handout are quite illuminating. Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada found that there were 614 road fatalities in 2012 in which drivers had drugs present in their body, compared to 476 fatalities in which alcohol was present. Therefore, there is an obvious need for this.

That said, there are stakeholders who have been consulted on this bill, and some of them do have issues with it. We have heard from the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, who support the principle of the bill, but they have looked at all of the different pieces of legislation that deal with this subject matter and they would rather see it combined into a coherent government strategy.

It is quite a coincidence that for the second private member's bill that we are debating tonight, Bill C-247, which dealt with passive detection devices, one of the recommendations was that the government needs to take a leading role to make sure that the Department of Justice and its resources are fully involved. When we look at the various private member's bills that deal with these issues, sometimes I think they concentrate on fixing individual trees rather than looking at the whole forest. That is one issue to take note of.

Of course, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, as I referenced in my question for the hon. member, has stated that there are problems. The organization would like to come to the parliamentary committee, but it believes that a piecemeal approach to this issue is not the way to move forward.

One of the issues in the bill is with the fact that there is no mention of a per se limit on THC. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice made mention of that. It is unclear as to how much THC, or indeed any kind of drugs, in a person's blood would need to be found to fine for impairment.

As was mentioned, cocaine is of course illegal to possess. We still do not know what the amounts are of that drug or of THC that can cause legal impairment as per the Criminal Code. I can compare it to blood alcohol content, just to explain for members what the per se limit is. Blood alcohol content of 0.05% or 0.08%, depending on the jurisdiction, is enough to move to prohibitions and to punishment.

Private Members' Business

It is important to stop impaired driving, but we want to make sure that have a clear definition of the amounts that constitute impairment. Different people of different weights will synthesize drugs in a different way, so we need to really lock down what that basic amount is that causes impairment.

We have been talking about the need for a comprehensive strategy. I am sure we will get new news on that in the following week, but one thing that we can point to is the extensively quoted Task Force on Cannabis Legalization and Regulation and the report that it issued.

The task force recommended many of the steps that I feel this bill does not cover, among them investing immediately and working with the provinces and territories to develop a national comprehensive public education strategy to send a clear message to Canadians that cannabis causes impairment, and that the best way to avoid driving impaired is simply not to consume beforehand. It also recommended investing in research to better link THC levels with impairment and crash risk to support the development of a per se limit.

•(1850)

It recommended to determine whether to establish a per se limit as a part of a comprehensive approach to cannabis-impaired driving, acting on the findings of the DDC; re-examine per se limits should a reliable correlation between THC levels and impairment be established; support the development of appropriate roadside drug screening device for detecting THC levels and invest in these tools; and finally, invest in baseline data collection and ongoing surveillance in evaluation and collaboration with the provinces and territories.

We are happy the comprehensive strategy will be developed in conjunction with the rollout of regulation and legalization of cannabis. Ultimately what Canadians primarily think that their members of Parliament should be doing is looking at ensuring public safety is a big part of our regulations and the laws that we develop, especially when something as revolutionary as cannabis legalization in Canada has a long history of prohibition and punishment. This will be quite a change for Canadian society. We want to ensure that is rolled out in a responsible manner and that we also look at the dangers to drug-impaired driving.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse states in its 2016 report that we must implement per se drug laws for certain substances as a part of that comprehensive approach to drug-impaired driving. As was made mention, this includes the enhanced training of all police officers in the recognition of the signs and symptoms of drug use, a strong drug evaluation and classification program, and the implementation of a roadside oral fluid drug screening.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse from the United States states “that drivers with THC in their blood were roughly twice as likely to be culpable for a fatal crash”. However, THC can be detected in body fluids for days or even weeks after intoxication.

We do not want to get into that situation where someone has consumed something on a Friday and by Monday, he or she is no longer impaired. However, if it is still detected in a person's body,

that is why it is so important to establish what the exact limits are, the exact amounts that cause that impairment.

With these facts in mind, we are glad a comprehensive program and approach to this problem will be rolled out so we do not miss the mark.

I have encouraged my caucus to support the bill. I believe, in principle, that it does deserve further study at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, just simply for the fact that impaired driving is the leading criminal cause of death in Canada. It causes the death of more than 1,200 Canadians per year.

When it comes to supporting a bill that has this in mind, the principle of the bill, I will lend my support behind that. I hope all members will do the same.

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill S-230, the drug-impaired driving detection act.

I would like to thank Senator Claude Carignan for his dedication to the bill and for guiding this piece of legislation through the Senate and I thank my colleague for bringing it to the House.

This bill seeks to authorize law enforcement officials to use roadside screening devices to detect the presence of drugs in the body of a driver suspected of being impaired.

The authority to use non-invasive drug screening devices similar to our current alcohol screening devices would allow law enforcement officers to immediately recognize a driver operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs. About 3,000 of 75,000 impaired driving incidents reported by police across Canada in 2015 involved drugs, seven of which were fatal.

To me, the bill is trying to make our roads and our communities significantly safer. Although there is a lack of statistics on the subject of drug-impaired driving, the information we do have is staggering. What is even more concerning is how the Liberal government is moving so quickly toward legalizing marijuana while not addressing one of the more dangerous effects of impaired driving. This bill is necessary and timely as we approach the deadlines the current government has set for itself regarding marijuana legalization.

I will mention a couple of statistics from the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse regarding marijuana and road safety. Marijuana was the most common illicit drug present among drivers in fatal motor vehicle collisions. It is also the most common illegal drug among young drivers. More young drivers in Ontario drive after using marijuana than after drinking alcohol. In 2011, 13% of young Canadians aged 15 to 24 admitted to driving after taking marijuana, but only 11% reported driving after drinking.

Private Members' Business

Statistics show that there has been a rapid rise in the presence of drugs in fatal motor vehicle accidents. MADD Canada states that drug-impaired fatalities now exceed the number of alcohol fatalities by 25%. We invest a lot of effort and money in the prevention of drinking and driving and in support of groups working to prevent the same, yet we are beginning to learn that drug-impaired driving is statistically even more common.

Law enforcement officers currently have the tools they need to measure blood alcohol levels roadside, but the tools to measure drug impairment are still not available across Canada. As such, it is significantly harder to prosecute drug-impaired driving, which is a necessary first step in preventing further risk on our roads. Without the necessary tools, fatalities and crashes as a result of drug-impaired driving are on the rise, but arrests and charges are not. This is unacceptable and does nothing to prevent this dangerous habit.

This needs to become a priority for the federal government, especially before the legalization of marijuana. Other countries have already undertaken this challenge and are responding very well to legislation against drug-impaired driving. There are best practices that we could be using as models, or we could create an entirely Canadian system. Regardless, legislation on drug-impaired driving needs to be finalized as soon as possible.

I would like to outline exactly why I believe drug-impaired driving is dangerous and wrong. As a youth leader for over 32 years, I can explain first-hand some of the many consequences drugs can have on the human body. I will try to stick to drug-related side effects or consequences that would have an effect on driving.

Drug-impaired drivers may have a slower reaction time, be disoriented, or be overly tired. Drug-impaired drivers may have difficulty concentrating, staying in their own lane, judging distances, or judging or maintaining a constant speed. Drug-impaired drivers may be more easily distracted by their surroundings, both inside and outside the vehicle. These consequences are only magnified when alcohol is also present in their system. Drug-impaired drivers may show other signs of poor judgment, such as texting while driving or talking on a phone while driving, both of which are root causes of fatalities.

One's reaction to drugs can also evolve over time and can both escalate and de-escalate rapidly. Drugs can impact one's mood, vision, mental state, and even have physical effects on drivers.

Any of these factors can increase the number of accidents, injuries, or casualties on our roads. Legislated screening tools would allow our law enforcement officers to properly patrol our streets and allow them to remove dangerous drivers from the roads. The evidence from the screening devices would lead to higher conviction rates and would help raise awareness on this issue.

According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, just as many drivers die in road crashes while under the influence of drugs as those who are under the influence of alcohol. MADD has very similar statistics which demonstrate that, in 2016, there were 614 vehicle accident fatalities where drugs were present in the driver's system, compared to the 476 fatalities where alcohol was present in the driver's system. Looking at these numbers, drugs seem statistically more dangerous than alcohol.

● (1855)

Along the same lines as the MADD study, a roadside survey in British Columbia, conducted in 2012, collected voluntary saliva and breathalyzer samples from drivers. The final results indicated that 7.4% of the drivers were drug impaired and only 5.4% were alcohol impaired.

If we can agree that drug-impaired driving is more prevalent than alcohol-impaired driving and that drug-impaired driving causes a significant number of fatalities, should we not be legislating drug-impaired driving the same as or more severely than we legislate alcohol-impaired driving?

Logically, legislation preventing drug-impaired drivers from operating a vehicle would have a positive impact on our communities. As we near the date on which the Liberal government announces its marijuana legislation, we need to equip our law enforcement officers with the proper tools to keep us safe.

It is also important to remark that drug-impaired driving cases often take up to twice as long to be completed in court than their alcohol-impaired driving counterparts. Drug-impaired driving cases are also less likely to result in a guilty sentence.

The use of drugs while driving, or prior to driving, is on the rise and will only increase with the government's legislation. The statistics correlating drug-impaired driving with vehicle crashes are astounding. The crash rate of marijuana users is two to six times higher than it is for drivers who are not impaired. Drivers who test positive for the use of sedatives are two to eight times more likely to be involved in a fatal traffic crash. Drivers who test positive for the use of opioids are up to eight times more likely to be involved in a traffic accident, and drivers who are impaired by cocaine are two to 10 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash.

Private Members' Business

Legislation similar to Bill S-230 is already present across the globe. In the United States, several states that have legalized marijuana have also introduced legislation on its use while driving. Washington and Colorado have set their legal limit at five nanograms of THC per millilitre of blood, while Nevada and Ohio have a lower limit of two nanograms. Other states have declared zero-tolerance legislation. Determining what is safe will be difficult. I recommend leaving those measurements to the medical and law enforcement professionals.

Other countries with similar legislation include Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, and the United Kingdom, and the list goes on. All of these countries have found value in legislation toward preventing drug-impaired driving. We are behind on this matter. As a country, we have an obligation to respond to this issue. I hope that a response is ready before we legalize the most commonly used illegal drug in our country.

To conclude, I am pleased to speak to this important and timely piece of legislation. As we move closer to the deadline, there are many issues that need to be addressed, including roadside testing of impaired drivers. I could list many others, and I am sure that when we come to debate, we will.

I am calling on the government to ensure the safety of our roads and of Canadians. We now have good tools available in the world to prove a level of impairment for alcohol. We could have the same for drugs. We need to equip our law enforcement officers with what they need to keep our roads safe.

The social movement against drinking and driving has been tremendous. I am hoping that a similar effort will be put into preventing drug-impaired driving in Canada.

Until we get screening technology across this country, we are going to continue to do a poor job of detecting drug-impaired drivers on our roads. As we lower the age and legalize marijuana, these young boys, who are most prevalent in terms of drug-impaired driving, will only increase in number. We need stronger rules, and we need to equip our law enforcement officers with the tools to enforce those rules more effectively.

● (1900)

Mr. Lloyd Longfield (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to Bill S-230, which would authorize the use of approved screening devices to detect the presence of drugs in anyone operating a vehicle. I would like to thank the member for Richmond—Arthabaska for bringing this important issue onto the floor for debate.

The government has been clear on the matter of impaired driving and the hazardous effects on its victims. Canadians cannot tolerate this type of reckless and irresponsible action without consequences. Authorities must have the appropriate tools necessary to ensure the public's safety. That is why our Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness rose in the House on February 9 and reassured members that the RCMP and other police forces across the country, in co-operation with the Government of Canada, have been testing a number of scientific devices for roadside testing for drug-impaired driving. The minister also committed the government to having in place both the legal and scientific regime to deal with drug-impaired driving.

This legislation arrives at a critical time as the government prepares to fulfill an election promise to legalize, strictly regulate, and tax the production of cannabis. Bringing an end to this unsuccessful prohibition program is long overdue. New legislation would provide more protection for children who would no longer be able to purchase the drug from street dealers. Under the new regulations, the purchase of cannabis would take place in regulated businesses and require photo ID. This would protect our youth and remove control from the illicit market. Cannabis would no longer fund the activities of organized crime. Revenues from the sale of cannabis could then be taken back into the health care system, including counselling and education.

While this next step in progressive policy is welcomed by many Canadians, I acknowledge that this change will be cause for concern for some. This is why the government is proposing strict regulations on the production and sale of cannabis.

While regulation and legislation are necessary steps, they are not totally sufficient, and while I support the intent of the bill, what is more effective than punishing a driver who drives under the influence is educating people to prevent them from getting behind the wheel in the first place. Teaching youth about the effects of cannabis consumption is the best way to ensure they never get behind the wheel while impaired by drugs or alcohol.

The task force for legalization and regulation heard at length from Canadians on this very issue. That is why the members of the task force argued for a whole-of-government approach, specifically that Ottawa work with the provinces and territories to develop a national, comprehensive public education strategy to send a clear message to Canadians that cannabis causes impairment.

The good work of the task force fell on receptive ears, and the government included funds to accomplish this very goal in budget 2017. Health Canada will support marijuana public education programming and surveillance activities in advance of the government's plan to legalize cannabis. The government would accomplish this by directing existing funding of \$9.6 million over five years, with \$1 million per year ongoing.

It is this kind of common-sense policy-making that Canadians voted for in the 2015 election. We made a campaign promise. We announced consultations for Canadians to provide further input, and the government listened to those concerns and acted.

Private Members' Business

Canadians and their government understand that the purely punitive approach is a failed one. We currently have the highest use of marijuana by youth in developed countries around the world. Ottawa must work with the provinces and territories to adopt a plan of action that comprehensively deals with the issues of drug use, based upon science as opposed to ideology.

Currently, anyone, including minors, can access cannabis with greater ease than alcohol or tobacco. This is because minors do not have to go through a regulated business to get cannabis. As it stands, the dealers are the only suppliers, and they have only one motive: profit. They do not care about age, quality control, or the strength of cannabis. Prohibition, even decriminalization, will not change this attitude.

• (1905)

While the members of the official opposition may still look upon legalization with skepticism, those on this side of the House understand that it is long past time for change. A comprehensive policy will allow Canadians the freedom to choose but to also encourage responsible consumption. At the same time, we will protect Canadians from impaired drivers using the most up-to-date technology.

In conclusion, Canadians can be assured that their government and their representatives in Parliament will not compromise when it comes to their safety and the safety of their communities. An important step is providing law enforcement with the tools they need now and will need in the future to ensure that drivers operating vehicles are not under the influence of cannabis.

This is only one step toward effective public safety policy. All orders of government need to work on providing devices and training so police forces are able to ensure that citizens and communities are safe from impaired drivers.

Governments also need to provide effective legislation for distribution, control and testing, and even municipal zoning regulations. Our government is committed to an all-of-government approach to personal and public safety policy and legislation. We will work with our provincial, territorial, and municipal partners, as well as our police forces, to provide improved safety and security for communities and the people living in them. We have to do better in the future than we have done in the past to provide safety for our citizens, especially our youth, and for our communities.

• (1910)

Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure tonight to speak to Bill S-230.

There is a problem in Saskatchewan. The province of Saskatchewan has had the highest number of impaired driving charges in all of Canada. The problem has existed for decades, if not a century, and the people of Saskatchewan are very concerned.

A daughter of a former member of Parliament for Blackstrap, Allan Kerpan, was involved in an accident involving drunk driving. He is one of many who has taken to the stage in the last couple of years to deal with the effects of not only drinking but also drugs.

Impaired driving due to drugs is an interesting one, because we all believe devices should be in cars now so police have a way of testing

people. We are concerned with the government legislation on marijuana. It has not thought it out.

Last week I had a chance to go to one of the high schools in Saskatoon, Walter Murray Collegiate. It is the biggest high school, with over 1,500 students. I had a chance to talk about the marijuana legislation. Much to my surprise, most kids in the assembly did not want the legalization of marijuana. That was kind of a surprise because the Liberals assumed everyone was in favour of marijuana, and that is not the case. The students have spoken out against it. They are concerned about it. They have seen what alcohol and now marijuana can do to families.

I mentioned Allan Kerpan, an MP who was in the House of Commons in the 1990s and 2000, and his family. We need a way of testing if this is to come about. As people know, the municipal and provincial police and the RCMP need devices in their cars right now. We know what is going on in the country, not only on the back roads of Saskatchewan but from coast to coast to coast. That is very important when we deal with this private bill, Bill S-230. We have to get out in front of this, and that is why my hon. colleague brought the bill forward now. This is an important part. Families in our country have been absolutely decimated due to the accidents and deaths that have occurred.

It is very important that the hon. member bring Bill S-230 forward at this time. Police officers need the devices now. We have heard from coast to coast. The University of B.C. may have a device ready for testing. We need it right now. UBC is one of many places in the country trying to get a device that could be put in every police car. That is where we need to go. We need to get out in front of the government legislation that will be brought forward later this year, and possibly will be in law by July 1, 2018.

When we look back through the years, we see how many families have been affected by alcohol. Could we have prevented it? We sure could have. Devices are needed in vehicles today that can read .08. We have brought that number down in almost every province and territory, because we know drinking and driving is a problem. We know drugs, like marijuana, will be a problem when the law is passed. That is why I am very pleased to speak to Bill S-230 and give it my support in the House of Commons tonight.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Grasswood will have five and a half minutes remaining in his time, should he wish it, when the House next resumes debate on the question.

Routine Proceedings

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.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

●(1915)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2), the motion to concur in the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, recommendation not to proceed further with Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (passive detection device), presented on Thursday, February 16, is deemed moved.

[*English*]

Mr. Gagan Sikand (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to once again have the opportunity to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-247.

Although I respect and appreciate the work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I must say I am disappointed by their report.

It is clear that impaired driving is a serious problem in Canada. Sadly, we are reminded of this much too frequently. This past holiday season, the Peel Regional Police, the police force that is tasked with keeping my riding safe, caught more than 400 impaired drivers between November 15 and January 2.

The current laws that we have in place to address impaired driving are ineffective and do not serve as a deterrent, as many Canadians continue to drive under the influence of alcohol. Survey data and criminal justice statistics indicate that on average, a person can drive impaired once a week for more than three years before being charged with an impaired driving offence. This is unacceptable and demonstrates the need to increase deterrent measures for impaired driving.

Despite what is included in the committee's report, I strongly believe that legislating passive alcohol sensors is an effective means of improving deterrent measures.

Currently, Canadian police forces rely on their own unaided senses to determine whether they have the legal grounds to administer a roadside sobriety test. They rely on observations such as an odour of alcohol, a flushed face, and slurred speech.

At sobriety checkpoints where the majority of these interactions between a peace officer and driver take place, police are under immense pressure to speed up the process in order to prevent impeding traffic. It may be difficult for an officer to detect some of these characteristics. This increases the potential for impaired drivers to go undetected.

Passive alcohol sensors would enhance the officer's ability to detect impaired drivers. Although the committee was skeptical of

this claim, research has proven it to be true. Referring back to an academic study, it indicated that in comparison to sobriety checkpoints where passive alcohol sensors were not used, sobriety checkpoints with passive alcohol sensors had an 88% higher detection rate.

In their report the committee stated:

...the costs of introducing such devices and the time and resources required for developing the appropriate testing mechanisms for them outweigh the potential benefits.

Let me just say that one more time: "The costs of introducing such devices and the time and resources required for developing the appropriate testing mechanisms for them outweigh the potential benefits."

Now please allow me to quote a July 2016 article in which the *National Post* reported:

Despite years of public messaging about the dangers of drinking and driving, Canada ranks No. 1 among 19 wealthy countries for percentage of roadway deaths linked to alcohol impairment....

The finding by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control should serve as a warning to lawmakers that new strategies are needed to combat impaired driving, which remains the top criminal cause of death in Canada....

I will move to the second part of Bill C-247, which proposes to amend subsections 255(3) and 255(3.1) of the Criminal Code by changing the wording in "impaired driving causing death" and "blood alcohol level over legal limit — death" by inserting "vehicular homicide as a result of impairment". I was disappointed to see that the committee did not address this portion of the bill in its report.

As I have mentioned in my previous speeches, what inspired me to present this bill was a local high school teacher in my riding who lost his life while out on a bicycle ride.

Throughout my time conducting research for Bill C-247, I came across Canadians from coast to coast to coast who shared their story on how impaired driving had impacted their lives. While I was doing this, I came in contact with an organization called Families for Justice led by a woman named Markita Kaulius. Markita created Families for Justice shortly after the death of her daughter Cassandra, who was killed by a drunk driver while driving home from a baseball game.

The organization provides support for families who have been victims of impaired driving. In addition to this, Families for Justice is an advocate for government initiatives to prevent impaired driving. I was glad that Markita was given the opportunity to testify before the committee and share her story.

Sadly, every year the number of families that join Families for Justice grows unacceptably. With every family that contacts Markita to join her cause, she is reminded of her beautiful young daughter who had her entire life ahead of her. She was engaged to be married, was in school to be a teacher, and had her whole life ahead of her, which was carelessly taken away by a driver who decided to drive after consuming alcohol.

Routine Proceedings

• (1920)

Through working with Markita, I also got to know a woman by the name of Sheri who had her own devastating experience with impaired driving, which led to the loss of her son Brad. For Markita and Sheri, one of the most difficult aspects of these tragic events is the sentences that were given to the people who took their children from them. The driver in Cassandra's death was released from custody after only two years of her three-year sentence. The driver in Brad's case will be eligible for full parole later this month, two years and eight months into his eight-year sentence.

The danger of impaired driving is not a new phenomenon. It is common knowledge that when people drive after consuming alcohol, they are putting everyone else around them at risk. It is for this reason that I feel it is time to call this horrific crime what it truly is, and that is a homicide. It is time that our government changed our Criminal Code to better reflect the impact these crimes have on the lives of their victims.

For Markita, Sheri, and the family of the teacher from my riding, the connotation of the offenders' actions should be on par with the amount of suffering they have gone through. These families view these crimes as homicides, and it is about time we do as well.

While the justice and human rights committee has recommended that the House not proceed further with this bill, I want to call on all members and our government to implement legislation to address impaired driving. As years go by, more families like Markita's and Sheri's go through the same devastating tragedy. We as a government have a responsibility to all Canadians to address this very serious issue.

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-247, a private member's bill introduced by the member of Parliament for Mississauga—Streetsville. On February 7, the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights decided unanimously to recommend that the House of Commons not proceed further with the bill. I am here today to speak further to that decision as the vice-chair of that committee.

Bill C-247 is seeking to amend section 254 of the Criminal Code to allow police officers to use an approved passive detection device to sample the ambient air in the immediate vicinity of a person they have reasonable grounds to believe is impaired. This would be in advance of the police officer taking a sample using an approved screening device. The bill is also seeking to amend subsections 255(3) and 255(3.1) of the code, which would change the offence of impaired driving causing death to vehicular homicide as a result of impairment.

The purpose of this bill is to act as a further deterrent for drunk drivers and to increase apprehension rates, as a positive reading would provide reasonable grounds to conduct a breath test on an approved screening device, ASD. It has been referred to as a device that would act as an extension of the officer's nose.

I thank the member for Mississauga—Streetsville for putting forward a bill with such commendable objectives. Certainly all of us in this chamber can agree that we should do everything we can to keep Canadians safe and keep drunk drivers off of roads. In politics we disagree on a great deal of things, but I think this is one area

where we all share a common goal that extends across all party lines. The intent of Bill C-247 is noble, but on further investigation with the help of expert testimony in the justice and human rights committee, we uncovered some issues in the bill that brought us to unanimously recommend that the House not proceed further with the bill.

Some of the most compelling evidence we came across was introduced by Dr. Daryl Mayers, who testified as chair of the alcohol test committee, known as the ATC, of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science. The ATC, the alcohol test committee, has provided advice to the Ministry of Justice about detection and quantification of blood alcohol concentrations for the past 50 years. We learned that the introduction of a passive detection device would need to be tested against the ATC's published standards to determine if it is appropriate to be used in Canadian alcohol testing. This would be costly in both time and resources and, as Dr. Mayers testified, would stretch the ATC's resources well past the breaking point.

The chair of the alcohol test committee brought to our attention concerns regarding the nature of these devices. Because they test ambient air for alcohol molecules, they are subject to numerous environmental factors. These devices are unlike ASDs in that ASDs require a deep-lung air sample. They are also administered away from others and from traffic and in a police vehicle, where environmental conditions are understood and controlled. For example, the dissemination of alcohol molecules through different sizes of cars will be different. The use of a passive device would necessarily introduce elements beyond the control of law enforcement.

There are other environmental factors that could result in an incorrect response from a passive device. Open alcohol in the vicinity or an intoxicated passenger could alter results. We also discovered that methanol in windshield wiper fluid could contribute to a positive result. The recent use of mouthwash could result in a false positive; whereas, a person chewing gum, which increases salivation and diminishes mouth alcohol, could result in a false negative. In our study of Bill C-247, it was unclear whether a response on a passive device indicating no alcohol was present would render the officer unable to investigate further.

Another consideration which is especially relevant here in Canada is that the weather could affect the results of a passive detection device. It has been noted that these devices are less effective in windy conditions. Dr. Mayers also indicated that he would recommend devices that use fuel cell technology as a mechanism for detecting alcohol. We learned, however, that fuel cells can be affected by cold weather and can cause a false negative. Here in Canada we experience extremes in weather conditions and these vary dramatically from coast to coast to coast. The development of region-specific recommendations for calibration, training, and operational procedures would be onerous, to say the least, for the volunteer-led alcohol test committee.

Routine Proceedings

● (1925)

Our committee also questioned the invasiveness of the passive devices. There are many versions of these devices on the market, and while some recommend a distance of six inches between the device and the driver, some recommend as few as two inches. The close proximity between the device and a driver could be seen as quite invasive and consequently negates the subtleness intended in the administration of such a device.

These are all potential intervening factors that arose during the study of Bill C-247, and left us questioning the effectiveness of passive detection devices. We learned that for the alcohol test committee to test new products against the ATC's published standards, to account for all the factors discussed previously, and to develop region-specific recommendations for calibration, training, and operational procedure would be substantial. Even if the committee were provided additional resources, it would still be a lengthy process, and the alcohol test committee would likely need to hire and consult numerous engineers throughout the process.

We also need to consider the capacity for human error in the administration of these devices. Dr. Daryl Mayers said the following before committee:

My experience with police officers, and I mean no disrespect, is that if you give officers a tool with all kinds of caveats attached to it—you have to do it this way, that way, make sure the wind isn't blowing, have your back to the wind, make sure you don't have the window open, check the car for spills—and you expect the officer to do [it] in a very rapid time frame, the more likely it is that one step or two steps will be missed, and that is a very serious thing once we come to litigate that case.

Dr. Mayers also brought to the attention of the committee the possibility of litigation arising from a false positive. The burden of lengthy and complicated litigation cannot be underscored.

I believe this legislation was introduced in an effort to provide law enforcement with additional tools to get more drunk drivers off the road. However, I fear that because of numerous factors that could affect the device, it would actually complicate matters for law enforcement and litigators. I think it is possible, if not likely, that adding this layer could result in even trickier litigation, and potentially result in less drunk driving convictions. I also think a false negative, whether caused by the wind or a stick of gum, could allow for the potential of an impaired person to avoid detection.

In addition, we heard from a Department of Justice official who confirmed that the present threshold for use of an approved screening device is very low. The threshold is simply suspicion of alcohol in a driver's body. That is the way we do things today. That suspicion could be arrived at through things like alcohol odour, glassy eyes, fumbling with documentation, and the like.

It was also confirmed that nothing presently prohibits an officer from using a passive alcohol sensor. In fact, the RCMP is already in possession of such a device. We never heard whether or not RCMP officers use the device regularly, but we know nothing prevents them from doing so.

I believe that as parliamentarians we need to do whatever we can as legislators to protect Canadians from impaired drivers. However, after the study of Bill C-247, I consider the costs and potential litigation complexity to outweigh the potential benefits. In fact, I think there is reason enough to believe that this bill could work

against its very objectives. For these reasons, I suggest that the House not proceed further with this bill.

● (1930)

Mr. Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join in this debate on the justice committee's recommendation to the House. I do so as the second vice-chair of that committee. Before I start, I would like to commend the hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville because I believe his intent behind the bill was very noble.

Bill C-247 was designed to allow police officers to use passive ambient air alcohol detection devices to basically detect alcohol in the air near a driver's mouth during roadside sobriety checks. The detection of alcohol by the sensor would then provide officers with reasonable grounds to suspect that the driver had consumed alcohol and allow them to then request a Breathalyzer test to check for impairment.

I was not on the committee when it was deliberating on the bill. There were two committee meetings on October 18 and October 20, and I was preceded by the hon. member for Victoria who was then a member of that committee. The bill was referred to committee on September 28, before those two meetings.

We fundamentally believe that we need to support effective measures against impaired driving, because each and every year we lose far too many lives in Canada, and indeed, as has been mentioned many times in this place, it is the leading cause of criminal death in Canada. The proposed devices in the bill would have several benefits if they were to show that they could work as effectively as the claims say.

The committee has made a recommendation to the House of Commons, and while the committee felt that the intent behind Bill C-247 was commendable, the committee concluded that based on the evidence gathered during its study, the costs of introducing such devices and the time and resources required for developing the appropriate testing mechanisms outweighed the potential benefits. We feel strongly that the government needs to consider taking this on with the resources of the Department of Justice and introducing legislation on this topic at the earliest opportunity.

We had a chance to talk to stakeholders. Law enforcement has suggested that, if this device were effective, it could be a potentially useful addition to the tool kit, but it is certainly not the one that is most urgently needed. Even Mothers Against Drunk Driving Canada, which was supportive of the use of effective devices, wanted Parliament to make sure that we did not displace the more pressing questions of how to effectively deter impaired drivers and detect drug impairment.

Routine Proceedings

During the witness testimony before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, some of the witnesses clarified the issues that these detection devices have. Of particular note, it was the chair for the Alcohol Test Committee who stated that the bill asks us to enact legislation using approved passive detection devices. If we enact the bill now, it requires the Alcohol Test Committee to develop standards and procedures for the evaluations.

We would have to perform evaluations on the new equipment proposed as passive devices, and we would have to develop operational recommendations. We would need best practices relating to the maintenance and use of these devices, and this means that the scientific aspect of the approval process would be extremely costly in both time and resources. The potential influx of numerous new devices seeking approval as passive detection devices would stretch its current resources past the breaking point. Even after this approval process was finally finished, there would still need to be recommendations from individual forensic laboratories to create region-specific recommendations for calibration, training, and operational procedures.

Even the introduction of a newly approved instrument can be challenging in and for our courts. The introduction of a novel type of testing with completely unfamiliar devices would undoubtedly be the subject of lengthy litigation involving scientific staff from all the forensic laboratories across the country.

We know from questions that have been raised in the House and from media reports and indeed from across the country that the court system is already quite burdened and quite strained.

● (1935)

There are already serious criminal charges that are either being stayed or withdrawn in the wake of the Jordan decision, which has fundamentally altered the legal landscape. It is something that I hope the federal government and our provincial governments finally take note of and put in the resources that we need in the system.

We want to stop impaired driving, but we do not want to do it at the expense of clogging the very judicial system that is meant to operate efficiently to make sure we are actually delivering justice for those who do harm. If we are going to burden the justice system with even more litigation against devices, that is not going to solve the main problem. Defence lawyers would probably have a field day challenging these devices because of their reliability.

We look at the climate issues, because that was one of the main things that was brought forward in witness testimony. Canada is a country that is affected by cold temperatures and humidity in the winter. Unfortunately, I live in a section of the country that is certainly affected by the humidity, Vancouver Island. It is not known just as the west coast, but indeed the wet coast.

The testimony indicated that the devices may not be appropriate for our climate. We can go to the testimony of Dr. Daryl Mayers, the chair of the Alcohol Test Committee, who laid it out completely for all of us. If the weather is windy, excessively damp, or even below 8° Celsius, the reliability of these passive detection devices is brought into question. The Winnipeg police department did a test in the early 2000s that found that these devices did not work very effectively in the winter. Devices whose function is inhibited in either cold weather

or by excessive amounts of precipitation in the air are simply too problematic for us to go forward, and we certainly need a lot more study to make sure these devices can actually do what they are supposed to do.

In light of these findings, I do agree with the committee's report that we need a comprehensive solution to this problem and that the government should consider introducing legislation on this topic at the earliest opportunity.

I would like to compliment the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, because I believe his intent was noble. He really does want to do the right thing, but we had a unanimously backed recommendation that we not proceed with this bill. There are Liberals, Conservatives, and our NDP member on committee. We listened to the evidence, and I agree with that report. I hope all hon. members will pay attention to the hard work that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights did.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to rise and speak to the motion concerning Bill C-247, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding passive detection devices. The motion proposes to accept the recent report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that Bill C-247 not proceed further. Although I applaud and agree with the intent of Bill C-247, I want to advise the House that I intend to vote in support of the motion.

In particular, I agree with the concerns expressed by the standing committee that the bill may not achieve its intended effect, and I will not go over the very comprehensive explanation provided by my colleagues on the opposite side of the House. I also want to advise the House that the standing committee, as part of its report, recommended that the government ensure that there be a comprehensive solution to the issues under consideration and that the government should therefore consider introducing legislation to provide for that comprehensive response to the issue of impaired driving. I share this view.

Our government is best placed to consider all of the challenges with the legal framework surrounding the investigation of impaired driving. That is why the Minister of Justice intends to introduce new comprehensive legislation this spring, which will carefully address both drug- and alcohol-impaired driving. The new legislation will take a thorough and strategic approach, having regard to the minister's overall mandate with respect to criminal justice reform. In this way, our government is working to keep our communities safe, protect victims, and hold offenders to account. I very sincerely look forward to working with the members on the justice committee as we go forward with this important work. We all agree that we have a responsibility in the House to do everything possible to keep our communities safe and to protect our citizens.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the member for bringing this important issue forward. I would like to thank the standing committee for its thoughtful consideration of this bill. The members of the committee invested extensively of their time, attention, and expertise in considering the merits of the proposed bill, and I am grateful to them for their efforts.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the witnesses who appeared before the standing committee who shared their experience and expertise, and in particular those witnesses who spoke about their personal experience with the devastating impact of impaired driving. I want to thank them for their courage and their support.

• (1940)

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(2)(d), the proceedings on the bill shall come to an end.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in this adjournment proceeding. I had asked a question on February 24, 2017, regarding Reporters Without Borders and their 2015 World Press Freedom Index. At the time, it showed that, in fact, Canada had dropped from its eighth rank in 2015 to its 18th rank. It actually dropped 10 spots. Namibia, Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Slovakia were all ahead of us.

The questionnaire this was based on was 87 questions long. Quite a bit of qualitative and quantitative data had been collected in 20 different languages. The parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs gave me an answer that I would simply define as bafflegab or gobbledegook, something in that manner. It was a mash-up of buzzwords and talking points that would not be understandable in any sort of English, or a French translation, that would be acceptable to me.

One thing I would also mention is that the criteria, categories, and indicators for the questions talked about pluralism, media independence, environment of self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure. All six points were in this 87-question questionnaire I was bringing up in the House. I was seeking further clarification from the government on why, in fact, after a year in power, Canada had dropped to the 18th spot in terms of the World Press Freedom Index.

We have seen, over the past 18 months, many journalists complain about having been the victims or the targets of police investigations. I will switch to French here for a moment.

[Translation]

On November 2, 2016, journalist Marie-Maude Denis said on Twitter, “I’ve just learned that my incoming and outgoing calls have been spied on by the Sûreté du Québec in 2013.”

Alain Gravel said, “My turn to get a confirmation that I was targeted by court mandates to obtain a log of my calls by the SQ.”

Here is another quote from Isabelle Richer, who said, “Surreal ... The SQ spied on my cellphone following a formal complaint made by Michel Arsenault in 2013.”

These statements were posted on Twitter on November 2, 2016.

• (1945)

[English]

That was not the only case. There were several other journalists in Canada who had been found to have been investigated by a police service of some sort, including Marie-Maude Denis and Alain Gravel, as I mentioned; Isabelle Richer, who I mentioned; Éric Thibault, from the *Le Journal de Montréal*; Denis Lessard; and Gilles Toupin and Joël-Denis Bellavance, who are both Ottawa-based journalists working for *La Presse*.

I felt that my questions to the minister and the parliamentary secretary, who answered, were pretty reasonable. They were just laying out the case that we were finding it unusual that so many journalists had been the target of what would be considered limitations on their press freedom. As well, there was this international organization, a well-regarded international organization, which had been producing this particular index at least since 2002, when it started, an index that had been going on for 14 or 15 years and was well respected internationally and is one the government should be aware of. The parliamentary secretary was simply incapable of providing an answer to the question.

I will mention that when the previous Conservative government took power in 2006, it was indeed in 18th spot, and over time, we actually saw it bounce up and down just a little bit, but it was going in the right direction, which was towards more press freedom. In fact, in 2015, it had finished in the eighth spot.

Again, going back to the categories and indicators, pluralism, media independence, environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and infrastructure, Canada had been going in the right direction, which was towards more press freedom.

My question the parliamentary secretary, and it is a question I repeat today, is this. Why has Canada dropped 10 spots, and why are we behind countries like Costa Rica, when we should be moving ahead and up in the rankings?

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise on this issue and to do my very best to respond to the concerns and issues raised by my friend across the hall.

Adjournment Proceedings

First, I would like to emphasize for the House how important this issue is to our government and to all Canadians. As the member opposite surely knows, our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. One of its most important guarantees is the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press and other media expression.

Freedom of the press is a fundamental Canadian value protected by our charter. It is also recognized in some of the core international instruments which are binding upon Canada, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man.

Our government has and will defend this right assiduously, as well as the underlying values of truth seeking, democratic debate, and personal freedom. Our commitment to openness and transparency is informed by these values.

I would also like to mention that the core role of the media in promoting freedom of expression is not only recognized by our government and our charter, but it is recognized throughout all our federal laws and programs. A specific example of this can be found in our Criminal Code, where courts have recognized the core role of the media in the context of police search powers. In exercising their discretion whether to issue a search warrant, there is clear legal authority requiring justices to consider the fundamental nature of the freedom of the press. These considerations are a natural extension of the value Canadians place on this important freedom.

According to the Supreme Court of Canada, media play a vital role in the functioning of a democratic society, and freedom to publish the news necessarily involves a freedom to gather the news. Because the media advance the search for truth and make vital contributions to the democratic debate on matters of public importance, a free press is essential for promoting the core values contained in the charter.

Of course, I am not talking only about freedom of expression, but also numerous other rights, such as freedom of assembly, association, and of course our democratic rights as citizens.

As we are all aware, section 1 of the charter guarantees charter rights subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. Although reasonable limits of freedom of the press are justifiable under section 1, our courts will scrutinize any such limits carefully, in recognition of the crucial role played by the media in Canadian society.

Our government is aware of the most recent complaints that have been raised against the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal and the Sûreté du Québec with respect to journalists. We look forward to hearing details about these specific instances during the hearings and from the report that will be issued by the Chamberland commission, when its important work begins this week.

At the same time, I want to be perfectly clear for the member opposite and for the House that both the RCMP commissioner and the CSIS director have publicly confirmed that such practices are not taking place at the federal level.

We are reviewing the safeguards that exist federally to ensure they are appropriate and sufficient to protect the fundamental Canadian value of freedom of the press.

● (1950)

Mr. Tom Kmiec: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary did a much better job of trying to address the question but again failed to answer the question of why Canada had dropped 10 spots on the index. I fear the hon. gentleman on the other side, who has honourably served our country as a Toronto police officer for many years, has been hanging out with too many lawyers. I recently read an excellent biography written about him. We have had many conversations about judicial issues. However, with all due respect to the lawyers in the House, they are prone to bouts of legalisms and splitting of hairs.

My question is very simple. There is a Yiddish proverb that I want to bring up: "Truth is a slowpoke." These complaints started in November. This index was put out in 2017. My question was in late February. Here we are in April, and I am still searching for an answer on why Canada dropped 10 spots on the index. It is not about our Charter of Rights. It is not about specific cases. It is a consistent, chronic problem. There is no other reason we would drop 10 spots on the 2015 World Press Freedom Index of Reporters Without Borders. Why did we drop those 10 spots?

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I am not aware of all the issues examined or the events that were under consideration by those who compiled the index. However, it is reasonably safe to conclude that most recent events, in particular the allegations concerning the activities of two major police services in Canada in their actions and dealings with journalists, may have had an impact on that index. As the member opposite has already acknowledged, it can go up and down in response to recent events. I would be reluctant to speculate, frankly, without further information on why that might happen.

I reiterate for the member and for this House that freedom of the press is essential to the preservation of an open and democratic society. I believe Canada has an outstanding record of resolutely supporting the right of journalists to pursue and share information.

As the member is well aware, there are rare occasions when we place reasonable limits on freedom of the press, particularly where public safety may be at risk. Nonetheless, I am very proud to reiterate our government's commitment to the values of protecting the safety and security of Canadians while respecting our rights and freedoms under the charter.

I hope that is a satisfactory response to the member's inquiry.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND PROCUREMENT

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to address a question I originally asked on November 30, 2016, about the decision by the Liberals to unilaterally change the number of fighter jets that the military needs and the decision to sole source the Super Hornet. The question was who wrote those statements of requirement, the air force or the PMO.

Adjournment Proceedings

As we know, through this whole discussion, the requests and desires of the Royal Canadian Air Force have been completely ignored by the government. The Liberals announced on March 14 that they finally wrote the letter to the U.S. government for the decision to go ahead to sole source 18 Super Hornets. It took them five months just to write one letter. What the Conservatives have been calling on the government to do is actually hold an open and transparent competition so that we can get the best equipment at the best price for the brave men and women who serve us in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

I just want to point out that other allied countries have done full competitions in very short periods of time. The Liberals have punted the decision down the road to make a decision on what plane we are going to buy in a competition five years from now. That is unacceptable. They took five months just to write a letter to the Trump administration on getting permission to buy the Super Hornets.

Denmark ran a fair and open competition in just 11 months, Norway ran a fair and open competition in one year and 11 months, and South Korea ran a fair and open competition in one year and four months. Why are the Liberals wasting five years to hold a competition on the replacement of our CF-18s when the previous government and the Liberal government have already done all the surveys and all the analysis on all the planes that are out there? The statements of requirement can be written today, and the plane could be selected in a relatively short period of time.

If one talks to defence experts like Alan Williams and former commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force, they all say that this decision can be made in a year and that we can get the best value and the best plane for our troops and taxpayers, while making sure we protect Canadian jobs.

As people know, the joint strike fighter program, the F-35, already employs hundreds of Canadians across this country in more than 100 companies that are already making pieces for the F-35, which is in full production and operation around the world.

We have to remember that, when the minister and the government talk about a capability gap, it is a manufactured capability gap. It is one that they fabricated on their own, and it has no reality or basis in logic at all. The Royal Canadian Air Force has always said that we have enough planes to do the job it is called upon to do, whether it is NORAD or NATO.

We also know that research done by Defence Research and Development Canada back in 2014, a public document that the Liberals will have classified and taken off the website, showed that we have enough fighter jets currently to do the job. There is no capability gap. That report also showed that running a mixed fleet of two or three different types of fighter aircraft is too expensive and too cumbersome for infrastructure training and operations here in Canada through our rather smaller fighting aircraft in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

It is not in the best interests of Canada, the industry, or taxpayers if the Liberals proceed with the sole source and not move immediately to an open, fair, and transparent competition.

● (1955)

Mr. Steven MacKinnon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Services and Procurement, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his advocacy, which I share, for our men and women in uniform. I appreciate his often thoughtful interventions on the issues of the day. That said, as the great Dave Mason once said, "There ain't no good guys. There ain't no bad guys. There's only you and me and we just disagree."

The decision by the government to proceed with an interim fighter solution indeed addresses what we think is a pretty clear capability gap. In fact, it is a capability gap that was the legacy of the government which we took over from, a government which, during its entire tenure in office, failed to be resolute, failed to proceed, and failed to make a decision on the future of Canada's fighter jets. The Conservatives wasted precious years, mismanaged, and often, regrettably, highly politicized processes that resulted in failed procurements and suffered from an unfortunate lack of transparency.

Let us not forget the overall goal at the heart of this issue. It is to ensure that our men and women in uniform have the equipment they need to do their jobs. That is what animates this government. It is what animates the military advisers to the Minister of National Defence. It is what animates the Prime Minister and the government, and it is what will continue to animate us, whether it is air force purchases or military purchases generally. Those who serve our country are often in harm's way and our government is not prepared to take unnecessary risks with their safety.

Our government is actually dealing with the reality of Canada's aging fleet of CF-18 fighter aircraft.

[*Translation*]

We have consulted widely to assess risks and analyze procurement options. We have made decisions, and we now are proceeding with a plan that addresses the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces in both the short and long term.

As part of our plan, the government will conduct an open and transparent competition to replace the fleet of fighter aircraft. This will be an open and transparent process, overseen by a fairness monitor, that will ensure that we get the right aircraft at the right price, with maximum economic benefits for Canadians.

● (2000)

[*English*]

We will not cut corners on this process. The process requires extensive planning and stakeholder engagement to successfully design and implement. We will take the time needed to consult, develop requirements, and assess solutions in order to get the aircraft and in-service support that meet Canada's defence needs and provide best value to Canadians.

Adjournment Proceedings

The CF-18s were purchased in the 1980s and the fleet is down from 138 aircraft to 76 today. We are no longer able to meet our international commitments with certainty. Therefore, we have undertaken discussions with the U.S. government and Boeing about the potential acquisition of 18 new Super Hornets. These discussions are aimed at determining if an interim solution can be provided at a cost, time, level of capability, and economic value that are acceptable to Canada.

Last month Canada submitted a letter of request to the U.S. government as part of this process. The letter outlines Canada's requirements for the interim aircraft and associated in-service support. No offer, we can assure Canadians, will be accepted unless it meets Canada's requirements at a cost, schedule, and level of capability acceptable to Canada.

We believe we have come up with a good solution and we are very confident in what we are putting before Canadians. We are confident that, in perusing magazines like *Skies*, the Super Hornet is the right choice for right now according to experts. We know that this decision is being supported within and outside the government.

Mr. James Bezan: First, Mr. Speaker, I have to address the member's comment that this is a disagreement between just him and me. I must say that there are 13 former commanders of the Royal Canadian Air Force who have written that this is a decision that will ultimately damage the nation's defence posture. Nobody is more passionate about the air force than these retired generals. This again reflects on how politically naive the Prime Minister was by making this very dangerous campaign promise of buying anything but the F-35.

The Liberals say they are going to move to an open competition, but it is five years down the road. We know that the current CF-18 fleet can only fly until 2025, and they are not going to replace those planes until 2030 to 2035. The first planes will probably not arrive until 2032 after we get this interim buy of Super Hornets. They also think that they are going to save taxpayers money, and they are not. They already have had to admit that.

In their campaign, the Liberals promised that the F-18 Super Hornets would only cost \$65 million per jet. I would tell the member that Kuwait is the last country that bought Super Hornets, 40 of them, and Kuwait paid over \$335 million per fighter jet. That is not a savings on anyone's books.

If we went to an open and transparent competition today, we would get the best plane at the best price in the best interest of Canadian defence.

Mr. Steven MacKinnon: Mr. Speaker, I see we are getting nowhere with respect to resolving our disagreement but, again, I thank the member for his intervention.

At the end of the day, this is about getting the right equipment, at the right time, with the right capability, for our men and women, those men and women who protect us in doing their jobs every day. However, we also want to maximize economic benefits to Canadians. We have taken active steps to ensure that Canada can meet its international commitments in the short and the long term.

[*Translation*]

I would like to reiterate that the government is committed to conducting an open and transparent competition to replace Canada's fighter fleet, but we are also going to go forward with this interim solution. The member opposite seems to recognize that, yes, our fighters will come to the end of their useful life, even though we are doing our best to extend it. There is a need for an interim solution. We are going to fill that need and then, obviously, we are going to launch the open and transparent process that we promised Canadians.

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to follow up on a question I asked the Minister of National Revenue about the Auditor General of Canada's report, which shed some light on some troubling aspects of management within the Canada Revenue Agency. This information is extremely troubling and I would like to go over some of the figures with the parliamentary secretary to see whether they are still accurate.

At the time, there were at the CRA 171,000 files related to objections to notices of assessment. Average taxpayers submit their income tax returns. It is timely that we are discussing this right now, because this is the time of year that we submit our tax returns to the CRA. The agency assesses the information and data in the return as it is submitted, and then it sometimes sends a notice of assessment to indicate that the return contained some errors and the taxpayer owes the CRA more money than originally thought.

In this situation, the taxpayer has the right to object to the Canada Revenue Agency's position and to state that the report was completely reliable, that it included all the necessary information, and that the information was correct. If the CRA maintains the opposite, the taxpayer can initiate a process that can be very lengthy, and that is what the Office of the Auditor General revealed. In fact, cases of objections can sometimes go on for more than two years before the CRA responds. The taxpayer submits his or her tax return, the CRA responds that it is not quite accurate and that the taxpayer owes one amount instead of another. At that point, the taxpayer can file an objection. It can take the CRA up to two years in some cases to provide more specific information about an existing dispute.

The Auditor General, who raised this issue a few years ago, had to raise it again in 2016 because there were still major problems with Canada Revenue Agency delays in responding to notices of objection. Processing takes four times longer than in other countries similar to Canada. It takes four times longer for people to get responses to their objections than in other countries. In Canada, it can take as long as two and a half years to get a response.

When I raised this matter, the Minister told me that "an action plan to reduce processing times for objections is already being drawn up." She even added, "It will be completed in early 2017." It is now April 4, 2017, so there is no better time to ask the question. Considering that it is already April, what is the status of the action plan that the Minister of National Revenue promised to complete in early 2017?

Adjournment Proceedings

I would like more information about this action plan that we are all, including the Auditor General, waiting for. The Auditor General made eight recommendations, and the minister said that she supported and welcomed them all. Where is the action plan that was to be delivered in early 2017? It is now April 2017.

● (2005)

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khara (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak about the diligent work that our government is undertaking to improve the way income tax objections are managed and processed.

As the hon. member opposite is aware, in November 2016 the Auditor General examined how efficiently the Canada Revenue Agency processes income tax objections. The CRA agrees with the eight recommendations and has developed an action plan to address each of them. The work is already under way to improve service to Canadians.

Canadians must have access to the highest level of quality service when they engage with the CRA. This is at the heart of the minister's mandate letter, which was developed after listening to Canadians. I am wholeheartedly committed to making every effort to reach this level of service.

Canadians want a government that delivers on its commitments, which is why the CRA is working to make real change happen. The CRA is using funding from budget 2016 to start improving its services by increasing its capacity to efficiently resolve taxpayer objections.

Every year the CRA carries out millions of actions related to individual and business tax returns. Of the 66 million transactions with taxpayers in 2014-15, only 0.1% resulted in an objection.

The CRA has already taken concrete steps to strengthen the way it manages tax objections. It has identified areas of delay and conducted a full review of the objection process. Since January, the CRA has started to implement changes to its processes to reduce lengthy processing times. As such, it is looking to other comparable organizations to leverage best practices, and it continues to transform its operations.

Our government has made a firm commitment to supporting Canadian taxpayers by providing complete, timely, and accurate information. This is a priority for our government, which continuously strives to uphold the Taxpayer Bill of Rights.

The CRA's current way of measuring processing time is based on the complexity of an objection. In November 2016, we published descriptions of the different levels of complexity on our website. In April of this year, just a few weeks ago, we added updates to include actual and expected times for processing objections, as well as our new service standard for assigning and resolving low-complexity objections.

The CRA will strive to respond to taxpayers on low-complexity objections within 180 days 80% of the time. These represent 60% of all objections. Better service for Canadians means service delivered in a way that makes taxpayers feel respected and valued.

In line with the CRA's guiding value of collaboration, we will also ensure that decisions on objections and appeals are shared internally with all assessing and audit areas. This will be done through an enhanced and formalized feedback process. By sharing explanations on why decisions are made, employees will be able to learn from these changes, and processes will be revised where required.

The Auditor General has spoken, and the CRA is taking action. By working to resolve income tax objections in a timely manner, the CRA will give Canadians the certainty they need about their tax affairs to make informed decisions for themselves and their family. We recognize the importance of resolving income tax objections in a timely manner and we will build on the progress that the CRA has made to continue providing helpful, client-focused service to all Canadians.

● (2010)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I am extremely disappointed with the answer that I received this evening.

The government is just looking into what is being done in other countries with regard to the time frame for processing income tax objections when the minister promised that the job would be done by early 2017. It is very surprising to hear my colleague say today that she intends to resolve low-complexity objections in 180 days or less, while talking about efficiency and effectiveness.

I do not think that the average taxpayer who sends something in to the Canada Revenue Agency would agree that waiting 180 days to get an answer is acceptable, effective, or efficient. What is more, the government is admitting that it believes that this time frame is acceptable. In my opinion, it is not acceptable for taxpayers to have to wait 180 days before getting an answer from the Canada Revenue Agency.

I would like my colleague to provide a detailed explanation of what actions have been taken to date since the minister promised to get the job done and improve the time frame for the processing of income tax objections. What has been accomplished to date? I do not want her to tell me about what is in the works or being planned for the coming months. The minister promised to get the job done. When will the job actually be done?

[English]

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, the agency is dedicated to providing Canadians with excellent service in every interaction they have with the CRA, including the resolution of an objection.

Our government is committed to providing real results to Canadians, which is why the CRA is starting to implement improvements to the program. Through improved processes and early communication with taxpayers, appeals officers will be able to efficiently process income tax objections in a timely manner.

Adjournment Proceedings

CRA regularly reviews the way it does business to ensure that excellent service continues to be provided to Canadians. Ongoing improvements to the objection process are just one of the ways the CRA is delivering on its commitment to improved client service.

We understand more needs to be done and we are committed to doing that for all Canadians.

● (2015)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 8:15 p.m.)

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