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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

—

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, November 7, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayer

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[Translation]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (B), 2017-18

The Speaker: Pursuant to subsection 79.2(2) of the Parliament of Canada Act, it is my duty to present to the House a report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer entitled “Supplementary Estimates (B) 2017-18”.

* * *

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

Hon. Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-65, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (harassment and violence), the Parliamentary Employment and Staff Relations Act and the Budget Implementation Act, 2017, No. 1.

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

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 44th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. The Committee advises that, pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the Subcommittee on Private Members’ Business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence on Monday, October 23, 2017, and recommended that the items listed herein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

PETITIONS

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions, similar in nature but different, all of which point out that nuclear weapons continue to proliferate in the world.

The petitioners point out that more than 20,000 nuclear weapons are in the world. They also point out that Canada is party to the non-proliferation treaty.

The first petition asks that the Government of Canada call for an urgent review of NATO's nuclear weapons policies to ensure that all NATO states fulfill their obligations to negotiate and conclude an agreement for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The second petition asks that the Government of Canada comply more fully with its international treaty obligations by playing a proactive role in achieving a nuclear weapons-free world and that the government convene an international conference to commence negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention to ban all nuclear weapons.

The third petition asks the Government of Canada to establish a department of peace that will reinvigorate Canada's role as a global peace-builder and that will have the abolition of nuclear weapons as a top priority.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present two petitions today.

The first is a petition from an association called Families For Justice. It is a group of Canadians who have lost a loved one killed by an impaired driver.

The petitioners believe Canada's impaired driving laws are much too lenient. They want the crime called what it is, “vehicular homicide”. They highlight that the number one cause of criminal death in Canada is impaired driving causing death, vehicular homicide.

The petitioners call on the Prime Minister to keep his promise to support legislation that would have mandatory minimum sentences, and they oppose Bill C-46.

Points of Order

●(1010)

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition highlights the fact that gender-based violence against girls begins before they are born through the use of sex selection. Ninety-two percent of Canadians call for this to be made illegal.

The petitioners call on Parliament to condemn the practice of sex selection discrimination against girls.

[*Translation*]

WATER QUALITY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here is another petition about blue-green algae signed by people from Lake Champlain. There are times in the summer when the petitioners cannot drink the lake water. This is a serious problem. I think this is the 12th petition I have presented on the subject.

However, there is some good news. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is responsible for the Boundary Waters Treaty and whom we have asked to take action on this issue, has indeed taken action. I congratulate her. She has responded, and the International Joint Commission will address the issue of water quality in Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog.

The Speaker: I must remind the member that he is not to engage in debate when presenting a petition. He must just present his petition. This is not time for debating or editorializing.

The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

WILD SALMON

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today to present two petitions.

The first one is from all the residents of my riding, Saanich—Gulf Islands, who are calling on the government to take action to implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry headed by Mr. Justice Bruce Cohen on wild salmon.

[*English*]

To protect the wild salmon, the petitioners ask that the 75 recommendations of Mr. Justice Cohen be implemented.

SECURITY CERTIFICATES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with an issue that affects human rights, the question of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and whether we can justify these in security certificates.

The petitioners ask that certificates currently in place be removed and that the people who have been helped by security certificates not be deported.

* * *

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.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING ORDER 69.1—BILL C-63

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to follow up on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Carleton last Friday.

[*English*]

Because this is the very important provisions of the new Standing Order 69.1, it is imperative to stand and add to what the member for Carleton said last Friday. In this corner of the House, we believe that Bill C-63 is an omnibus bill as defined under the new Standing Order 69.1.

Unlike the member, we have been and remain concerned that omnibus bills continue in this place and their use boxes members of Parliament into positions where it becomes increasingly difficult to represent our constituents on various matters that various governments have lumped together.

Standing Order 69.1, which was passed in the House in June, states the following:

In the case where a government bill seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked, the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill. The Speaker shall have the power to combine clauses of the bill thematically and to put the aforementioned questions on each of these groups of clauses separately, provided that there will be a single debate at each stage.

Standing Order 69.1 allows members of Parliament to represent their constituents on various specific issues and it grants the Speaker the power to group parts of legislation to allow for voting on separate items and protects all parliamentarians from the Hobbesian choice of having to choose how to vote on multiple questions, which can be contradictory.

The Standing Orders also allow for exceptions and allow for grouping in the second part of that Standing Order, which states under clause 2:

The present Standing Order shall not apply if the bill has as its main purpose the implementation of a budget and contains only provisions that were announced in the budget presentation or in the documents tabled during the budget presentation.

●(1015)

[*Translation*]

With respect to Bill C-63, the wording of that particular Standing Order states very clearly, I think, that a factual determination can be made. Do all of the initiatives presented in Bill C-63 also appear in the budget that was presented in March of this year?

If all of the initiatives “were announced in the budget presentation or in the documents tabled during the budget presentation” then the bill should not qualify for separate votes, pursuant to Standing Order 69.1.

Points of Order

If it is truly a budget bill, the Speaker should not “combine clauses of the bill thematically and...put the aforementioned questions on each of these groups of clauses separately” as called for by Standing Order 69.1.

[*English*]

I submit today that if Bill C-63 contains any initiative that was not included in the March budget, then the whole bill cannot be exempted under Standing Order 69.1(2), because the exemptions described in the Standing Order say that all measures must have been in the budget. I also submit that there are sections in Bill C-63 that were not in the March 2017 budget.

We found a couple more examples that the member for Carleton did not mention in his intervention last Friday.

According to the summary of Bill C-63, after the section that summarizes the changes to the Income Tax Act, the summary goes into a second list, saying, “implements other income tax measures by”, and then lists a number of measures, including, “(c) ensuring that qualifying farmers and fishers selling to agricultural and fisheries cooperatives are eligible for the small business deduction.” There is no mention in the budget speech or in the budget documents of such a plan. This, we assert, was not part of the March 2017 budget.

In the March budget, there were sections that allowed for insurance deductibility for farmers and fishers, but nothing that would change the small business deduction.

As well, the same section in Bill C-63 goes on to say, “Part 3 amends the Excise Act to ensure that beer made from concentrate on the premises where it is consumed is taxed in a manner that is consistent with other beer products.” This is reflected in part 3 of the bill, which introduces amendments to section 165 of the Excise Tax Act to change how tax on mostly homemade beer is calculated.

[*Translation*]

In the documents that accompanied the budget, only one section mentioned alcohol products, and that was to talk about potential changes to implement interprovincial agreements.

[*English*]

In the supplementary tax measures documents, there are changes to the tax on alcohol, but nothing specific to beer from concentrate.

While the government certainly has the right to ask for an increase to taxes on beer from concentrate, it did not do so in the last budget, and therefore this bill is not a true budget bill.

[*Translation*]

Given that those two measures appear in Bill C-63, but are not mentioned in either budget 2017 or in any of the additional documentation such as budget planning or supplementary information on tax measures, I believe that Bill C-63 should be treated in its entirety as an omnibus bill as defined in Standing Order 69.1.

[*English*]

Remember, the Standing Order says clearly that the exemptions are only available for legislation that has as a “main purpose the

implementation of a budget and contains only provisions that were announced in the budget presentation or in the documents.”

By throwing in elements that were not in the March budget, I submit the bill should be treated as an omnibus bill.

• (1020)

Mr. Tom Kmiec (Calgary Shepard, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to comment on the point of order raised last week by the hon. member for Carleton under Standing Order 69.1 to divide Bill C-63, the budget implementation bill, 2017, no. 2, so as to allow a separate vote on clause 176 and the bill's schedule concerning the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. I apologize in advance for a somewhat lengthy submission, but since we do not have precedents yet to guide us, there is still much ground to be covered.

To save some time, I am going to simply refer the Chair to the original point of order, as well as to the point of order raised by the official opposition House leader concerning Bill C-56 on October 31. Truth be told, I am not making extensive arguments because I am looking to somehow delay the business of the day, but because of what happened during the amendments made back in June and in the spring to the Standing Orders, when they were rushed through. There are many details left unaddressed, which need to be sorted out. Let that be the lesson of what happens when a government obsessed with doing things hastily rams through the House of Commons a platitude dressed up in legal language.

Now to the point of order, I believe that the hon. member for Carleton ably argued how Bill C-63 goes beyond the exemptions written in budget implementation bills. My argument goes to why, having established that the exemption does not apply, items that had some passing reference in the budget can be divided from the other budgetary provisions in the budget implementation bill. As the Chair undoubtedly is aware, the Quebec national assembly has a procedure to allow consideration of motions to order the division of a bill where there are different principles within that bill. Its jurisprudence could be helpful to us in this case.

Pages 399 and 400 of *Parliamentary Procedure in Québec* explain the process when a motion to divide a bill has been offered. It states:

The Chair rules on the admissibility of the motion, after examining the bill to determine whether it contains more than one principle.... criteria establishing whether or not a bill contains more than one principle have evolved out of jurisprudence. First, if the different parts of the bill constitute a fraction of a larger whole or principle, then the bill is not considered to contain more than one principle. Second, a distinction must be made between the essence and the mechanics or procedures of a bill. A principle is an essential element of a bill, whereas the mechanics are simply incidental to that principle. It should not be concluded that a bill contains more than one principle just because it comprises various procedures. Similarly, it should not be concluded that the principles that would result from a division are mere mechanics just because they can be grouped under a single theme.

Points of Order

The Chair can also consider other elements. For instance, although the explanatory notes have no legal value in identifying the principles of a bill, they may nevertheless indicate the existence of more than one principle. In one ruling, the Chair found that appending the text of an entire bill to another bill spoke volumes, and pointed out the difficulties of application created by this type of drafting. However, compliance with legislative drafting rules does not ensure that a bill contains only one principle.

The principle or principles contained in a bill must not be confused with the field it concerns. To frame the concept of principle in that way would prevent the division of most bills, because they each apply to a specific field. Furthermore, when determining the principle or principles of a bill, the Chair need not consider the importance given to certain parts of the bill, nor evaluate whether one part of the bill is incidental to another. The Chair should not seek to clarify the legislator's intention, but should simply read the text, without trying to interpret it. That being said, the Chair must necessarily analyze the provisions of the bill to determine whether they contain one or more principles. However, this must be done on the basis of the text itself and not by seeking to determine all the possible consequences of applying the bill once it has been adopted.

I have one more, shorter, quote from page 401 that adds:

The following conditions have also been established by parliamentary jurisprudence: each part of the divided bill must be able to stand on its own; each part of the divided bill must be more than a mere procedure; each bill resulting from the division must be a coherent whole, independent from the rest.... Parliamentary jurisprudence has established that, in a motion to divide, the sections of a bill cannot be rewritten in order to render the motion admissible, with the exception of the section relating to the coming into force of the bill. It is nonetheless possible to cut some words from a section provided that they are transposed integrally into the other bill.

Let me turn to the specific case of Bill C-63. Before we hear some more rebuttal on this, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the remaining provisions of Bill C-63 are all budgetary in nature. They are all economic in their effect.

• (1025)

Let me refer to the words on page 400 of *Parliamentary Procedure in Québec*. It is a shorter quote, which states:

The principle or principles contained in a bill must not be confused with the field it concerns. To frame the concept of principle in that way, would prevent the division of most bills, because they apply to a specific field.

—as I said.

In this case, we are talking about what might be claimed to be budgetary or economic policy.

The ruling of former Quebec national assembly vice-president Fatima Houda-Pepin on December 11, 2007, at page 2,513 of the *Journal des débats* makes the following point:

[*Translation*]

In this case, the bill contains more than one principle. Although the bill deals with road safety, the Chair cannot consider that to be the principle of Bill 42. The principle or principles of a bill should not be confused with the topic to which it pertains. Coming up with a different concept of the notion of principle would disqualify most bills from being subject to a division motion because they deal with a specific topic. In this case, the various means of ensuring road safety included in this bill could constitute distinct principles.

[*English*]

Indeed, I anticipate the Liberals may say that every piece of Bill C-63 is critical and integral to the entire legislative package and, if separated, would doom the whole initiative. To that, I offer the ruling of another former Quebec national assembly vice-president, Claude Pinard, on June 3, 1998, at page 11,651 of the *Journal des débats*:

[*Translation*]

In this case, this was rather an instructive exercise used to demonstrate that the principles of a bill do not necessarily coincide with its author's intentions. In other words, the Chair, when identifying the principles of a bill, does not have to wonder about whether certain parts of the bill are more important to the author than others, or whether the author considered one part of the bill incidental to another. To do otherwise would render Standing Order 241 inapplicable, and no other bill could be divided, since it would be very surprising that the author of a bill did not consider every part of his or her bill to be absolutely essential.

[*English*]

Next, I will turn to the practical considerations that must flow from a decision under Standing Order 69.1 to divide a bill. At second reading—and third reading, for that matter—Standing Order 69.1(1) is clear that there is to be a “single debate” at each stage. However, it does not give direction on the formulation of the question or questions to be proposed by the Chair.

Moreover, a practical consideration, especially for those of us on this side of the House, is the matter of amendment at second and third reading. Are we to be limited to one amendment, must it relate to the entire bill, or perhaps it is to be limited to a single portion of the divided bill? The answers to these questions turn, obviously, on how the Chair approaches and proposes the main motion or motions at second or third reading. An analogous process in Australia might be of assistance here. In the Commonwealth Parliament, the approach to omnibus bills is essentially to have a series of separate, individual bills but to handle them *en bloc* in a process known as “cognate debate”.

Page 389 of *House of Representatives Practice*, sixth edition, explains:

When there are related bills before the House, it frequently suits the convenience of the House, by means of the cognate debate procedure, to have a general second reading debate on the bills as a group rather than a series of separate debates on the individual bills. A proposal for a cognate debate is usually put to the House by the Chair when the first bill of the group is called on. If there is no objection the debate on the second reading of the first bill is then permitted to cover the other related bills, and no debate (usually) occurs when the questions on the second reading of the subsequent bills are put. Apart from this, normal procedures apply—the bills are taken in turn with separate questions put as required at each stage of each bill. If a Member wishes to move a second reading amendment to a bill encompassed by a cognate debate, other than to the first bill, the amendment may only be moved when the relevant order of the day for the later bill is called on.

To that end, I encourage you to devise some approach to permit multiple amendments to be on the floor, or at least in the public domain somehow during second reading and third reading. Alternatively, a stricter adaptation of the Australian approach with amendments being permitted to be moved before the putting of the questions on each part of a divided bill could also be fashioned. However, this latter approach has shortcomings, such as the very limited time available for members to consider an amendment or how it would intersect with the implementation of time allocation orders.

Points of Order

•(1030)

As an aside, the intersection of Standing Order 69.1 and motions offered under Standing Order 73(1) to refer bills to committee before second reading needs to be sorted out. My reading of Standing Order 69.1 excludes the option of Standing Order 73(1), given the very specific references in Standing Order 69.1(1) to, “the motion for second reading and reference to a committee”.

After the second reading stages, of course, is the committee stage. While the mechanics of a committee study do not change, there is the matter of whether the multiple votes trigger separate orders of reference. Indeed, do all the parts of the bill go to a single committee or potentially to multiple committees? Certainly, the government contemplated this multiple-committee scenario. The government House leader’s infamous March discussion paper, which led to government Motion No. 18 and its new Standing Order 69.1, said “the divided bills could be sent to separate committees if the subject matter of the bills warranted such action.” The government’s legislative intention, so to speak, is clear here.

With respect to Bill C-63, I would argue that two separate orders of reference would be created through the action of dividing off the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank provisions. Once the committee stage has concluded, there is the report stage. Standing Order 69.1 is silent on this part of the legislative process. Coupled with this is the growing practice of placing all report stage motions into a single group for debate. At a minimum, I would urge the Chair, when using its discretionary authority under Standing Order 76.1(5) on the selection and grouping of report stage motions, to honour the spirit of these bill divisions to allow for the motions concerning each of the divided portions of a bill to constitute a separate group for debate at report stage.

Additionally, if the Chair permits multiple committee references, some parameters need to be established on how to proceed at subsequent stages. The most logical approach would be to treat the final report related to the bill as the conclusion of the committee stage and the trigger for the waiting period for report stage consideration.

The concerns at third reading are the same as those at second reading, so I will not repeat them.

Given the increasingly activist Senate, we also need to anticipate and prepare for it to amend these omnibus bills. Those situations will, rightfully, need to be approached on a case-by-case basis. However, the Chair should prepare for applications under the existing motion-splitting practices concerning government motions on Senate amendments.

Additionally, there is the matter of timing. My reading of Standing Order 69.1 does not reveal a deadline for seeking a division on a bill, practically speaking, other than the end of third reading debate. Obviously, a ruling cannot have retrospective application if it is made after second reading. I would be grateful if the Chair could also clarify this point in the ruling.

In closing, the government’s quest for modernizing the Standing Orders without collaborating with the opposition and without the benefit of expert input on the text of its amendments has really just

created a maze for members to navigate, and a mess I believe for you, Mr. Speaker, to disentangle.

I have done this before. I have a Yiddish proverb, as I always do, which reads “It is better to be embarrassed than heartbroken.” Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence that you will get to the bottom of this and find a way to embarrass as few members as there are here, instead of breaking some hearts.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary Shepard for his argument, and particularly for the proverb.

I see the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands rising on the same point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I will have an opportunity to address Bill C-63 in its substance very shortly in the speaking order in debate today, but I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in on the question of whether the bill is appropriately put before us. It is the first real test of Standing Order 69.1 on omnibus bills.

I made many attempts in points of order in the 41st Parliament to argue for the splitting of omnibus bills, for setting them aside. The Speaker at that point, currently the leader of the Conservative Party, ruled that was not for the Speaker to decide, and the House had to speak to the matter of whether a bill was properly an omnibus bill or not.

By way of background, there is nothing wrong with an omnibus bill. In tradition, all the Speakers in this place have said if a bill has a central and primary purpose, in order to achieve that purpose, amendments or repeals to other bills are acceptable. What was unacceptable in the 41st Parliament was randomly putting in so many bills. It was not only in the 41st Parliament. It happened in 2009 and 2010. When a bill is a budget bill, to defeat it is to bring down the government, so in a minority government it became political leverage to push through unpalatable bills all at once, with inadequate study. In a majority Parliament, it became a way for the government of the day to move through things expeditiously.

It put us in mind of the statement from Speaker Lucien Lamoureux years ago, who said he supposed there would come a day where the business of the House would be one omnibus bill that goes through all at once.

In this case, we now have guidance. I agree with previous speakers that it is lamentable that the Standing Order changes were brought in by majority rule as opposed to by consensus. However, Standing Order 69.1 is helpful. It gives us guidance, and it gives the Speaker the discretion to separate out those sections that are not properly within the bill.

Government Orders

I will be speaking to this in Bill C-63 in my second reading debate to say this kind of omnibus budget bill bears no relationship to the kind of egregious abuse of process that we saw in Bill C-38 and Bill C-45 in 2012. Those were bills that achieved things that had nothing to do with the budget, were not mentioned in the budget, and were egregious in their impact. This is of an order that is quite different.

I do not find Bill C-63, as an omnibus budget bill, objectionable, but it is quite right, as the hon. NDP House leader has pointed out, that where there are provisions that were not mentioned at all in the budget, if we are to uphold Standing Order 69.1, the Speaker has the discretion to move those parts out and allow separate debate and study of those portions only.

Standing Order 69.1 is an improvement over our previous Standing Orders. It does give guidance. However, I would hate to see the debate in this place misunderstood by anyone observing as representing an abuse of process, abuse of Parliament, and an affront to democracy that we saw in previous Parliaments under the previous government.

• (1035)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for adding her arguments to those already presented by the members for New Westminster—Burnaby, Calgary Shepard, and of course Carleton, who made his arguments earlier.

I thank colleagues for their presentations. I will come back to the House on this issue.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Kamal Khera (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, no. 2. The bill would implement certain provisions of our government's second budget, budget 2017, that was tabled in the House on March 22.

Following in the footsteps of budget 2016, budget 2017 offers immediate help to those who need it the most and helps ensure that everyone has a real and fair chance of success.

In the 2015 campaign, when we knocked on doors we listened to Canadians, how they were struggling to find jobs and pay for their families, or working extremely hard to make ends meet. We listened to them and we invested in Canadians, in our communities, and in our country.

That is why the first thing we did as a government was to lower taxes for the middle class and raised them for the wealthiest 1%.

We introduced the Canada child benefit that helped nine out of 10 families and lifted over 300,000 children out of poverty.

These investments made by our government in our people, in our communities, and in our economy are now bearing fruit.

We have been able to add nearly 500,000 new jobs in our economy in the last two years. Just this past October, 89,000 full-time jobs were created. The steady rate of job growth has led to the unemployment rate dropping to 6.3%, the lowest level in over a decade.

Additionally, due to the historic investments made by our government, youth unemployment is also at the lowest level in decades. In Brampton West, I had the privilege this summer to visit many local organizations taking part in the Canada summer jobs program. This program helps provide essential experience for youth all across Canada. Our government doubled the funding and doubled the number of jobs for students. In Brampton West, organizations were able to hire over 150 youth through the summer jobs program. That is real change.

Our economic policies have also made a mark on the international stage. Canada has seen the highest growth rate of all G7 countries, with our economy growing at an average rate of 3.7% over the last year. As a result of this strong economic growth, our government is able to invest more in Canadian families and our communities.

In our fall economic statement, we announced a number of measures aimed toward ensuring that those in the middle class and those working hard to join it share in the success we achieve as a country.

We announced further action to strengthen the Canada child benefit. When it was first announced, the Canada child benefit helped provide more money to nine out of 10 families and lift 300,000 children out of poverty. This was significant for the people of Brampton West.

Starting in July 2018, the Canada child benefit will increase with the cost of living, two years ahead of schedule. In my riding of Brampton West, this means that a single parent of two making \$35,000 will receive over \$560 more next year tax-free for books, for skating lessons, or for warm clothes for winter for their children.

Additionally, our government announced an enhancement of the working income tax benefit. By letting low-income workers take home more money, the working income tax benefit offers real help to over 1.5 million Canadians. Our government is doing more to help those working hard to join the middle class by enhancing the WITB by an additional \$500 million per year starting in 2019. These changes will encourage more Canadians to enter the workforce and further boost our economy.

Government Orders

•(1040)

Now, let us talk about our job creators. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and they help create jobs in our communities and throughout the country. That is why in our fall economic statement we announced that the small business tax rate would be cut from 10.5% currently to 9% in 2019. This will provide small businesses with up to \$7,500 in tax savings per year to reinvest in their businesses. For a local small business in my riding of Brampton West, such as AJ's Bar and Grill, this means more money to hire new employees and expand its services.

The steps we have taken since being elected have helped create this environment of growth and optimism. Bill C-63 looks to build on our policies and bring more prosperity for middle-class Canadians.

This budget implementation act would support the middle class and those working hard to be part of it by protecting the rights of federally regulated workers when they seek flexible work arrangements from their employers. Some of the ways we are helping Canadian families balance work and family responsibilities are by providing greater flexibility for annual vacation days and holidays, more bereavement days in the event of losing a loved one, and more unpaid leave for family responsibilities. These changes would greatly impact the young families in Brampton West who are just starting out in their lives.

Our government also recognizes that many young Canadians are undertaking internships to gain hands-on experience. While internships can help young Canadians make a successful transition into the workforce, some internships, in particular those that are unpaid, can be unfair. The budget implementation act proposes to eliminate unpaid internships in federally regulated sectors where the internships are not part of a formal educational program. These changes would also ensure that unpaid interns who are part of an educational program are entitled to labour standard protections, such as maximum hours of work, weekly days of rest, and general holidays.

It is a well-known fact that our government is committed to strengthening the middle class by promoting strong, inclusive economic growth in Canada and around the world. Investments in high-quality infrastructure contribute to long-term growth and a better quality of life for people at home and abroad.

As part of Canada's commitment to engage, collaborate, and invest with other global partners on development projects in Asia, Canada's decision to apply for membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank was announced in August 2016. Canada's investment in the bank will be included as part of Bill C-63. This would help sustain growth in Asia and represents an opportunity for Canada to further engage in multilateral infrastructure efforts that support inclusive economic growth at home and abroad. By doing this, we would contribute to global economic growth, and help Canadian companies to explore new commercial opportunities.

The steps taken in budget 2017 and Bill C-63 address the very real issues facing Canadians every single day. Our government plans to strengthen the middle class and ensure that Canadians have the support, resources, and confidence they need to succeed, create jobs, and grow our economy.

I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to improving the lives of so many people across our country. I am proud to support this piece of legislation, and I encourage all members to do the same.

•(1045)

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as usual from that side, we hear about the middle class and those trying to join it, and that this budget is so good for them. The Liberals talk about how they are lowering taxes on the middle class when, of course, those taxes were lowered on, if you can call it, the upper-middle class, people who are making \$150,000 or \$200,000 a year. Middle-class people who are making \$40,000 a year or less got absolutely nothing. The Liberals could have lowered the taxes on that group and helped all Canadians, but instead they chose to leave them out and lower taxes on the people above that.

However, I really wanted to ask why the Liberals left out the big fish. Why did they not follow up on their promises about closing the tax loopholes that CEOs use when they are paid in stock options? It would have netted the government \$750 million or so and really sent a message that it was going after the people who really could pay more of their fair share.

Ms. Kamal Kherra: Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight. One of the first things we did as a government was lower taxes on the middle class and raise them for the wealthiest 1%. We introduced the Canada child benefit, which has helped nine out of 10 families in Canada and has taken 300,000 kids out of poverty.

With respect to my hon. member's question, I would like to remind him that it is our government that invested over \$1 billion in CRA to fight tax evasion and aggressive tax planning. Because of that, we are well on our way to recouping over \$25 billion. We have identified more than 627 cases, which have been transferred for criminal investigations. There have been 268 warrants and 78 convictions.

We will continue to work hard every day for a tax system that is fair for all Canadians.

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear the hon. member elaborate on the measure that is going to provide flexibility. The changes in Bill C-63 would allow more flexibility for families when they need an opportunity for some special time for a variety of issues.

Could my hon. colleague elaborate on the flexibility side as well as on closing the many loopholes in the tax system? Both are important issues for Canadians to know more about.

Government Orders

•(1050)

Ms. Kamal Khara: Mr. Speaker, what my hon. colleague said is extremely important and true. That is why this bill would put measures in place to give flexibility to Canadians working in federally regulated industries to balance work and family responsibilities. There would be greater flexibility for annual vacation days and holidays, more bereavement days in the event of losing a loved one, and more unpaid leave for family responsibilities.

I believe other programs we have implemented, such as the Canada child benefit, will also assist single parents who may need help in these specific cases.

There are a lot of good measures in this bill, and I hope my colleagues, even on the other side, support this bill.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to give a speech on Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures. This is an omnibus budget bill.

[*English*]

In speaking to this, I wanted to also start with the big picture. Most of the speeches in this place since we began the debate at second reading of Bill C-63 have not delved very much into Bill C-63 itself. I plan to go into it in some detail. Most of the speeches have dealt with the general question of how much we, depending on which side of the House we are on, like or dislike the budget itself. There are some big picture comments I also want to make.

In debates in this place, the Conservative official opposition members berate the government for spending too much and adding to the debt. It is as though we have forgotten how to distinguish between the deficit, which is rising, and debt. Debt is a more permanent condition, and unfortunately, it is very hard to eliminate debt once it has been added on. We have not reduced any of the \$150-billion addition to the national debt accrued under former prime minister Stephen Harper. The debt increased quite a lot in that period, although in the final term, we saw a balanced budget. Deficit is an issue of concern, but not nearly as much as debt.

In looking at the deficit and deficit spending, this current Liberal government was elected promising to run a deficit, although a much smaller one than the one we now see.

Here is what concerns me on the subject of government spending and increasing deficits. We are actually in a situation in this country where we need more, not less, government spending. The strictures on spending the current government appears to feel constrained by on things that need to be addressed come from an unwillingness to spend more than the large spending announcements that have already been made, which were for needed spending.

We need spending on infrastructure across Canada. In a sense, we have been like a homeowner who has deferred maintenance on the home in order to afford the other things we need in our household budget. However, deferred maintenance adds up. When the deferred maintenance is on water works and sewage systems, bridges and

roads, and social infrastructure, such as affordable housing, and those things come home to roost, we need to spend more.

At the same time, there is a deep aversion to raising taxes. There have been a lot of claims that the opposite side has raised taxes a great deal. The reality, which I support, and it was in the Green Party platform to reduce the tax on small business to 9%, is certainly applauded. However, we in the Green Party are urging the government to look at the need to raise taxes on large, profitable multinationals.

The tax on large business was, in the year 2000, 28%. It is now down to 14%. It certainly should be raised, because if we look at the percentage of our total government revenues that come from corporations versus individual citizens, the portion on individual citizens has gone up while the portion on large corporations has shrunk dramatically.

As the economy is recovering, and that is good, there certainly is no reason or excuse to not go after, as my hon. friend from South Okanagan—West Kootenay just pointed out, the big fish. The big fish are in offshore tax havens. The big fish are in large, profitable multinationals. Going after people who are seeking to avoid, or worse, criminally evade, taxes should be a top priority.

I note, and it is a personal story, but I think it is quite bizarre, that my daughter, who is a university student, reported to me that the CRA is wasting tax dollars asking for proof of various items on her income tax return. She is a student. She is not making enough money to pay much in taxes or anything in taxes, I think. However, she is being asked to provide proof of the cost of books. I said that it was bizarre, and she said that another friend of hers is doing the same thing.

I would suggest that CRA could adjust its sights on millionaires and billionaires as opposed to students. I think that would be something most Canadians would support.

•(1055)

Turning to Bill C-63, I have to say that I read it with a growing sense of happiness. No doubt it will surprise people that anyone on the opposition benches would. However, when I pick up an omnibus budget bill I still have a sense of, I guess, PTSD from having read the omnibus budget bills in the 41st Parliament, particularly Bill C-38, which destroyed our environmental assessment regime and wrecked the Fisheries Act; and Bill C-45, which devastated the Navigable Waters Protection Act, removed the inspector general for CSIS, and various other measures that had nothing to do with each other.

Government Orders

Reading Bill C-63 confirms in my mind the strong need to simplify our tax code. When we talk to tax accountants, they generally agree that it would be wonderful if the Minister of Finance went in for root-and-branch tax reform to simplify the tax code to remove so many boutique exemptions. I commend the Minister of Finance for removing a number of boutique exemptions, but the tax code, and therefore the omnibus bill we have before us, is very complex on very specific items, such as straddling tax years and figuring out how to deal with different derivatives and the use of various tax mechanisms, such as going through trusts or going through additional corporations and how we end up taxing.

For the most part, I actually find myself wondering if I am going to vote for this particular budget bill if we can make some amendments. I want to point out the areas I like in this bill and the areas I think would benefit from amendments.

As it is an omnibus budget bill, I am pleased to see that there has finally been a tepid move, although it could go much further, to eliminate some of the fossil fuel subsidies. This was a large-ticket commitment in the Liberal campaign platform. Most of the large fossil fuel subsidies remain in place, despite a pledge in the Liberal platform to eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels.

This would be a parallel and needed measure that would go along with eliminating the market distortions that are created by both subsidizing fossil fuels and failing to put a price on dumping waste into the atmosphere. That is equivalent to having a municipal waste dump where there is no tipping fee. People are not encouraged to avoid dumping if it is free. That is why a carbon price makes sense, but we need to move to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies.

The move that is happening here is in relation to changes to the Canadian exploration expense. This happens to be in part 1 of Bill C-63. It would change the tax treatment of Canadian exploration expenses to reduce the tax deductions that are available now from 100% to about 30%. By the way, the way this is structured has created an incentive for accelerated drilling prior to this kicking in in 2019. This could be an unintended but environmentally damaging period. I am holding in my hands advice from Bennett Jones to that corporate sector suggesting that if any oil and gas companies can hurry up and start exploration activities and get commitments in writing before 2019, they can continue to take advantage of the 100% deduction on capital expenses.

I also welcome the changes to the donation of ecologically sensitive lands. I worked on this, back in the day, on the now defunct National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, repealed in the omnibus budget bill, Bill C-38. We worked to persuade the minister of finance of the day, the Right Hon. Paul Martin, to create special tax treatment for the donation of ecologically sensitive land. The revisions in Bill C-63 continue along that road to clarify and improve that system.

I am not at all unhappy to see the follow-through on the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This is part of Canada's development portfolio. We still lag far behind the commitments made by previous governments, including every government back to Lester B. Pearson, Jean Chrétien, and the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney, who all committed that Canada's development assistance should equal 0.7% of our GDP. We are nowhere near that, but certainly the

provisions around the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are welcome.

There are a number of other provisions I was pleased to see, particularly those in the Canada Labour Code that would provide more flexible work arrangements and give Canadians prescribed statutory time off work to recover after experiencing family violence. I would like to see those sections amended. I would like to see that time off work as paid leave. I would like to see a single woman without children receive some assistance if she has been the victim of violence. There could be some tweaking of provisions in there.

I am very happy to see the new tax treatment for geothermal energy and an Energy Efficiency Act.

There are many provisions in a bill of 275 pages, but I will stop there and say that I am generally pleased with the contents of this bill.

● (1100)

Hon. Judy A. Sgro (Humber River—Black Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is fascinating to listen to the areas the member so ably commented on, many of which she has been talking about for some time. I am pleased to see that she is tentatively a supporter of the bill. She knows how important it is to be able to pass this kind of legislation.

I would be interested to hear more about the tweaking of flex leave and the areas where we can better help families throughout Canada.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, it is always tempting as a member of the opposition, particularly the leader of another party, to spend most of one's time in Parliament talking about what is missing. I could fill up 10 minutes with what is missing and what I would like to see in a budget.

Under the family flextime arrangements with employers, there will be a maximum of three days of family responsibility leave and leave of up to 10 days for people who have been the victim of family violence. There has already been commentary on this, and we will undoubtedly hear good suggestions at committee. For example, I support what the United Steelworkers have said, which is why not have paid leave for people who are the victims of violence, including family violence? I say this because it is traumatizing. Obviously, anyone who has been the victim of violence within the family, including if one's child has been the victim of violence, cannot go to work the next day. These are very compassionate and important changes to the Canada Labour Code, but we might want to go further and consider paid leave. I certainly would.

Mr. Kerry Diotte (Edmonton Griesbach, CPC): Mr. Speaker, does the member have any comments about what the previous speaker talked about, the \$25 billion that is soon to be recovered by the government from tax cheats and whether she thought that perhaps some of this might be related to any of the people named in the paradise papers, including the Liberal Party's fundraising chair?

Government Orders

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, globally we have had a real epidemic of the super-rich deciding to be super irresponsible. The super-rich, the 1% globally, hide wealth in offshore accounts in ways that ensure they are not taxed. That is so irresponsible. We have been in the grip of neoliberal theories of the trickle-down economy, which argue that when the rich do really well, we will all do well. Gus Speth, the former head of the United Nations Development Programme, has said that in the context of the trickle-down economy, a rising tide “lifts only yachts.” I think that is the case with that particular economic theory.

We seen those who are doing super well not paying their fair share. In the post-Depression era in the U.S., when there was huge economic growth under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the top tax bracket was 80%, yet they had stunning economic growth figures. I will not comment on anyone personally, although the hon. member for Edmonton Griesbach has invited me to do so. What I will say is that anyone who is a tax cheat should have their assets discovered and pay their fair share regardless of whom they know or where their friends in high places may be.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Green Party for her speech. Given her vision, which is the most unifying possible, I would like to ask her a question.

Is she comfortable with the idea that, with respect to the items that were not included in the initial budget or the supplementary documents, it would be a good idea to afford the Speaker the possibility of dividing the vote on these items? I think that is of interest to my colleague as well.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. He is right as always.

In the House of Commons, we now have the new Standing Order 69.1, which allows the Speaker to divide the elements. The elements that were already in the budget can be voted on in an omnibus bill. However, with respect to the measures and elements not mentioned in the budget, I believe it is a good idea that the Speaker allow separate votes for the distinct elements that were not included in the actual budget.

[*English*]

Mr. Andy Fillmore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Democratic Institutions, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-63, which would implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament in March, 2017. Before I get to the crux of Bill C-63, I would like to set the broader context in which it has been introduced, because it is important for all of us to understand how our government's actions to date have impacted the Canadian economy.

As my colleagues know, every month, Statistics Canada releases a labour force survey that includes a selection of data about the performance of the Canadian economy, including the number of jobs added that month and the rate of unemployment. For decades, once every 30 days, governments of the day have awaited with bated breath to see just what Statistics Canada had to report.

Allow me to read the opening paragraphs of the most recent labour force survey, released this past Friday by Statistics Canada. They read:

Employment increased by 35,000 in October, and the unemployment rate rose 0.1 percentage points to 6.3%. Employment gains in the month were driven by full-time work (+89,000), while fewer people worked part time (-53,000).

On a year-over-year basis, total employment rose by 308,000 (+1.7%), with full-time work increasing by 397,000 (+2.7%) and the number of people working part time declining by 89,000 (-2.5%). On a year-over-year basis, total hours worked were up 2.7%.

The unemployment rate trended downwards in the 12 months to October, falling 0.7 percentage points over this period.

Those are the numbers from Canada's national statistics agency on Friday, and they speak for themselves. More broadly, since forming government we have added 500,000 new jobs to the Canadian economy. October marked 11 straight months of job growth, and 90% of new jobs created are full time. Meanwhile, unemployment is at its lowest rate in nine years. It is clear that our government's plan to create jobs and grow our economy is working.

Budget 2017 and Bill C-63 are the continuation of that work, the continuation of our demonstrably successful efforts to spur inclusive economic growth.

Now I would like to turn to some of the details of the plan, beginning with enhanced support for workers and skills training.

Sometimes our lives change suddenly and our work schedule needs to change significantly in response. Our government is giving Canadian workers the flexibility to adapt when these changes arise. Bill C-63 would make substantial improvements to employment insurance. We are providing \$310 million in additional tax relief to support Canadians who have taken on the important responsibility of caring for a loved one. We are investing \$886 million to increase flexibility in parental and maternity benefits, extending the benefits to 18 months from 12 months, so new parents have the flexibility to meet their diverse needs.

We are also making substantial investments, \$2.7 billion, to be precise, to boost skills training and employment supports for unemployed and under-employed Canadians. Because we hear from so many Canadian workers who are choosing to pursue new skills in today's rapidly changing economy, we are going to invest \$132 million to expand the flexibility of employment insurance for those who seek to fund their own personal skills development.

These efforts are complemented by a range of initiatives by our government to support workers, including our recent announcement that we are enhancing the working income tax benefit, or WITB, for low-income workers. For a single mom, a more generous working income tax benefit, combined with a stronger Canada child benefit, will mean more money for books, skating lessons, or warm clothes for winter.

Government Orders

Let us now speak about the budget's focus on affordable housing. I come to the House from an exciting career as a city planner. One thing I learned from that work is that without secure, stable, and affordable housing, every other goal our citizens strive to achieve becomes secondary. Without adequate shelter, families struggle to raise their children, to get educated, to find and keep employment, and even to stay healthy.

One of the many communities I am proud to represent in Halifax is called Mulgrave Park, a public housing neighbourhood. It is a vibrant community in our city's north end that really embodies the best of what our city has to offer: neighbours offering caring and loving support for each other. This past winter, I was proud and deeply moved to announce that our government would be investing \$5 million dollars toward much needed improvements in their community infrastructure. These investments will make a real difference in the day-to-day lives of the people who live there, and they have told me as much with their smiles and their warm embraces.

• (1110)

Indeed, investments in affordable housing are always worth it. That is just one reason I am so thrilled that budget 2017 drastically increases the government's spending on affordable housing to \$13.5 billion. Just imagine the lives it will change across this country.

I will turn now to the government's innovation agenda. Many will recall that back in March, some dubbed budget 2017 the "innovation budget". The budget does focus very intentionally on innovation, and for good reason. The nature of our economy is evolving and we must ensure, as it evolves, that it works for all Canadians. The budget demonstrates that we are focused on building up Canada as a world-leading innovation economy to create jobs and grow the middle class by supporting innovators and equipping Canadian workers with the tools they need to succeed.

For example, the budget invests \$1.26 billion in the strategic innovation fund, giving Canadian innovators access to a simpler and quicker funding application process to attract new, high-quality business investments. This is of great value to all Canadians, including my riding of Halifax. I have said many times that I believe Halifax has what it takes to put Atlantic Canada on the leading edge of innovation. Look no further than our growing tech and clean-tech sectors or the runaway success of our oceans sector, which last month became a finalist to become a supercluster under the government's innovation supercluster initiative. These are the kinds of projects that will help Canada be a leader in the industries of tomorrow and why every dollar the budget puts toward innovation is a dollar well spent.

Members may be wondering how the budget would better protect our environment. Meaningful and timely action is required if we are going to protect the majestic natural environment that defines and nurtures Canada. One of the most significant ways we are addressing environmental challenges in this budget is through green infrastructure, with an investment of \$21.9 billion over the next 11 years. This major investment would allow us to mitigate and adapt to climate change through projects that reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, promote clean air and safe water systems, and uphold renewable sources of power. In particular, it makes a substantial

investment of \$83 million to enhance climate resilience in indigenous communities, as well as \$18 million to implement a climate change and health adaptation program for first nations and Inuit communities.

As someone who does in fact believe in the science behind climate change, I am particularly excited that the budget includes \$73.5 million to establish the Canadian centre for climate services. This centre of expertise would make climate science more accessible and support decision-makers as we address climate change.

The last topic I must address today is how our budget will foster what we call "inclusive growth". Our government was elected on a promise to create the economic conditions for every Canadian to succeed and to leave no one behind. Investments in inclusive growth include \$7 billion over 10 years in affordable child care, an investment that would create 40,000 more high-quality, affordable child care spaces across Canada. It includes funding to improve gender and cultural sensitivity in the judiciary, \$100 million for a new national strategy to address gender-based violence, \$74 million to enhance the career transition services program for veterans, and \$17.5 million to establish a centre of excellence on PTSD.

For our youth, it includes \$12.5 million to reduce barriers to education through the Canada learning bond program and \$38 million to help low-income youth transition to post-secondary education and work through Pathways to Education Canada.

For indigenous communities, it includes \$89.9 million for indigenous languages revitalization, \$828 million to address health challenges in first nations and Inuit communities, and \$165 million to support indigenous students by increasing access to post-secondary education and skills training.

These are the kinds of investments that will transform Canada for the better, along with the others I mentioned in my speech today, and countless additional initiatives I did not have time to address here today. I hope my colleagues from all corners of this place will agree that our plan is working for Canadians and will vote to keep this spectacular momentum going by voting in favour of Bill C-63.

• (1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech, to which I listened closely.

He started by talking at length about the job market. We are all seeing a certain uptick in a number of ridings, and mine is no exception. The unemployment rate is falling, which means more people are working and paying employment insurance premiums.

Points of Order

Since this should mean a corresponding increase in revenues, why are we still facing a situation the government does not seem to have considered, namely that fewer than four out of ten workers qualify for employment insurance when bad luck strikes and they lose their jobs?

Why does the bill before us not address this issue?

[English]

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary mentioned, an incredible investment has been made in the employment insurance program. When investments like that are made across the country, it will in fact be a benefit that accrues to all Canadians, as the economy as a whole is raised up by that. This, in conjunction with the tremendous investments in workforce training for those seeking a transition to a new job or those seeking to transition into the workforce in the first place, will have a tremendous effect in every corner of our great country.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was interesting to read in the *Toronto Star* today, which is very often the public mouthpiece of the Liberal Party, that the revelations contained in the paradise papers that key Liberal insiders and bagmen were gaming the tax system added to the still unanswered questions about the finance minister's practices and actions and "reinforce the impression that this government is [not only] out of touch with the concerns of ordinary Canadians...[but quite possibly] in league with those who would rig the game in their own self-interest." It concludes that the Liberals were happy to allow the rich to play by their own set of rules.

Does my hon. colleague agree with the *Toronto Star*?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, I find it highly ironic that the question is coming from the member. Under his government, there was a 10-year period where the poor in Canada became poorer, the rich became richer, and the middle class were ever more squeezed with a flat or negative income growth. I can understand the opposition party's obsession with such reports, as he referred to today, given the tremendous economic success our party is having in Canada right now. Of course, those members are looking for a distraction from all of that.

Particularly, in the case of the story mentioned by my hon. colleague, it is also understandable that when a party sees another party coming up in its fundraising rearview mirror, it might have a distraction to offer for that as well.

● (1120)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the questions around what is technically by the Liberals' own definition an omnibus bill, I suppose we can often ask what is in it and what is not in it. We see in the 300-some-odd pages that the Liberals have not found the space to keep their commitment on closing an important loophole for Canadian CEOs. It may not be obvious to many middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join it, that when people are paid in stock options, they pay a much lower tax rate.

The Liberals actually campaigned two years ago to begin to close that loophole to make it much more restrictive and to only apply that to innovation companies when it was a true incentive as opposed to

what it usually was, which is a tax dodge. The Liberals tried to characterize the small business sector that way.

Therefore, my question is this. The Liberals did not find room in the 330 pages in this omnibus bill to close the loophole and keep their commitment. Could my friend give us a time when he actually thinks the Liberals will follow through on the promise they made to Canadians over two years ago?

Mr. Andy Fillmore: Mr. Speaker, although we are able to walk and chew gum at the same time, we are not able to do everything at the same time. Clearly, right now our focus is on the middle class. As we all know now, Canada has the lowest small business tax rate in the G7. We have the fastest-growing economy. The effort that the Liberal government is undertaking to grow the economy and create more jobs is working brilliantly in Canada. We look forward to always doing better in the future.

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POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING ORDER 69.1—BILL C-63

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the points of order raised last week on the application of Standing Order 69.1(1) and 69.1(2).

The purpose of this new Standing Order is to address the improper use of omnibus bills. The rule addresses instances where a government includes in a bill distinctly unrelated provisions that do not fall under a common theme. In a situation where a bill contains provisions that are unrelated to the common theme, the Speaker may put to the House separate votes at second reading and third reading on those unrelated elements.

I would like to turn to the application of the second part of the new Standing Order, which deals with the budget implementation bill. The member for Carleton identified some provisions in Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in the House on March 22, 2017, which he asserted were not referenced in the budget.

The member's principal concern is the reference in the budget document to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. I would draw the attention of the member to page 181 of the budget document, which states:

As the first North American country to apply for membership at the AIIB, Canada is demonstrating our strong engagement in multilateral institutions, and will commit to playing a unique and constructive role in supporting the Bank's operations and governance. The Government will introduce federal legislation to operationalize Canada's membership at this institution in 2017.

The budget proposal to introduce legislation to operationalize Canada's membership in the bank is found in division 2 part 5 of the budget implementation bill, Bill C-63.

As for the other measures in the bill to which the member refers, I would note the following links between the budget and the implementing bill.

Government Orders

Page 190 in the budget references, “Budget 2017 also proposes to amend legislation to implement the recommendations of the 2015 Judicial Compensation and Benefits Commission.” The members know that the Judicial Compensation and Benefits Commission report recommends remuneration schemes for judges, which require amendments to the Judges Act to implement.

Page 211 in the budget references, “Budget 2017 proposes to introduce targeted legislative amendments to bolster the toolkit for managing the resolution of Canada’s largest banks.” This commitment is reflected in division 5 part 5 of Bill C-63.

The member for Portage—Lisgar referred to the June 19 debate where the government House leader stated:

We want to ensure that MPs are not faced with the dilemma of how to vote on a bill that is most supportable but contains a totally unrelated clause, a poison pill, that they find objectionable. We want flexibility for MPs in these instances.

This is precisely the intended objective: to ensure members are able to vote on a totally unrelated measure in a bill. That can only serve to improve the transparency of the legislative process.

I have one final point that I would like to put on the record. Standing Order 69.1 in no way contemplates the division of a bill for the purposes of debate or for separate committee referrals. The Standing Order is crystal clear. There shall be a single debate at the second and third reading stages, with separate votes on distinctly unrelated provisions.

• (1125)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): I want to thank the hon. member. We will take it under advisement.

Mr. Peter Julian (New Westminster—Burnaby, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order in response to the government's intervention, and I will be brief.

The reality is that the interventions we have heard over the last few days from a number of opposition members simply have not been contradicted by the government. I looked forward eagerly to hearing what points it might offer in rebuttal, but there was no rebuttal. The government has created a bit of a straw man in saying that Standing Order 69.1 is not intended to divide debate. None of the opposition members who have risen to suggest that this be divided for the purposes of voting have suggested that.

What the government has really done today is validated all the interventions of opposition members over the past few days. I think, Mr. Speaker, you can get appropriate guidance from the House that for the purposes of voting, Standing Order 69.1 should apply to Bill C-63.

I thank the government for confirming what opposition members have been saying in the House of Commons.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We will take both under advisement and take it into consideration when we come up with the verdict.

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in

Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to speak today on what is proving to be one of the least popular budget bills in modern Canadian parliamentary history, although I regret not having the opportunity to address the ill-conceived Canada infrastructure bank directly, since it has been embedded in one of those omnibus bills and legislation. I will therefore dedicate my remarks to talking a bit about another Liberal boondoggle.

Bill C-63 is a continuation of the decline we have seen the government taking Canada on since it was first elected. Why is this a surprise? It is the Liberal way to tell Canadians one thing at election time and then do something completely different while it is in power.

I remember the election campaign. The Liberals promised a small deficit of \$10 billion to fund infrastructure. Many Canadians voted for a modest deficit, taking the Prime Minister at his word, in contrast to the fiscal responsibility promoted by my own party and also, quite frankly, by the NDP.

[*Translation*]

It did not take long for the concept of a modest deficit to fall by the wayside, and since then it has spiralled out of control. The last economic update did not even offer a plan for balancing the budget. No plan at all. It is unbelievable.

[*English*]

What is worse is the conduct of the finance minister in regard to his own affairs. In case anybody has forgotten, let me remind the House.

First, the minister failed to put his assets from his family firm Morneau Shepell, a human resources and pension management firm, in a blind trust, despite saying he would do so. These assets consisted of millions of shares, which are worth approximately \$21 million in current stock prices.

Second, the minister continued to receive dividends on these shares, dated from the time he was elected. At a dividend rate of about 6.5¢ a share, the minister was roughly earning \$65,000 a month over the past two years. For comparison, according to Statistics Canada, the median wage of an individual worker in the province of Ontario, the area I represent, is just over \$44,000 per year. That is \$20,000 less per year than our finance minister was earning per month from dividends alone. That is on top of his salary as a cabinet minister. Said another way, the average Ontario worker makes \$20,000 less over the course of a year than the minister made per month. Now, there is a clear message for the middle class.

Government Orders

Third, we also learned that while the minister was calling small business owners tax cheats, he apparently forgot to disclose that he owned a private corporation, with a sole purpose of owning a villa in the south of France. I guess it is a small villa, maybe a “villette”. Why own a corporation to own a villa? To avoid paying inheritance tax, of course, the same tax the minister has proposed to the farmers of my riding when they transfer their family farms to the next generation of Canadians. We should be proud that the next generation of Canadians wants to farm our great country.

Fourth, we also learned that Morneau Shepell, the minister's aforementioned family business, had an \$8 million contract to manage the pension and benefits of the Bank of Canada. What minister is responsible for the Bank of Canada? Why, the Minister of Finance.

To summarize, the minister continued to hold shares in a company he regulated, while the company signed a contract with a department for which he was responsible. It is really quite astounding. One would think that this minister would have been fired for this clear conflict of interest. The Ethics Commissioner, to her credit, has fined the minister for this breach. However, the Prime Minister continues to defend him and allow this attack on our farmers to continue while not dealing with his own minister.

Bill C-63 would simply continue the out-of-control spending of the Liberal government and would further hike taxes on everyone it has claimed to help. The Liberals are adding debt at the twice the rate that promised and the minister's own numbers project debt for every year in the future. Unfortunately for Canadians, someone has to pay for this Liberal spending spree, and it is middle-class Canadians. In fact, it is estimated that more than 80% of the middle class pay more tax today under the Liberals than under the previous government.

Regarding some of the specifics of the bill, the Liberals are now going to tax our beer. Breweries in my riding, whether it be Creemore Springs, Side Launch Brewing Company, Collingwood Brewery, or Northwinds Brewery, all create jobs. They attract tourists who are eager to sample their products, and they already pay enough tax.

● (1130)

However, it is not enough for the Liberals, who look at successful entrepreneurs as tax cheats and a source of revenue. In fact, the Liberals are so desperate for money that they are also targeting type 1 diabetics. They have now decided to deny type 1 diabetics their tax credits. Individuals who need help are going to help the Liberals get back into the black, I guess.

The Canada Revenue Agency itself confirmed that with respect to insulin therapy, new direction was given at the beginning of May regarding applications under the disability tax credit. This change in direction was unannounced, and it has caused huge confusion and suffering for those suffering from type 1 diabetes. It has resulted in hundreds of diabetics receiving less funding by hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars.

What is worse is that the minister has the power to stop it today, but she and her fellow cabinet colleagues, her government, her colleagues on the other side of the House, have not reverted the directive. It is simple. A directive from her to her department will

reverse the changes and allow those type 1 diabetics to receive their tax credits until further consultation could be done. I raised this in the House last Friday, but to my knowledge, the minister has yet to act.

Another item that would be created with this omnibus bill, Bill C-63, is another infrastructure bank support. We saw in the omnibus bill, Bill C-44, the creation of the Canada infrastructure bank. It is a \$35-billion boondoggle. François Beaudoin, the former CEO of the Business Development Bank of Canada and witness at the Gomery inquiry into Liberal corruption, stated that this new bank is easily open to “political interference”. However, in the rush to create that fund, the Liberals ignored everyone.

This time there is a commitment to support another infrastructure bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, for an immediate investment of \$256 million, and a further authorization in the future for the potential of another \$480 million. The Liberals will have bought 1% of this bank. What do taxpayers get back? Nothing. We commit money as Canadians so that other countries can get cheaper loans and build their infrastructure. By bringing Canada into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Liberals would be sending hundreds of millions of Canadian taxpayer dollars to foreigners with no control over how the money would be spent or whether or not Canadian companies would benefit, let alone Canadian citizens.

As I have said previously, I am very confident in saying that Canadians want investments in our infrastructure here in Canada. Whether it be in my riding, Collingwood, Wasaga Beach, Adjala-Tosorontio, Angus, or Alliston, we know that infrastructure is needed. Canadian citizens need it so that they can make their businesses more successful, and so that they can make sure their children get to school safely.

I was happy to be a part of a previous government that understood that we worked with our allies, the United States and Japan, and did not support this bank. We could not then, and the Liberals cannot now, ensure that the bank would follow environmental, social, and human rights standards that we expect of our institutions. Therefore, while they preach about human rights and environmental policy standards here at home and to others abroad, they are prepared to turn a blind eye when it suits their needs.

Bill C-63 is a continuation of a shameful decline in our government finances. I will be voting against it, and I encourage all members on both sides of the House to vote against the bill, which is one that invests in others outside of our nation's borders and not in Canadians.

Government Orders

•(1135)

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

Mr. Speaker, the member truly reflects and embodies the Conservative Party in opposition, which is so much out of tune and out of touch with reality. The Conservatives have no problem distorting truths in order to substantiate a specific theme that they want to espouse. They have no reservations about character assassination, and they have no problem saying things that are just not true.

The member talked about Canadians wanting to see an investment here in Canada, and they are seeing that investment. There is far more investment than with the Stephen Harper government, in which she was a member and a cabinet member. We have record high amounts being invested in Canadian infrastructure. In every region of this country, this government is building. The commitment towards Canada's infrastructure is higher in this government than in decades and, I would argue, quite possibly in the history of Canada.

Will my colleague across the way not recognize the truth and say that we have a significant investment in Canada's infrastructure in these last two budgets? If she does not believe that, can she tell me of another national budget, in particular that the Harper government quite possibly introduced, where there was a stronger commitment to Canada's infrastructure? Tell me when that occurred.

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to state that if we want to talk about character assassination, why is it the Minister of Finance gets to tell the member for Milton that she cannot do math? What is that all about? The last I checked, the member for Milton is actually exceptionally competent and well qualified, and should not be diminished in this House.

The issues with regard to the Minister of Finance are actually public. The Ethics Commissioner has been clear.

With respect to my speech, and the things I spoke to, yes, this bill increases taxes on beer. Yes, this bill actually makes a choice to invest in infrastructure outside of Canadian borders as opposed to at home.

My question for the member would be, why is it that \$2 billion in infrastructure money lapsed last year instead of being invested in places like Collingwood or Wasaga Beach, or Adjala-Tosorontio, where people actually need that infrastructure investment? That lapsed money could have made a meaningful difference not only in my riding but across the country. The Liberals do not have their act together, and do not feel that they can invest in small communities.

•(1140)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her speech.

I would like to know if her position has changed. We in the NDP have long been concerned about tax evasion. In my opinion, my colleague's government missed multiple opportunities to address a situation that is unacceptable to middle-class Canadians. The recent events reported in the news are highly alarming. They clearly show that Liberal Party fundraisers are evading taxes with impunity.

Does the member think the government should be doing more to stop this hemorrhaging of money we so desperately need to provide services to Canadians who actually do pay their taxes?

[*English*]

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, I do have concerns about people who avoid taxes, one of them being our Minister of Finance. He has made a conscious choice to avoid paying taxes here, inheritance taxes.

The Liberals expect to place a higher tax rate on those individuals who are farmers, physicians, and small business people across our country. Tax avoidance is a problem in this country, and we have seen that most recently with these paradise papers. I do hope that the government acts swiftly and actually takes action, albeit we have not seen them take action on their own Minister of Finance. Why would we expect them to take action on anyone else?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Peter Schiefke (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Youth), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise in the House today to support Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, 2017, no. 2.

On October 27, the hon. Minister of National Defence introduced Bill C-63, and we have taken the next steps to ensure we maintain the job and economic growth of the past two years. I will explain why I think Bill C-63 presents our government and the House with a way forward to provide for current and future generations.

The record growth that we have witnessed over the past two years is clear proof that this government's plan is working. Last Friday, Statistics Canada published their most recent labour force survey for October 2018. Our economy generated half a million jobs from the time we formed our government two years ago until this past weekend.

The majority of these jobs are full-time. In October, 90,000 full-time jobs were created in Canada. I am particularly proud to note that Quebec, which is home to my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, is leading the way when it comes to job creation in Canada. In October alone, 33,000 new full-time jobs were created in Quebec. What is more, Quebec's unemployment rate is now lower than the national rate.

This government's economic plan is working because we remained focused on Canadians' priorities, those that will have the biggest impact on our economic growth, namely investing in our families, lowering taxes for the middle class, and supporting the success of our SMEs.

I am also proud to say that employment was up in October, particularly for young people between the ages of 15 and 24. As the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for Youth, I am honoured to see that our plan to help young people is also working. Programs, such as Canada summer jobs, are working. They are giving 35,000 more young Canadians across the country work experience every summer.

Government Orders

The strength of our economy shows that more young people than ever are finding jobs and kick-starting their careers. We are helping young Canadians get the skills they need to succeed through new investments in innovation and job training. In September, we announced a \$73-million investment to create 60,000 new student work placements over five years in co-operation with universities, colleges, and polytechnics.

• (1145)

[English]

To see that our investments in young Canadians are working is enough, in my view, to support the measures of the second budget implementation act as part of this government's broader economic strategy. However, our plan does not stop with our young people.

This government's strategy is comprehensive and focused on areas that matter most for our middle class. That is why our first-ever act as government was to lower taxes on the middle class and increase them on Canada's top 1%. It is why we introduced the more generous and tax-free Canada child benefit, and most recently indexed it to the cost of living as it continues to rise. For the same reasons we recently committed to lowering the tax rate for small businesses in Canada to 9% over the next 15 months. Because of these bold policies, Canada is now the fastest growing economy in the G7. We have the most competitive small business tax rate and the lowest overall tax costs for small businesses. With nearly 99% of companies in Canada being small businesses, it is important to ensure that we build an economic system that works for them, allowing them to grow and flourish for years to come. However, there is always more work to be done, and better is indeed always possible.

Therefore, to continue on the incredible success that we have seen in the last two years, we must work to implement key portions of the 2017 budget. Bill C-63 would do just that. Allow me to highlight some key points that will mean the most to my community of Vaudreuil—Soulanges.

The budget implementation bill no. 2 takes steps to implement our innovation and skills plan, which focuses some of our investments where they matter most in helping Canadians navigate the changing landscape of the 21st century economy. By doing so, we will create a labour force that works for Canadians.

Bill C-63 seeks to implement a \$1 billion innovation and skills plan as part of budget 2017, with \$600 million toward new financing for clean tech firms. This is welcome news and goes beyond the bold steps this government has already taken to protect our environment and grow a green economy in 2017 and beyond.

We have already tripled investments in clean tech since forming government only two years ago. This goes hand in hand with the government's commitment to a clean growth economy, including the \$2 billion low-carbon economy fund and the \$21.9 billion in green infrastructure outlined in budget 2017. By prioritizing clean growth, the proposed budget implementation bill pushes our government's plans for a green economy further than ever before.

By seeking a balance for our economy, Bill C-63 will keep our support on track for the middle class and those working hard to join it. It aims for balance in other areas of our economy as well. The

budget implementation bill seeks to put in place measures to ensure that Canadian workers will have greater flexibility in achieving a healthy work-life balance, helping those with families and sick loved ones to spend more time at home when they need to.

I am lucky to be the father of two beautiful children, Ellie and Anderson. I am lucky to serve my community and build a better country for my children at the same time. I am also lucky to have an incredible partner in helping meet these challenges and finding that balance between my responsibilities as an MP and as a father.

This is challenging. It is a challenge that many Canadians, including those in my community, know all too well. More Canadian families than ever before must find new and innovative ways to strike that balance as parents who work to support their children and who spend time with them at home.

That is why this government extended parental leave in Canada from 12 to 18 months at 33% of the parent's income. The budget implementation bill takes the next steps in our plan and would give Canadians more flexibility in federally regulated industries to have a better work-life balance, allowing more room to take vacation and holidays when they need them, to take care of a family member, and to prepare to grieve after losing a loved one.

[Translation]

Canadians deserve the opportunity to live and work in a way that best accommodates their aspirations, their families, and their choices. It is our duty as MPs to help them any way we can.

Bill C-63 contains significant measures that are necessary to securing the future Canadians expect. Those measures include strengthening our green economy, more flexibility for federally regulated employees, and the implementation of certain measures in budget 2017.

I encourage all members of the House who share these values to support Bill C-63 and, in so doing, support the middle class, our small businesses, and our economy.

I encourage those who are still unsure to take a look at our government's economic update. We have the lowest overall tax rates for small businesses and the fastest economic growth in the G7. We have cut taxes for the middle class and provided support to middle-class families. Wages are up and child poverty is down. We have invested in our economy, and we have helped create over 500,000 jobs in the past two years.

Our plan is working. Now it is time for all of us to support Bill C-63.

Government Orders

• (1150)

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three questions for the hon. member. It is very important that we have a budget that represents where Canadians are now, and takes us in the direction of prosperity for all Canadians. He is the parliamentary secretary for youth, and the Prime Minister is the Minister for Youth.

The first question is this. Does he think it is fair that previous governments had a minister for youth, but the Liberal government does not have a minister for seniors, who are the largest growing population? There are more seniors than youth. It is the largest growing demographic in Canada and yet it is being ignored by the government. Does he think that is fair?

The second question is about taxation. Does the member think it is fair that taxes are going up, but they say taxes are going down? Canadians are hard pressed, and it is a growing problem.

Third, does he think it is fair that the Prime Minister and the finance minister are not paying their fair share of taxes?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I will first tell my hon. colleague that young Canadians are grateful that they have a Prime Minister who is taking a hands-on approach to ensure they have all opportunities available to them, something that, unfortunately, did not exist over the last 10 years, when we saw very minimal investment in young Canadians.

When we consulted young Canadians across the country, one question we heard most of all was where were their opportunities, the investments that previous generations had seen so they had opportunities to find jobs, start small businesses, and receive the tools necessary to succeed. We heard them loud and clear, and that is why we are investing record amounts in providing opportunities for young Canadians to go to university and get the skills they need to find the jobs they are looking for. We have invested in the Canada summer jobs program to ensure they have more opportunities to put money in their pockets and gain valuable work experience. We are also investing in skills training and co-ops, with the creation of 60,000 placements in our most recent budget.

That is what young Canadians have been asking for, and that is what we are providing to them after 10 years of minimal investment in youth.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I have two very simple questions for him.

The Liberals keep saying that they are working for the middle class and they boast about the upturn in the economy, but there are two things worth mentioning here.

It would seem that if wealth is truly being created, then the distribution of that wealth is not entirely equitable. I am not sure how the Liberals define middle class, but in a riding like mine, where the median salary is roughly \$32,000 a year, needless to say that no one will be getting any of the Liberal government's tax cuts.

Why did the Liberals not see fit to help these low income workers and put in place a plan to raise minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

First, we not only lowered taxes for the middle class, but we also brought in the Canada child benefit, which is putting more money in the pockets of nine out of ten families and that money is not taxable.

In my riding of Vaudreuil—Soulanges, that represents \$72 million for families. I am sure that the numbers are roughly the same in my hon. colleague's riding.

We have put in place a number of ways to lower taxes for the middle class and to invest in the middle class. That is what we will continue to do for the next two years.

• (1155)

[English]

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today on the Hill there are many youth from Boys and Girls Clubs throughout Canada. I know that one person in particular, Abbie Matheson, is spending the day shadowing me. The minister of youth spoke this morning and welcomed them.

I am wondering if he could comment on how important this budget is to get it right for youth so that we can prepare the youth for tomorrow and so they fully have the opportunity to succeed.

Mr. Peter Schiefke: Mr. Speaker, I will join my colleague in welcoming Abbie to Parliament today.

It is very important that we get this right, and the reasons are simple. First, the rate of unemployment, before we came to office, for young Canadians was double the national average. We needed to do something about that, and we have, by investing in skills training, investing in growing our economy, and ensuring that there are more jobs in the Canada summer jobs program, as well as the co-op placements.

However, above and beyond that, we owe it to the next generation of young Canadians to ensure that they have all the opportunities that every single one of us in this House had, every member of Parliament, which previous generations of governments gave them by investing in their generation. That is what we need to do, and that is what we are going to continue to do.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary Forest Lawn, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this summer and fall, there was bad news for Canadians all over, from this government.

We first had the spectacle of the government going out and talking about raising taxes for small businesses, the business community. The Liberals themselves have admitted that the business community is the driving force of our economy. This created a huge amount of uncertainty in the business community. We heard time after time how extremely angry the business community was getting over this so-called proposed tax. The government's own caucus members revolted and they gradually tinkered with the proposal, but it has still left an extremely bad taste among the business community.

Government Orders

Then we had the spectacle of the finance minister who took advantage of a loophole. We now understand he is the only minister on that side who took advantage of the loophole in not declaring all of his shares according to what is required by law and by practice.

What is important to note is that it was the Minister of Finance who did it. The finance minister is the individual who gives confidence to the market, who gives confidence to the economy. He is an important individual with respect to Canada's economy. If he himself cannot just follow the basic rules of accountability set out in Parliament, and uses a loophole, that has sent out a terrible impression. The government has lost a huge amount of confidence among Canadians.

Lo and behold, we now have the paradise papers coming out. The day before yesterday, we saw a picture of the Prime Minister and his chief Liberal fundraiser Mr. Bronfman hugging each other. What does that picture say? On one side, the Prime Minister wants to raise taxes on the business community, while on the other side, his chief Liberal fundraiser is hiding money so he does not have to pay taxes in this country. One is raising taxes on business and the other is trying to avoid paying taxes. Guess what. They are the best of friends. Is that the kind of message we want to send out to Canadians and people around the world as to the state of Canada's economy?

The Liberal member before me talked about what the government is doing. The Liberals forget the fact that our Conservative government laid the foundation for where our economy is going.

We did have some good news. There was a small deficit. Instead of reducing the deficit, the Liberals increased their spending. They have now put us on a course where we do not know what our grandchildren will be paying in the future for the Liberals' spending. One would think that, with their own children, the Liberals would at least be prudent. Have they been? No, they have not been prudent. They keep spending money that they do not have, with a deficit. They could have given Canadians a huge amount of confidence.

The point is this. Canadians are worried about the actions being taken by the Liberal government. They are very worried about their future. Contrary to the Prime Minister's "sunny ways", Canadians are now worried about where the government is going. The Liberals do a little tinkering here and a little tinkering there, and then they say they are going to raise taxes and stop the credit for diabetics, until there is a backlash and we see them running away. Why can we not have a sound economic direction coming from the government?

When the Liberals were in opposition, they said they would do this and do that. The Prime Minister said on the world stage that Canada is back, but he has forgotten the fact that for 10 years we were all working very hard. The minister himself knows very well how hard we worked to get Canada on the world stage, and yet they go there and say that nothing had happened.

I just heard the minister of youth say the Liberals put money toward skills development. Hello. Excuse me. He just needs to look at the record and he will see who started that program.

●(1200)

It was the former Conservative government that started that program. The government is taking advantage of what the former

Conservative government did and to mask that by saying it is the advocate of all of those things. No, that is not the way it is.

Let us talk for a minute about the direction the government is going in. We should talk about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The bank was designed by China to increase its own influence in that part of the region. It is part of China's foreign policy. We do not have any problem with China's foreign policy, but why should the Canadian taxpayers be paying to promote China's foreign policy? Why should we be paying into this bank, which is primarily based in, and set up by, China? We have an Asian Development Bank that we are partners with and are on its board of directors. It does the same thing. I do not see any reason why we, as a member of the Asian Development Bank, suddenly have to give taxpayers' money to promote some other country's foreign affairs interests. That is another wrong decision by the Liberal government.

As we stand and look around, I am sorry to say that Canadians do not feel comfortable with the government's direction. We hear this time after time from business people and everyone else.

Now, the government is talking about the middle class. I just read a CBC article that discusses who is in the middle class. It says that the middle class are making almost \$80,000. As my colleague just said, the average income in his riding is \$35,000. Where the hell is the middle class the Liberal government is talking about coming from? People making \$80,000 are the middle class. I am sorry, but that is not the situation of many Canadians.

The point coming from this budget is that instead of sunny ways, we are getting darker days coming forward. I do not know where the economy is going. We on this side of the House stand at every opportunity to point out to the Liberals what they are doing, what Canadians want, and why they are on the wrong track.

This budget will not in any way provide any kind of comfort to Canadians who are working very hard. Canadians pay their taxes. Ask Canadians, and they will pay their taxes. However, the friends of the Liberals, as we have found out from the paradise papers, are not paying their taxes. They are trying to hide from paying taxes. Who are these rich friends? Who do they belong to? They do not belong to the NDP Party. They do not belong to the Conservative Party. They belong to the Liberal Party, the party of the rich. It is the rich who are trying not to pay their fair taxes.

Let us look at one very simple thing. The chief Liberal Party fundraiser, Mr. Bronfman, is now the best friend of the Prime Minister. He hosts Liberal fundraising dinners for him. He calls his buddies, the rich guys, and tells them to come. Then they lobby the government, so they can find the loopholes to avoid paying taxes.

Government Orders

Is that the kind of government we want, where government officials and their friends use their influence to create those loopholes not to pay taxes? A prime example is the finance minister and his use of loopholes, and now Mr. Bronfman and all the others are using loopholes. They said they did not break any laws. It is not about breaking laws; it is about accountability and being honest. They are all taking advantage of what is available in Canada.

I say this to the other side: sunny days are over for Canadians. We will hold the government accountable, and in 2019 Canadians will speak.

• (1205)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague said at one point that he did not know where the economy is going. I do, and I can fill him in on that.

We have the lowest unemployment rate now. We are the leading economy in terms of growth in the G7. The government is investing in children. The government is investing in lowering the small corporate tax rate. The economy is heading in a great direction.

The member also mentioned that he believes the previous government laid the foundation for what we now have, for what we are experiencing now. I simply do not buy that. The Conservatives had 10 years. If they had held office for only two years and somehow had made the policy decisions that we have, I might be inclined to believe that. However, the Conservatives had 10 years and they were unable to accomplish it.

How does the member justify that comment?

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, it is straightforward and simple. They have been in government for only a year and a half. A government does not suddenly come to power and cause massive change in that short time. The foundation of these policies was laid by our Conservative government before the Liberals came to power.

No matter what the member says, whether he believes it or does not, the facts do not change that it was the policies of the Conservative government that laid the foundation for the very strong economy these guys are trying to take credit for.

My question for him is very simple. Where is the Prime Minister? Canadians are upset. Canadians do not know where this economy is going. He should be telling Canadians what he is going to do about it, instead of raising taxes, having his friends hide their income from taxes and his finance minister not even following the accountability laws of our country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

Unfortunately, I missed part of it. Perhaps he spoke about the fact that we were discussing this morning, among other things, the possibility of the Speaker of the House separating out certain elements that were not included in the initial budget. An omnibus bill is always a complex matter for us, and we are wondering whether we should support it or not. The question is whether the subjects that were not announced in the budget initially could be voted on separately.

I would like my colleague to comment on that.

[*English*]

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, no matter if it is an omnibus bill or anything else, we have an opportunity to talk about the issues we want to talk about. We can pick up the issues that we feel the government is wrong about and talk about them. It is not a very big hurdle if we are debating a question that we feel is important.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, the hon. member referenced the Asian infrastructure bank buried deep within this omnibus bill, a type of bill that I remind the House the Liberals said they would not put forward. The Liberal government plans to give \$500 million to that bank. Could the hon. member speak to the risks associated with Canadian taxpayers investing money in that bank that will go to China?

• (1210)

Hon. Deepak Obhrai: Madam Speaker, it is simple and straightforward. There is no benefit for Canada going into that bank. That bank is an arm of China to increase its influence in Asia, because that is where that money will go. It has nothing to do with the Canadian taxpayer. We get nothing out of it. We are just putting money in there. What is the point?

We are already partners with the existing Asian Development Bank and are doing the same things with it. There is no need for us to do anything with the newer Asian infrastructure bank that is promoting the foreign interests of the Chinese government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Sudbury, Lib.): Madam Speaker, today I have the great honour and pleasure to speak to Bill C-63, the budget implementation act, 2017, no. 2.

In recent days, we have seen that there is a great deal of interest in the budget, and for good reason. In 2015, Canadians made a choice. They could choose between a government that would continue to slash investments in Canadians or a government that would invest in Canadians.

We made the very well-thought-out decision to invest in Canadians. From the outset, we cut taxes for the middle class and we raised them for the wealthiest 1% in Canada. The choice was crystal clear: we chose to take this money and reinvest it in the middle class.

Furthermore, in our election platform we promised to provide a significantly higher Canada child benefit.

[*English*]

The increase in the Canada child benefit is having a major effect on the Canadian population. The investment is providing middle-class Canadians and Canadians who have a hard time making ends meet with more money to invest in their children and their families.

Government Orders

In my riding of Sudbury alone, we are seeing 7,100 payments a month, benefiting over 12,270 children. The total investment coming into my riding every month as a result is more than \$4 million, and that is repeated across Canada. We are seeing this on a monthly basis. The effect is significant, because with the old system the Conservatives had put in place, everyone received the same amount of money. In my riding we would only have received \$1.3 million of investment a month under it. We are now seeing \$4 million. It also has an effect on small businesses.

People can play sports now because they have more money. They are able to invest in their children's education and activities. Just putting bread on the table, ensuring a healthy lifestyle, is important. I am really proud that we are seeing that on a daily basis.

[*Translation*]

As we conveyed this month, we also want to continue investing in small business.

[*English*]

Small business is the backbone of our economy. That is why a few weeks back the Minister of Finance announced reductions in the taxes on small business from 10.5% to 10% next year and 9% in 2019. That will be the lowest tax rate on small business in the G7. Many other countries do not have this low rate of tax.

The reason we want a low rate is very simple: we want small business to continue to invest, grow, and expand their businesses across municipalities, provinces, and nationally. It is key for our economy that we allow small business owners to continue investing and growing, because it results in middle-class jobs that stimulate the economy.

We are seeing the effects of the increased Canada child benefit and reduced taxes on the middle class. The middle class are reinvesting money in our economy. Over the last few years, we have seen 450,000 new jobs created in Canada alone. The unemployment rate has been dropping since, and is actually at its lowest level since 2008. In my riding of Sudbury as well, we are seeing the lowest unemployment rate in years, even though we have the mining sector in my area, which is not doing that well. However, we are pulling through and the economy is doing well. We are looking forward to the mining sector coming back up, and the effect it will have on our economy in the natural resource industry in Sudbury and northern Ontario.

I am also quite proud of the fact that we have invested in veterans. The previous government had cut services and benefits for veterans drastically in the hope of trying to balance its budget. We believe in reinvesting. We have done that by starting over and bringing back a lot of the veterans' services offices, investing in caregivers for veterans, and investing in the possibility of veterans furthering their education. This is going to have a profound effect on veterans, and we are not done. We will continue to invest in our veterans in Canada.

Another thing I kept hearing about on the campaign trail was infrastructure and housing, and how there had been lack of investment and direction by the previous government over 10 years. It did nothing on the housing side, which had become almost a crisis situation in Canada. We are investing a record amount of capital to

ensure that the housing services industry in Canada for the people who need it the most is operating properly and efficiently. That is why \$11 billion was announced in the last budget, which is in addition to the money already invested in the 2016 budget. We are continuing to invest in housing in Canada, and that has played a major role in the social determinants of health, which has a major and important impact across Canada.

In that housing envelope, it is key that we are also investing in off-reserve housing for indigenous individuals. I am seeing that in my riding of Sudbury. People had come to me pleading that we continue the investments in housing in Sudbury. The last budget addressed that properly. The envelope for off-reserve housing alone was increased to \$225 million.

When we talk about indigenous peoples, an additional \$3.4 billion was tabled in the 2016 budget. Where will this money go? It will go to infrastructure and health. We know there is a complete lack of investment in these sectors. The indigenous population is increasing and we need to invest in them. That is why I was so proud that we are doing what we said we would do on the campaign trail and investing in the infrastructure and health of indigenous communities. This is not just a one-time thing: it has to be a continuing investment over the next generation. I hope it will continue.

Another important investment made was with respect to youth employment. We promised to increase youth employment across Canada, and youth unemployment is now at an all-time low in Canada. In my riding alone, we have seen over 280 jobs for youth created in 2017 alone. On top of that, we want to ensure that the necessary conditions for youth employment are done properly. That is why we eliminated unpaid internships. Basically, if someone is going to be doing internships, they have to be rewarded properly for the work they do.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, we promised to invest in the economy, in infrastructure, and in first nations and veterans, and we are keeping our promises to Canadians.

I would also like to mention the major investment we are making in superclusters. Canada is currently holding a competition to choose five Canadian groups to receive an investment of more than \$900 million over the next few years. By investing in five different engines of growth in Canada's economy, we hope to double the jobs they create.

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Our party wants to create more jobs for Canadians and improve the quality of life for Canada's middle class. We are going to continue working on this goal. That is why the supercluster program will really have a positive effect. We want to help Canadian groups in the agriculture, mining, forestry, and fisheries sectors. We have received more than 50 funding applications from groups in these sectors. There are now nine groups across Canada in the running for the funding announced in the budget.

These are the things that will transform Canada and create the jobs we so sorely need. Our goal is to create that wealth. That is why I am very proud to support Bill C-63, to ensure a brighter future for all Canadians.

• (1220)

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, the government is investing \$500 million in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. That bank is currently funding two pipeline projects, one in Azerbaijan and another in Bangladesh, while the government has worked to kill northern gateway. The Prime Minister says one thing and does another with respect to Trans Mountain. The government's mismanagement of the energy sector has resulted in the cancellation of energy east.

Would the hon. member for Sudbury not agree that, instead of funding pipeline projects in Bangladesh and Azerbaijan, it would be better to build pipelines here in Canada to get Alberta energy to market?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, clearly the hon. member forgets the last 10 years when no pipelines were built by the previous government. We are on the cusp, and have certainly allowed Trans Mountain to move forward. We need to realize that industry will decide if it wants to invest in pipelines across this country. We want to make sure that the regulatory framework is there, and that it is a solid framework that Canadians can believe in. We have done that. We made sure that all aspects, environment, social, and indigenous communities, were properly consulted, something that had not been done by the previous government. We have done that, and now it is up to industry to decide if it wants to build its own pipelines.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to talk about the environment. As members know, Fiji is presiding over COP23 in Bonn, which is in its first week.

An article currently in *Le Devoir* is headlined “Commitments too weak to avoid climate disaster.” It issues a warning about our weak greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments, which could result in disaster situations.

There is a tiny measure for geothermal projects, but does the member not think we should be going much further? For starters, the government needs to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. It is ridiculous that we are still spending billions of dollars on fossil fuel subsidies, when we made an international commitment quite some time ago to eliminate them. There is nothing to encourage greater emphasis on the energy shift towards renewables.

Why did the update not include a more serious plan? We are currently at COP23, in the middle of a conference on climate change.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his important question.

With regard to the investments that we proposed in budget 2016-17, I would like to say that, when we talk about superclusters, we are talking about economic sectors that we want to transform in order to make them greener and more successful.

That will help us to meet our targets with respect to the environment. It is important to continue to invest because we firmly believe that investments in the environment go hand-in-hand with the economy. We need to strike a balance. That is what our government is proposing to do, and that is what we are continuing to do right now.

I am proud of the many initiatives that have been put forward, including those involving superclusters, which will create jobs while helping to make Canada's economy greener.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question about the form of the bill. It is a mammoth bill, with many pages, that affects a number of departments. However, the Liberal Party promised during the election campaign that it would not introduce any omnibus bills like this.

Is my colleague disappointed with the form of this omnibus bill?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre: Madam Speaker, this is an ambitious bill because there are a number of things that need to be accomplished. We made promises to Canadians during the last election. We need to make sure that we meet those objectives, and that is what this bill does.

[English]

Mr. Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on Bill C-63, the budget implementation act.

During the last election, the Prime Minister criss-crossed the country, running on a platform entitled, “Real Change: A new plan for a strong middle class”. Given that Bill C-63 would directly impact the middle class, as the policies and actions of the government over the last two years have, it is a fair time in this debate to ask how the middle class is faring under the Liberal government.

Government Orders

To begin with, the taxes of the middle class are going up. I know the mantra of the government is to say that it has cut taxes for the middle class while increasing taxes for the wealthy, except that is plainly false. According to one study recently issued by the Fraser Institute, 81% of middle-class Canadians have seen their taxes go up, on average, by \$840 a year. For every tax reduction that the government has announced, supposedly targeted at the middle class, those cuts have been offset by tax increases elsewhere. In other words, this is a government that gives with one hand and takes with the other. What the bottom line means for the pocketbook of the vast majority of middle-class Canadians is that their taxes have gone up, not down. So much for a plan to strengthen the middle class. Instead of a plan to strengthen the middle class, what we really have seen from the government is a plan to nickel and dime middle-class Canadians.

The Prime Minister, who portrays himself as such a champion of middle-class Canadians and ran on a platform that was centred on the middle class, has led a government that has done such things as eliminate the public transit tax credit. I do not think there are many multi-millionaire CEOs who get around on public transit. Perhaps there are some and for those who do, the public transit tax credit pretty much meant nothing to them, but for the tens of thousands of Canadians who go to work each and every day by public transit, the public transit tax credit meant something to them, something that the Liberal government has taken away. So much again for a plan to strengthen the middle class.

Then there was the mean-spirited attempt by the government to tax employee discounts. In other words, the government decided to go after waiters and retail workers who might have gotten a discount on a pair of jeans or maybe a cheeseburger at the end of a long shift. I guess that is what the Prime Minister means by being compassionate. I guess what the Prime Minister means by standing up for the middle class is going after retail workers, going after waiters, and going against the most vulnerable members of our society.

Of course, we now learn that the Prime Minister has a new target, namely, diabetic Canadians, because the government is making it harder for diabetic Canadians to take advantage of a disability tax credit. Before the Liberal government was elected, about 80% of applicants received that tax credit. Today, it is the exact opposite: about 80% of Canadians are denied that tax credit. The average cost to a diabetic Canadian annually, in terms of cost for care and so on, is about \$15,000. I know that for the silver-spooned Prime Minister and his multi-millionaire finance minister, \$15,000 is chump change.

• (1225)

However, for the vast majority of Canadians, \$15,000 is a lot, and \$15,000 on anything can make the difference between putting food on the table and paying down a mortgage to stay in one's home. Instead of helping those diabetic Canadians who incur, on average, \$15,000 in expenses annually, and instead of helping to make their lives a little easier, the government is making it more difficult for them to receive that tax credit. It is absolutely shameful. It is just disgusting.

Of course, in the last few months, the Prime Minister announced that he was going after another group of middle-class Canadians,

namely small business owners and farmers. He insulted them. He called them tax cheats. The Prime Minister's solution to deal with these middle-class tax cheats, as he called them, was to, without consultation, try to ram through some of the largest changes to the Income Tax Act in more than 40 years, which in turn would result in massive tax increases on small business owners and farmers, mostly a middle-class group of people that the Prime Minister calls tax cheats.

Well, as it turns out, the real tax cheats are not hard-working, middle-class small business owners who create jobs and take risks. No, the real tax cheats are the Prime Minister's friends and cronies, including none other than Stephen Bronfman, who was the Prime Minister's leadership campaign chairman. He was the chief fundraiser for the Liberal Party. We know from the paradise papers that he has been funnelling millions of dollars to tax-free offshore accounts in such places as the Cayman Islands. If the Prime Minister is looking for tax cheats, he should not look to the middle-class small businesses and farmers, but he should look among his own friends. I think he would find plenty of tax cheats among them, including his chief fundraiser.

What is the deal in terms of hiking taxes on middle-class Canadians, shaking down waiters and retail workers, declaring war on small business owners and farmers? There is really a very simple explanation, which is that over the last two years, the current government's spending has been absolutely out of control.

We all remember when the Prime Minister made the commitment to Canadians that he would run short-term deficits of no more than \$10 billion in the first year and no more than \$10 billion in the second year, but not to worry, because Canada would return to a balanced budget in 2019. However, what we have seen from the government instead is a deficit in the first year that was more than twice what the Prime Minister promised. This year, it is going to again be twice as large. Instead of a plan to return to a balanced budget, we see no plan at all. Indeed, there is no end in sight to the writ red ink. The government is projected to add as much as \$70 billion in new debt by the end of its term in 2019. Talk about fiscal vandalism. As a result, the government has tried to find revenue wherever it can.

• (1230)

The Liberals have been looking to shake down and squeeze hard-working middle-class Canadians. The Prime Minister offered Canadians a new plan to strengthen the middle class, but what he has actually delivered is a plan to shake down middle-class Canadians. Bill C-63 is all about that. Sadly, it should come as no surprise. We have seen a Prime Minister who has not kept his word, who breaks promises, who says one thing and does another, and who genuinely believes there is one standard for middle-class Canadians and another standard for Liberal elites, himself and his finance minister. It is why he was so busy working overtime to target middle-class small-business owners, while doing absolutely nothing to increase taxes on big multinational publicly traded companies.

Bill C-63 deserves to be defeated.

Government Orders

•(1235)

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy hearing my colleague speak, including during question period when he is not asking a question.

I want to address something the member said at the beginning of his speech. He talked about the middle class and how it was not being helped out. He said, “so much for strengthening the middle class”. However, we know the economy is thriving. We are the leading country in growth among the G7 countries. More is being invested in the middle class, as we can see. This party believes that when the middle class is doing well, the economy is doing well.

Given the fact that the economy is doing well, does the member not believe that creating a strong middle class makes a strong economy?

Mr. Michael Cooper: Madam Speaker, the government inherited a strong economic foundation as a result of nine and a half years of prudent Conservative economic policies. Quite frankly, over the last two years the Liberals have been doing everything to screw it up. That is really the fact of the matter.

The member talks about the economy doing so well, but in fact there has been a slowdown in GDP. GDP is expected to be less this year than it was in 2015. With respect to jobs created, nearly half of those have been created in the public sector rather than the private sector, which is not sustainable. With respect to the relatively minor drop in the unemployment rate, a large part of that is attributable to the fact that labour participation rate has decreased.

Therefore, I beg to differ when the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands says that the economic picture is rosy. It, in fact, is cloudy and stormy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is going to vote against the budget implementation bill, mainly because of the way it was introduced. Bill C-63 is a 318-page omnibus bill. It amends 19 acts and creates a new one. Some of the measures are budgetary, but others have absolutely nothing to do with the budget. What is more, they are all mixed in with such a hodgepodge of technical measures that we cannot debate the bill properly. Here is what the Prime Minister had to say about omnibus bills during the election campaign, and I quote:

Stephen Harper has also used omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly reviewing and debating his proposals. We will...bring an end to this undemocratic practice.

What a great promise. Yes, this is an undemocratic practice, and I am not the one who said it. Members can read it for themselves on page 30 of the Liberal Party's election platform. However, we are starting to get used to the government's shell games.

Every time the Liberals introduce a new bill, it is the things they do not say that we need to be careful of. For example, six months ago, they hid a measure in their last mammoth bill, Bill C-44, that would do no less than give investors in the Canada infrastructure bank the power to disregard Quebec's laws. There was no agricultural zoning, no environmental protections, and no municipal zoning. Under the bill, Toronto bankers were considered agents of the federal crown and could do whatever they wanted in Quebec.

Six months before that, the Liberals sought to give Toronto bankers another gift with Bill C-29, another mammoth bill. On that occasion, the government was seeking to allow bankers to circumvent Quebec's consumer protection legislation. To heck with consumers and the little people who are getting ripped off, we know that the government reports to Bay Street.

Today, we are being presented another omnibus budget implementation bill. Once again, the government has a nasty surprise for us. On page 277 of the document and on the following pages, we see that the government is amending the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. With this apparently innocuous, or at least highly technical, amendment, it is establishing the legislative architecture for imposing a federal tax on cannabis.

We all know that cannabis will be legal in eight months. From that point on, the federal government will no longer have a role to play. All it will have to do is pocket the tax it is setting up in this bill. Healthcare services, prevention, drug treatment and public safety will all be under Quebec's jurisdiction. It will be very expensive.

In other words, the government is creating a problem, telling the provinces to deal with it and making money all at the same time. Quebec and the other provinces are saying that they need more time. We understand that the Prime Minister is really intent on rolling his joint in front of the cameras on Canada Day 2018, but the government's attitude toward Quebec is nothing less than scandalous. It is shovelling problems into Quebec's and the other provinces' yards, and has the gall to make money as a result.

The government cannot hide behind the fact that Quebec can impose further taxes if it so desires. It does not work that way. There is a maximum price beyond which black market cannabis will be less expensive for consumers. The Parliamentary Budget Officer said so. He issued a warning. If the government tries to make marijuana a cash cow, it might very well foster organized crime. In Bill C-63, the government is opening the door to this possibility.

The Bloc Québécois recently introduced a bill to prevent outlaw motorcycle clubs from acting like rock stars, waving their banners, intimidating citizens and making a show of force. However, the Liberals and the other parties did not even want to read the bill, and rejected it out of hand. I am therefore not surprised that the government is not concerned about organized crime. However, with Bill C-63, it will be giving organized crime yet another break.

The provinces will have to lower taxes and forgo revenues so that the Hell's Angels' cannabis is not a better deal than cannabis sold legally. For that reason alone, I encourage all hon. members to oppose the bill. It is scandalous.

However, there is more. The main reason why we are disappointed with Bill C-63 is because of what it does not contain. There is nothing at all in the bill to solve the problem of tax havens.

Madam Speaker, you may not have noticed, but we are celebrating an anniversary today: it has been exactly four months since the government signed the OECD's multilateral convention to prevent tax evasion and tax havens.

Government Orders

●(1240)

Canada signed the BEPS Project agreement on July 7, but it has not yet ratified it, because Canadian law, essentially the Income Tax Act, does not meet the agreement's requirements. Today, four months later, how many measures from the international agreement are included in Bill C-63? Not a single one.

We are extremely disappointed, but not particularly surprised. I have been a member of the House for two years now. Almost every day, I see the exceptionally powerful lobbying of the five major Canadian banks on Bay Street in Toronto. The Minister of Finance, himself a major shareholder of Morneau Shepell, uses tax havens, is involved in financial schemes and advises people to use tax havens to divert money from Canada.

For example, his company advised the Bahamas on how to better attract Canadian insurance companies. It is written on the website of the Minister of Finance's company. It is also written that he advised Barbados, Bermuda and the Cayman Islands in methods of fostering access for his client companies.

In terms of economic policy, there is not much difference with the previous government. The Prime Minister is a great communicator, but the fact remains that this is an old government that is more interested in finances than in Canadians. The financial lobby runs Ottawa when it comes to economic matters. This is nothing new. Paul Martin had a shipping company registered in Barbados so he would not have to pay income tax.

If you look at the Income Tax Act, the Bank Act or the Canada infrastructure bank, you can see that Canada's economic development is wholly based on the interests of the financial lobby in Toronto. After Barbados in the 1990s, Stephen Harper's Conservative government legalized 22 more tax havens in 2009 by signing tax information exchange agreements.

Last spring, the Liberals added the Cook Islands to the list. That is the history of Canada. The financial community has the government's ear, and, really, who is governing who? The Minister of National Revenue keeps repeating that we are investing historic amounts, "zillions and zillions", in the fight against tax evasion and that the net is tightening. I am all for prosecuting fraud, but the problem lies elsewhere. Essentially, the use of tax havens is perfectly legal in Canada. That is the real problem. As legislators, that is the problem that concerns us here in the House.

When the minister says that the net is tightening on those who abuse the system, she is mistaken. It is still wide open. For example, Canada accounts for 2% of global GDP, and yet, last summer, the IMF reported that three Canadian banks, the Royal Bank, Scotiabank and the CIBC, represent 80% of all banking assets in Barbados, Grenada and the Bahamas. In the eight other tax havens that make up the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, Canadian banks own 60% of banking assets. That is considerable.

Canada is not an economic superpower, but it is a superpower in tax havens. Nothing in Bill C-63 addresses this problem. Every Canadian has to pay the income tax that these freeloaders are not. The middle class that the government is so fond of talking about will be footing the bill. The regulatory framework was written

specifically to allow banks and multinationals to avoid paying income tax in Canada.

I say "regulatory framework" because the problem is in the regulations. No tax treaty condones the use of tax havens. Even the treaty with Barbados does not cover the empty shells that enjoy tax breaks in that country. As for the other tax havens, Canada has not signed tax treaties with them. When you look at the Income Tax Act, it does not condone tax havens, either. When Parliament passed the act and adopted the treaties, it never condoned tax havens. Members of Parliament did their job and prohibited them. It is the government that failed in its task. In obscure regulations, it contravened Parliament's decisions. It decreed by regulation that the act and the treaties adopted by Parliament do not apply, and that bank profits can be exempted by having them go through the West Indies.

For this reason, and because of what this mammoth contains and does not contain, we will be opposing it.

●(1245)

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for his well thought out speech.

He spoke about tax havens, and I would like to remind him that several experts have mentioned that they are in effect a legalized scam. I still cannot believe that more information has been revealed last Sunday. After the Panama papers, we now have the paradise papers. We now know that the Liberal Party's top bagmen, the people very close to the Prime Minister, profited from tax schemes that can be described as a legalized scam. The hon. member mentions that it is unbelievable that this is not included in the economic update.

In his opinion, what does it mean that there is nothing in the bill about doing away with tax havens?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummond for his intervention.

The paradise papers reveal a huge scandal. As far as I know, it is the largest document leak we have ever seen pertaining to tax havens. What do they reveal? Thousands of Canadians are using this scheme lawfully, or right up to the very line of legality. What do we learn from them? We learn that former Canadian prime ministers, both Liberal and Conservative, are on that list and that the Prime Minister's bagman and close friend was caught red-handed.

Now we begin to see why the Liberals seem so unwilling to address this problem. Their own cronies are the ones benefiting from it. This has to change. Canadians need to stand united, challenge the government, and speak out. We need to demand change. The government is increasing its debt load and slashing services, while claiming that its hands are tied and it has no other choice. Meanwhile, its millionaire friends head down south to tax havens with their golden tickets. This has to change.

●(1250)

Ms. Christine Moore: Madam Speaker, would you mind calling quorum? I think it would be worthwhile. Before my colleagues continue the debate, I would like to confirm that we have quorum.

And the count having been taken:

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mrs. Carol Hughes): We do have a quorum in the House at the moment.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech today.

My colleague talked about everything that has been going on with the Minister of Finance over the past few weeks.

Does the hon. member think that the Minister of Finance has the confidence of every Canadian?

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question.

The Minister of Finance is supposed to pass legislation affecting the economy and guide his government on economic matters. We now know more about his business interests and might wonder whose interests he is serving. Is he governing for the entire population or for his company?

Just before being appointed Minister of Finance, he was still a senior executive at his company. He recently announced that he would sell millions of shares, but for the past two years were his decisions primarily motivated by how they could potentially benefit his company financially?

When I moved a motion to combat tax evasion in Barbados, every member of the Liberal Party voted against the motion with one exception. We wonder whether the Minister of Finance had a say in that. We know that his company has a subsidiary in Barbados. On the company's website it says that its work on Canadian pension funds includes arrangements in Barbados and people are invited to contact the company. When the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, and the entire government are making decisions, whose interests are they serving? That is the question. This seriously undermines our trust in him, that is for sure.

An hon. member: A blatant conflict of interest.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity today to speak in this debate about Bill C-63, the second act implementing the budget tabled last March in this place. It is a big bill. It is 329 pages and would amend 19 pieces of legislation. It is unfortunate that in recent years budget implementation bills have become so enormous, and the government has allowed so little time for their debate and study, that we cannot possibly discuss them effectively.

This bill changes labour laws. It lays the foundation for Canada's membership in the Asian infrastructure bank. I know there have been points of order raised about whether the bill can be legally considered an omnibus bill under the new Standing Order 69.1. I will not comment on that, but its sheer size is concerning.

One would think that in all those pages, there would be a lot of good news for Canadians. There are a few bits of sunshine there, particularly in provisions that would change the labour code to make the workplace a more flexible place and put in place some protections for unpaid interns. We in the NDP would like to see some of these provisions go a bit further, but in general, we salute

any measures that recognize the difficulties workers face these days. These changes are certainly a step in the right direction.

There are some other things I was happy to see, such as support for geothermal projects, although it is tepid, as my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands said. There is a reduction in subsidies for the fossil fuel industry.

There are some good issues raised in the bill, but really, there could have been so much more good news in such a huge bill. We are very disappointed about what is actually missing.

Before the budget was tabled last March, the NDP sent the finance minister a letter outlining some of the things we thought could and should be done to really help average Canadians, really help the middle class and those wanting to join it.

I would like to talk a bit about the items that are missing from the budget. These are truly missed opportunities to help Canadians. First is pharmacare. I know the parliamentary budget officer came out with a report only recently that showed that we could save over \$4 billion a year in Canada if we instituted a universal pharmacare program that offered free prescription drugs to all Canadians. That is right. We could save billions of dollars while providing free prescription drugs. Canadians would be wealthier and healthier.

The finance minister did not have access to that report, so perhaps that is why he did not include it in the budget, but there were other, earlier reports, just as credible, that estimated even larger savings, more than \$11 billion a year, under the same program. The Liberals voted against an NDP motion last month that simply called for talks with the provinces to begin within a year to look at how such a program could be structured. I am hoping this is not a case of the government not wanting to give credit to the NDP for such a good idea, which would make life better for all Canadians, and that by next spring they will quietly slip universal pharmacare into the 2018 budget. Better late than never.

Another item the Liberals forgot to include in the 2017 budget, and the 2016 budget for that matter, was their promise to do away with the CEO stock option tax loophole. That would have saved Canadians over \$750 million a year. The Liberals promised that in the last election. They decided not to go after CEOs. Instead, this summer they went after small businesses across the country. They are going after the small fry, the minnows, instead of the big fish.

Speaking of big fish, we also asked the finance minister to enact legislation in the budget to close down offshore tax havens. Now the paradise papers have shown us why they might not have wanted to do that. It was to protect the Liberals who are using these offshore tax havens to avoid paying their fair share of taxes in Canada.

Government Orders

It is a little ironic to hear the Conservatives asking the finance minister about Morneau Shepell's tax shelter in Barbados, when it was their government that signed the tax treaty with Barbados to allow Morneau Shepell to avoid paying its fair share. However, the inaction on the part of the Liberals is just as disappointing. In fact, they keep on creating offshore tax havens. They just signed a new treaty with the Cook Islands.

● (1255)

We also asked the finance minister to institute a \$15-an-hour minimum wage for federal workers. This would have been a great signal to the country that the federal government recognizes that many hard-working Canadians cannot possibly live on the minimum wages they receive for their work. Now the move for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage has been taken up by the governments of B.C. and Alberta, and hopefully that good policy will spread across this country. Hopefully, the federal government will make that move for federal workers in next year's budget.

We also asked the minister about the eco-energy retrofit program. I would like to spend some time on that subject. It is one that is close to my heart. I actually tabled a private member's motion that called on the government to reintroduce the eco-energy retrofit program, because it is one of those government initiatives that is actually a win-win-win-win for the government, the economy, homeowners, and the environment.

This popular program ran from 2007 to 2012 and helped hundreds of thousands of Canadians retrofit their homes, lowering their energy bills by 20%. It created thousands of good local jobs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by three tonnes per year for each house.

While the program cost the federal government \$900 million over five years, it leveraged more than \$4 billion in retrofit investments by Canadian families. The government got five times the economic impact from its investment. When homeowners invest in new windows, insulation, and other energy-saving projects, when they shop at building supply stores in their own communities, that money circulates through their communities and across the country.

When I talk to the Canadian Home Builders' Association here or in my riding, they remind me of the huge positive impact that program had on their members and homeowners everywhere. They really noticed the negative impact when the program was, unfortunately, cancelled.

The government wants infrastructure investment. It wants to reduce carbon emissions. It wants to help the middle class. The eco-energy retrofit program would be a perfect way to do all of that, a proven way, something the federal government could get started on right away, because it has been done before. I know it was the Conservative government that did it before, and the NDP have been reminding the Liberals that it is a good idea, but it is really too good an idea to let partisan politics get in the way.

I could go on, but I think I will stop here. Suffice it to say that Bill C-63, like the budget itself, has been a huge missed opportunity for the government and for all Canadians. We will all have to wait until next year for an improvement, but it will be more than a day late and a dollar short.

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to ask my colleague to clarify something for me. Since coming to power, the Liberals have been talking ad nauseam about the middle class, which has a very different definition depending on the speaker.

In my riding, the average salary is about \$32,000 a year. When I take a look at the various Liberal measures to support the middle class, it seems that people need to earn between \$80,000 and \$100,000 a year to benefit from them. I am referring to, among other things, the tax cuts that do not affect low earners, or most of my constituents.

Given the positive economic times we are currently experiencing, wealth is being created, but why are the Liberals not doing a better job of distributing this wealth by implementing such measures as the \$15-per-hour minimum wage, which would give those who earn the least some room to breathe?

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, the Liberals, as we hear ad nauseam, talk about how they want to help the middle class, and then they introduce tax measures that lower taxes for people who make \$80,000, \$150,000, or \$200,000 a year. They do almost nothing for people who make \$50,000 a year and do nothing for those who make less than \$45,000 a year.

That is a huge number of Canadians. I do not know the exact number, but probably the majority of Canadians make less than \$45,000 a year. One of the first times I rose in this House a couple of years ago I asked a Liberal colleague that question. He went on about how his constituents were applauding him for that move. I looked online to see what the average income was in his riding. I found out that 80% of the people in his riding would not benefit at all from that tax measure.

It is amazing that the Liberals think they are helping the middle class, when they are doing nothing for them.

Mr. Mark Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am quite puzzled by my colleague's lack of interest in some of the initiatives in the bill.

Let me reference a couple of the things the bill would do. The bill would put measures in place that would give greater flexibility for Canadians working in federally regulated industries to balance work and family responsibilities. It would increase flexibility for annual vacation days and holidays, provide more bereavement days, and provide more unpaid leave for family responsibilities.

The member is a New Democrat. He is a member of a party that touts itself as being progressive in the House. How can he stand up and vote against these initiatives when the time comes to vote?

Government Orders

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, my colleague was not listening to my speech because I specifically mentioned those issues are some of the few things that the NDP really likes in the budget. We support them, but Bill C-63 is an omnibus bill. We only have one choice and that is to vote yes or no to the whole bill. That is the real tyranny of omnibus bills. If we could fix that, it would help us support those issues.

We would love to support them. We want workers to have more flexible workplaces. We want to protect unpaid interns but we cannot do that when it is one of the few little nuggets of gold amidst this huge pile of stuff that we really do not like. We do support those things but they are in an omnibus budget bill so we are forced to vote against the bill.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. He is obviously very familiar with the circumstances of the people in his riding. That is to his credit.

I would like to ask him whether he is optimistic that the NDP will be successful and the Speaker will rule that it is possible to have a separate vote on the elements that were not announced in the initial budget.

That would be a good thing because when we hear the comments of our colleague opposite, we lose hope and that fuels cynicism.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Cannings: Madam Speaker, I am hopeful, because if we could split these huge bills into smaller parts, it would improve the way that we work in the House. There are just so many different things in these huge budget bills, for example, 19 changes, 19 statutes. It is very difficult to vote for them en masse in any real meaningful way.

Yes, I am hopeful that we will come to a good resolution with respect to this legislation and others like it will be split.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is an honour today to rise to speak on Bill C-63, which would amend the Budget Implementation Act.

Before I get started, I want to give a quick shout-out to my mother. It is her 70th birthday and I am far from home. I say, “Thanks, mom”.

A year ago, I tabled a bill, Bill C-312, for a national cycling strategy. In our country, we have seen soaring health care and infrastructure costs and we need to address our greenhouse gases. In the spirit of Bill C-312, I biked across my riding this summer. My riding is 8,500 square kilometres that consists of 10 nations, seven municipalities, and three regional districts. I had an opportunity to engage people in communities. I visited over 28 communities and had over 20 town halls. My speech today is really a reflection of what people wanted to see in the budget, what they want to see happen in their communities, and what they did not see.

The government likes to talk about a robust economy, job creation, and a growing economy, but that is not being seen in my riding of Courtenay—Alberni. In fact, it is the opposite. Raw log

exports have gone up tenfold in 10 years in the Alberni Valley, for example. Port Alberni has been identified as the city in British Columbia with the highest poverty rate. A third of children are living in poverty.

My riding needs a marine economy that works for it. We need to rehabilitate the sockeye salmon fishery. It was in a critical stage last summer and the decline of the stock has cost the local economy millions of dollars, but the multiplier effect is in the tens of millions of dollars. We need urgent investments in stock enhancement, rehabilitation, and salmon protection. The government likes to tout its oceans protection plan, but in its coastal restoration fund, it forgot places like the Somass River, which is critical for the sockeye in British Columbia. It is the third-highest returning river basin in coastal British Columbia.

There are great opportunities to create jobs in the port, which is the only deep-sea port on the west coast of Vancouver Island. The Port Alberni Port Authority has put forward some excellent projects that we hope the government will consider. They would create thousands of jobs in my riding. This is a place that had the highest median income in Canada in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and now has one of the lowest median incomes in Canada. The people of the Alberni Valley sent buckets of money to Ottawa when times were good. They are hoping they will get the same return, and they are not seeing that when they need it the most.

There are excellent opportunities in the aerospace sector. In my riding, there is a global leader, Coulson Aviation, which is selling firefighting expertise and technology around the world. It is that Canadian story, where it is not doing business here in Canada because of regulation and because the government is not doing local procurement. We need government to act on opportunities within our communities.

My riding has a great university, the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences, which is helping to unlock the potential of the 1.2 million Canadians who are out of work or injured in the workplace. We need to make this a priority. This would grow the GDP in our country, help empower people, give people hope who need it the most, and get workers back to work who have been injured in the workplace.

Government Orders

Seniors in my riding and across the country are demanding support for pharmacare, health care, affordable housing, and home care. My riding has an aging population, one of the highest median ages in the country. It is an urgent situation and we need support for initiatives and these important needs. Affordable housing is a huge issue in my riding as well. The spillover from Vancouver is going to Vancouver Island, Victoria, and Nanaimo. It is now going to rural communities, where housing affordability is becoming the biggest issue. The government made an announcement that it is investing \$11.2 billion over 10 years in affordable housing, but when we look at it closely, it is \$20 million in the first year and \$300 million by the next election. That is giving people false hope about the government's real commitment and real change to grow the middle class and help those who are not in it. This is urgent.

● (1310)

There are situations that are of serious and immediate concern. We have an opioid crisis, a fentanyl crisis, that is impacting our communities. In Port Alberni, for example, the Port Alberni Shelter Society, which is a group of people who are relying on local funds to open an overdose protection centre, needs urgent funds from Ottawa to keep that going. It is calling upon Ottawa to make sure this is identified as a national health emergency so that we can help combat that crisis.

We have great people in our communities who are working with people on the street. I have cited case studies here in the House about the cost-effectiveness of putting a roof over someone's head versus having someone live on the street. We know it makes sense.

People are concerned in my riding. They are concerned about the economy. They are concerned about social development and infrastructure. They are concerned about climate change. Floods, forest fires, storms, and seasonal changes are having a significant impact on our environment and our economy.

One thing that I noted on my journey, when going to the remote indigenous communities in my riding, was the people who are earning \$235 a month on income assistance in rural communities with 70% unemployment. That is unacceptable. In many of these communities, people have to travel to the grocery store, which is 45 minutes to an hour and a half away. Therefore, for people living in Hesquiat, it is \$50 each way to go to the grocery store just to buy groceries. That leaves them \$135 to get by on for clothing, medicine, and to survive. This is taking place here in Canada.

Fortunately, on October 1, John Horgan and the B.C. provincial government implemented an increase of \$100. However, people are still left with \$335 to pay for the water taxi to get to the grocery store, and we know they are not buying fresh food because they cannot afford it. This is at the same time that the Nuu-chah-nulth communities have been in court for over a decade. They had won their court case for the right to catch and sell fish, but the Government of Canada appealed that decision. It appealed that decision twice, not once, and twice it was thrown out by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. Instead of doing what it promised to do, which was to work on a nation-to-nation basis, it appealed and fought first nations in court. This is the same government that says that its most important relationship is with indigenous people, yet it is fighting them in court.

People earning \$335 a month are not looking for a handout, they are looking to do business with Canada and be a partner in Canada. That is the word from my friend Curtis Dick. My friend Ken Watts quoted his father the late George Watts, who said that they are just looking for "their rightful place in this country". These are communities that cannot access the fish that are swimming right by their villages. They can be part of this great story of Canada. They just want to feed their families. They want to grow an economy that works for everybody, and be a partner in this nation. They run on the principles of *isaak*, and that is respect. That is how they have approached Canada.

Canada needs to come back to the nations with the same respect. They need to get to the negotiating table and invest money. However, in this budget there is no money to give back to the nations. They have spent \$12 million instead of investing in programs because their food, economic security, and rights are a priority for them. Why will the government not, as an urgent priority, at least get the money they have spent in court back to the nations and stop spending taxpayers' money? Canada must have spent tens of millions of dollars fighting the very people with whom it says it has its most important relationship. As a priority and a way of life, the people of Nuu-chah-nulth live by "*hishuk ish tsawalk*", which means "everything is one". In their traditional territories, which they call their *ha-houlthee*, they treat everyone as one, and everything is interconnected. When the *Leviathan II* went down, these same people were pulling \$5 and \$10 out of their jars to buy gas to go and look for people from another country who were missing, because we are all interconnected.

It is time for Canada to do the right thing, to invest in ending poverty in these nations, and end these discriminatory policies of the past. I hope the government is listening today.

● (1315)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. I want to join him in wishing his mother a very happy birthday. She has every reason to be proud of her son's work.

We know that making a budget is all about making choices, whether it is a personal budget or a government budget. There are always more expenses than income. However, the Liberal government deliberately chose not to crack down on tax havens, which is causing us to lose at least \$8 billion a year, each and every year.

Is retrieving that money not the key to providing the funding necessary to meet the member's many goals?

[*English*]

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, a part of the speech I wish was able to get to about governing and choices. It is about choosing to ensure people have roofs over their head. It is choosing to resolve a court case with indigenous people to ensure they can access the rights we know they already have, and have won in the courts.

Government Orders

Instead, the government is choosing to protect CEO stock option loopholes, Bay Street, and tax havens. This is shameful. People in my community are dying. People are living without hope. We need to re-instill their hope by ensuring they are put first and foremost, which the policies of the government have not demonstrated.

The middle class-tax break has been forgotten. The government forgot about everybody earning \$45,000 a year or less. However, people can put their money in offshore tax accounts. The government protects CEOs on Bay Street, instead of doing the right thing.

I appreciate my colleague and his important values. Canadians know this is wrong and fundamentally unacceptable.

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2015, the NDP promised to balance the budget. The member talks about tax evaders and whatnot. We have invested a billion dollars to go after the tax cheats and offshore tax evaders. I am curious to find out if the member tells his constituents that if we had balanced budget, we would not have been able to do that.

We are not sure yet if his new leader will promise to balance the budget as well, which effectively means those members would not be able invest any dollars to go after tax evaders. Have the New Democrats changed their policy or do they still have the “steady as she goes” policy?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, it is really rich to hear my colleague from the Liberal government ask me about balanced budgets. The Liberals are running soaring budgets and creating policies to protect the very wealthy. Instead, they could be closing tax havens, investing that money into paying deficits, or into projects and opportunities for my community and people who need a lift up. Rather, the government is protecting its friends on Bay Street. We have seen that time and again.

Why would the Liberals not follow through with its promise to close CEO tax loopholes, and not support their commitment through an motion the NDP to close tax havens? They are sitting idly by while people have no roofs over their heads and are living without access to medicine. They are not dealing with their real promise to make Canada's indigenous peoples their most important relationship.

If the member came to my riding to see how the government is treating indigenous peoples, he would be ashamed, and so would the government. The Prime Minister has been to my riding and has met with the nations. He made a promise that he would resolve this court case, but he has not followed through on that.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said this would be a priority. However, the Liberal government has dragged its feet, just like the Conservatives and the Harper government did. The Liberals are leaving people to struggle every day to put food on their table and get to the grocery store.

• (1320)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talks about reducing of poverty. The government came forward with the Canada child benefit. It has had a significant impact on child poverty, and it will be indexed to the cost of inflation in this new budget implementation bill. I know it will improve the lives of my constituents who are struggling.

Could the member comment on this great new policy that has helped lift 40% of children out of poverty?

Mr. Gord Johns: Madam Speaker, I invite the member and his government to visit my riding. I live in a place with the highest child poverty in British Columbia. One-third of the children live in poverty. The member could come and learn what a national child care plan would do for people in our communities, what it would do to end indigenous children being in care or what giving money to the nations would so they could move forward and stop more children living in care. This was an opportunity. The child care tax benefit does not solve that. However, a national child care strategy and working with indigenous people would do just that.

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to the budget implementation act. The bill is supposed to be the Liberal government's plan going forward for managing the country's finances and for implementing policies that will make Canada a better, stronger, and more cohesive society. However, Canadians who elected the Liberal government to achieve that will be sorely disappointed. In fact, the bill would do the exact opposite.

Members may recall that when the Prime Minister ran for election, he promised Canadians many different things. He has failed to deliver on many of those. For example, he promised Canadians that he would run a prudent government, that he would run only small deficits of about \$10 billion. We know that promise is out the window. We know the Prime Minister promised solemnly that he would balance the budget within his term of government. Over a period of four years, he would run a few what he called small deficits and then he would return to balance. We now know the Prime Minister has no plan whatsoever to return to balanced budgets.

The budget implementation act would normally be a bit of a pointer, a signpost to the future, indicating that on such and such a date the government expected to be back to balance and to manage the finances of our country in a way that would not burden future generations with huge debt. We all know that when we run a deficit, at the end of the year, we are short some money. This money is either going to come from taxpayers or it is going to come from borrowing. Sadly, the government is committed to doing both. It is going to borrow heavily to finance its deficits and it is increasing taxes on so many different things, contrary to the promises the Liberals made to Canadians. Now we are at the end of the year and the government is even further in debt. Every year a deficit is run, the debt grows larger. That is what the budget implementation act would do. It shows Canadians, quite starkly, that the government does not know how to manage its finances.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister is now saying to future generations of Canadians, our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, that the government will spend widely today on itself and it will let future generations pay all that money back. By the way, he does not have a plan to balance budgets any time soon. It might be 10, 20 or 30 years out, but those kids can bet their boots that when they grow up, when take over the reins of power and when take their rightful place within Canada, they will have a huge debt hanging over their heads and they will have to repay it somehow, with interest.

That is the story of this budget implementation act. The act effectively would solidify the Prime Minister and his government as being spendthrifts and tax-and-spend Liberals. We have often hear the phrase tax-and-spend Liberals. It is true. It is in the DNA of the Liberals to tax Canadians to death and spend their money on their own priorities rather than on the priorities of Canadians.

This is an example of taxing to death. Since the Prime Minister was elected, he has increased taxes on hydro, gasoline, home heating, and health and dental benefits. Recently, he went after employee discounts. Imagine a McDonald's worker late at night, finishing off a shift, having a Big Mac and some fries. Now the Prime Minister is stepping in with his finance minister and saying that the burger will be taxed because it is an employee discount.

It goes on. The Liberals have eliminated income splitting for couples. Shame on them. This was a way of recognizing that Canadian couples deserved the kind of treatment afforded to single people.

● (1325)

The Liberals eliminated post-secondary tax credits, which helped parents educate their children so they would have good-paying jobs when they came out of university or trade school. They are even going after diabetics. Members will recall in the last few weeks that the government was caught with its finger in the cookie jar so to speak. It was disclosed that it is going after diabetics by taking away their ability to apply for the disability tax credit. The following week, it was disclosed that the Liberals were going after the mentally ill. We know that for half a year, they have been going after small business.

The Prime Minister promised solemnly that he would go after the rich fat cats and stand up for the middle class. Clearly, the middle class does not include small business people, diabetics, those who receive employee discounts, or the mentally ill. It is a scandal what the Prime Minister and his government are doing. They are breaking promise after promise to stand up for the middle class.

Today, 80% of middle-class Canadians pay more tax than they did before the Liberals came to power. It works out to about \$840 more each year that middle-class Canadians pay in tax. The Prime Minister will not acknowledge that during question period. He hides behind talking points. He talks about the middle class and those working hard to join it. He never defined the middle class, which certainly does not include diabetics, those who receive employee discounts, the mentally ill, or the autistic. It does not include small business people, like the pizza shop owners in my community of Abbotsford. They have kids who work hard in those pizza shops, trying to make a living. At the end of the day, the government told them that it wanted to tax them even more. If they left money in their

company, it would tax it at a rate of up to 73%. Imagine, 73% of tax on hard-working small businesses.

Then there is the scandal of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or AIIB. Instead of investing billions of dollars in building our own infrastructure, whether it be roads, bridges, urban transit, our ports, airports, inland ports, and seaports, the Prime Minister recently announced that Canada would join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This is a Chinese-led bank that will invest exclusively in Asia, not in Canada. There are no investments in Canada. They are all in Asia. He said that it would create jobs in Canada.

I would like to see the Prime Minister's plan for using the AIIB to make infrastructure investments in Canada and to create jobs. There is no guarantee that will happen. In fact, today Canadians already have the right to bid on jobs that are funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The reason Canadian companies do not get those jobs is because many of those bidding processes are ripe with corruption. Therefore, Canadians have difficulty competing in that marketplace. This will not change with the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Half a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayer money is what the Prime Minister has put into the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. This money will be spent in Asia, not creating jobs at home, not building infrastructure here.

We know the Prime Minister is immensely fond of China. This basic dictatorship that is China he has lauded, because it is efficient. It gets things done. Imagine that. He should be lauding Canada and how we are getting things done, and we are doing it by respecting human rights and the highest environmental standards.

Then we can talk about the broken promises on electoral reform. Remember that process?

● (1330)

The Prime Minister promised that the last election would be the last one under the first past the post system. He broke that promise. He held consultations across Canada that were a sham, and then he dropped it all. The Prime Minister misled Canadians, and come 2019, Canadians will hold him accountable.

Government Orders

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the debt, and I will come back to that a bit later. We have made significant investments in the middle class and in infrastructure, have reduced taxes on the middle class, and made enormous investments in infrastructure. All of that is paying off. The GDP growth rate is the best among the G7 countries. In my riding of Nepean and in Ottawa, the unemployment rate is the lowest in the last 10 years. Last month alone, we created 35,000 full-time jobs in Canada.

When we look at Canada's debt from 1997 to the current date, only between the years 1997 to 2008 did it actually go down. We have made a commitment to keep the debt to GDP rate low and are willing to do that. Can the hon. member comment on the growth rate we are achieving and our intention of maintaining a lower debt to GDP ratio?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, the fact that Canada is experiencing growth and job creation today is because of a Conservative government that invested heavily and responsibly in infrastructure before 2015. It kept taxes low on Canadians, moved infrastructure projects forward, and was supportive of the resource sector.

Today, we know there are lots of red flags in our economy. We know that foreign investment is fleeing Canada. It is avoiding Canada because we do not have regulatory certainty anymore. When a company from abroad wants to invest in Canada, it asks how long it will take to get its project approved, and it is told that it could be many years, or maybe never. Therefore, it is not going to be investing in Canada.

That is the sad part of this Liberal government. It has overturned all of the good things our previous Conservative government did to lay the basis for a sound economy.

• (1335)

Hon. Tony Clement (Parry Sound—Muskoka, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like the member to return to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank for a second. As a former trade minister, the hon. member knows a lot about how these international commercial arrangements in fact work.

I find it strange that a government that promised infrastructure in Canada for Canadians is now resorting to promising infrastructure and legislating infrastructure for Asian billionaires. Can the hon. member expand upon this, based on his tremendous experience with commercial agreements and international trade?

Hon. Ed Fast: Madam Speaker, when we were in government under Stephen Harper, we looked very carefully at the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and said no. Why? It was because it did not promote Canada's interests. It was not going to create jobs in Canada. As my colleague said, it would be creating jobs in China for Chinese billionaires.

Another thing that will happen as we help the Chinese build out their Asian infrastructure is that we will improve their competitiveness and that of other Asian economies and undermine our own. We should be investing in Canada. That is the sad thing about the Liberal government: it invests in infrastructure in foreign countries, which

will create an unlevel playing field between them and Canada when it comes to competitiveness.

The government takes \$2.6 billion of Canadian taxpayers' dollars and puts it into something called the green climate fund at the United Nations that is supposed to help other countries mitigate or adapt to climate change. There are no safeguards; there is no oversight of this money. When this money gets sent abroad, guess what happens? In many cases, it falls through the cracks and disappears without any accountability. That is not the kind of government we ran. We were a strong Conservative government that was financially accountable, and accountable to taxpayers. That is what we are not seeing from the Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to support Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the 2017 budget.

We have come a long way since we were elected in 2015. I am proud of the record of our government, which is now more than halfway through its term in office. When I was the president of the Regroupement des gens d'affaires de Boisbriand, I remember that the economic conditions were bleak and sluggish. Now that the 2008 economic crisis is behind us, let us be proud of our economic numbers. Canada weathered the 2008 economic crisis better than any other G7 country, and that is something Canadians can be proud of.

During the last election campaign, we proposed an ambitious plan for Canadians. This plan was based on solid evidence and a belief that the entire economy would benefit if we invested in the middle class, in our workforce, and in training for our young people and workers. The numbers now speak for themselves and show that this inclusive plan is working.

Statistics Canada's labour force survey of October 2017 shows that our economy created more than 500,000 new jobs since we came to power. The Canadian economy is growing faster than it has in more than a decade, and the unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest point since 2008. There is more good news: the most dramatic rise in employment was in Quebec, with 18,000 net new jobs in October 2017, mainly in the manufacturing sector.

Our plan is working. Today, more Canadians are employed, and the situation will continue to improve thanks to a plan that works. I would like to mention a few measures that directly affect the people in my riding, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles. They include a tax break for 9 million middle-class Canadians, the introduction of the new Canada child tax benefit, and the improvement of the Canada pension plan, to ensure that future generations of workers can enjoy a dignified retirement.

Since its introduction in July 2016, the Canada child benefit has put more non-taxable dollars in the pockets of thousands of Canadian families. When the Canada child tax benefit was established, the additional money in parents' pockets had an immediate effect on consumer confidence and economic growth. The increased confidence this money gives families had an immediate impact on economic growth. This is excellent news.

Government Orders

The credit also benefits all children, unlike the tax credits for child fitness and children's arts proposed by the previous government. In Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, 10,300 families are receiving more money thanks to the Canada child tax benefit. Also, 18,870 children directly benefit from a \$530 monthly payment per family. This amount is non-taxable.

These numbers speak for themselves. The Canada child tax benefit has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty, and we are moving forward with improvements to our government's key measure. That is why we intend to increase the Canada child tax benefit annually to keep up with the cost of living starting in July 2018, two years earlier than planned.

I will give an example: for a single-parent family with two children and a yearly income of \$35,000, this increase represents an additional non-taxable \$560 next year, which can be used for books, skating lessons, or warm clothing for the winter.

Another of our government's key measures in Bill C-63 is obviously the lower income tax rate for small and medium-size businesses. Once again, no sooner said than done. As promised in our 2015 election platform, we are delivering on our commitment to lower the income tax rate for small and medium-size businesses.

• (1340)

That rate, which was 11% in 2015, will drop to 9% in 2019. That is excellent news for the Rivière-des-Mille-Îles businesses and business people who were more than willing to participate in a pre-budget round table with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance when he was in my riding in January 2016.

This great news will give our dynamic businesses more breathing room, allowing them to make capital investments, do renovations, buy new equipment, and even hire more staff.

A number of high-profile Quebecers also welcomed the news. Here is what Michel Leblanc, president and CEO of the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal, had to say:

The tax cut announced by the Minister of Finance this morning is excellent news for small and medium-sized businesses in all sectors. Our economy is strong, and this announcement will make it even stronger. It is important to keep stimulating investment and making our businesses more competitive. Small businesses are the economic backbone of Canada and metropolitan Montreal. Reducing the tax rate will have a positive impact on our economy as a whole.

I fully support that statement because, when I travel around the four cities in my riding, business people tell me that this measure will help them.

Finally, budget 2017 puts the skilled, talented, and creative people of Canada at the heart of a more innovative economy of the future, an economy that will create jobs for the middle class of today and tomorrow.

For our government, relying on innovation also means relying on the know-how of Quebec and Canadian society. The role of elected officials is now to focus on the economy of the future, invest in their fellow citizens, and give the workers of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles the tools they need to succeed in this economy. It also means educating businesses to help them benefit from new free trade agreements like CETA.

Many measures have been taken to put Canada in a leadership position within the global economy. First, we invested \$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 economy of the future. Next, we created a new strategic innovation fund that will serve to attract, support, and grow Canadian companies in dynamic and emerging sectors, such as agrifood, which is a very strong sector in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, digital technology, green technologies, and advanced manufacturing, thanks to an investment of \$1.26 billion over five years. We also offered greater support to superclusters of companies that innovate in key sectors such as digital technology and green technology and that have the greatest potential to accelerate economic growth, thanks to an investment of up to \$950 million over five years starting in 2017-18.

I have always been proud to say that the greatest strength of Canada and of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles lies in its skilled, hard-working, and creative workforce. I am very proud of the measures in budget 2017 and their positive impact on my community.

I am confident that our plan will help our country prosper, both now and in the years ahead.

• (1345)

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, one thing I did not hear was any mention of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

It just seems strange to me that up until this point, and I have not been in the House for all of the debate but for a fair bit of it, none of my Liberal colleagues have commented on the fact that we are spending all these dollars for infrastructure in Asia, which taxpayers in Canada will be forced to pay for.

I am happy to invest in infrastructure; we all are, but my children and grandchildren will pay for that infrastructure in Asia. That is a bit of a question for me.

Could my colleague enlighten us as to why we are spending money on infrastructure in Asia?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for talking about infrastructure.

He knows that we need to invest in infrastructure, and it is one of our key measures. In my riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, construction will soon begin on the REM project, the Réseau électrique métropolitain, a 67-kilometre urban transit system with 27 stations. It is a significant investment in terms of infrastructure which will ensure the people's mobility in the greater Montreal area.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech but I did not hear anything about a certain issue that is making headlines.

Government Orders

There has been a lot of talk about the Panama papers, but last Sunday, people got the shock of their lives. Canadians are appalled by what the paradise papers reveal. These documents show us that the Liberal government's chief fundraiser and the Prime Minister's great friend was caught in what experts are actually calling a legalized scam.

When will my hon. colleague tell us their position, then? Why does the update feature no clear position on combatting tax evasion? Could it be because friends of the party are off limits?

• (1350)

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague from Drummondville, a fellow member of the Standing Committee on Official Languages. We always really enjoy working together. Here is my answer to his very relevant question.

It is very important. Our government has invested in putting a stop to these tax schemes and to tax evasion. We are making sure the tax system is fair to everyone. We will find out who is hiding income and assets abroad and who is trying to avoid paying taxes, and we will make them face the consequences.

[*English*]

Mr. Chandra Arya (Nepean, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague came out with some excellent points in her remarks. In my riding of Nepean, 23,000 children benefited from the Canada child benefit program, with an average amount of \$490, totalling about \$6.2 million.

I would like my hon. friend's comments on the investments we have made through cutting income taxes for the middle class, the investments we have made through the child benefit program, and investments we have made to infrastructure, which has allowed GDP growth.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Linda Lapointe: Madam Speaker, as my colleague said, this is a key element of our budget and our platform.

I care about helping the families and businesses in my riding succeed. I am proud to say that, since coming into effect, the Canada child benefit has helped 18,830 children in my riding by giving 10,300 families an average of \$530 per month tax free.

When families have more money in their pockets, the whole economy benefits. Jobs are up in Quebec and across Canada. That alone shows that our approach is working.

[*English*]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, in the last election the current Prime Minister looked Canadians in the eye and promised that, if elected, the Liberal Party would run budgetary deficits of \$10 billion per year for the first three years and then return Canada's books to balance in 2019. What a far cry from the reality we are living in today. The government's spending is completely out of control. It is running deficits two and three times larger than initially promised, and it has absolutely no plan to get back to balance. This is not what Canadians voted for.

Our Conservative government left office with back-to-back surplus budgets, a growing economy, and a record that included

the best recovery from the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. We on this side of the aisle are proud of that.

During the election campaign, the Liberal Party promised that its \$10 billion deficits would be spent primarily on two things: infrastructure and tax cuts for the middle class, oh, and for those working hard to join it. I am afraid that my colleagues in the Liberal Party might be suffering from collective amnesia, because not only have they spent far more than they promised, but they have done the exact opposite of what they promised.

First, let me talk about the government's poor record on infrastructure investment.

Bill C-63 includes half a billion dollars spent by the government on infrastructure in Asia. Yes, members heard me correctly: not Canadian infrastructure but Asian infrastructure. Bill C-63 provides Canada with a less than 1% stake in the Chinese-controlled Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. The projects in which this bank will invest are determined by the interests of the Chinese government. Considering the sort of virtuous signalling we have seen from the government during the NAFTA negotiations, it comes as a bit of a shock that it would be willing to hand over half a billion dollars to China to spend as it wishes. Do not take my word for it. The following is taken from the *Toronto Star* about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank:

The United States opposes the institution, warning that it would provide loans to developing countries without requiring any caveats about the environment, labour rights or anti-corruption reforms, as are typically included...from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

I would have thought that the Liberals, who spend so much time on their image, would like to be seen as standing up for the environment, standing up for labour rights, and standing against government corruption, but I guess when push comes to shove they focus on their own best interests.

I understand that trade with China is a priority for the Liberals. The Prime Minister has made that clear by his several cash-for-access fundraisers attended by high-ranking Chinese officials. However, is it really worth forking over this sort of money with no guarantees?

There is all this talk about Chinese infrastructure, but what about Canada? This week we learned that there are massive delays in federal infrastructure spending. Billions of dollars are being carried over year after year in unspent funds as the Liberal government cannot figure out how to get shovels in the ground and get projects under way.

It seems clear to me that it is becoming increasingly clear to Canadians that the Liberal government is spending more time trying to build bridges, fix roads, and prepare water pipes in China than it is here at home in Canada. Again, this is not what Canadians voted for in the last election.

One other thing that Canadians did not vote for in the last election was the Liberal government's attack on middle-class Canadians, the very people it claims to want to help.

Statements by Members

We all know that small business in Canada employs 70% of private sector workers. In Canada, 55% of businesses have fewer than four employees. An attack on small business is an attack on ordinary hard-working Canadians. Where would the jobs be if it were not for small business?

This summer in an attempt to quietly sneak by Canadians, the Liberals introduced a number of tax measures that would have had devastating effects on Canada's farmers and small business owners. The backbone of our economy, small business owners, were targeted as tax cheats.

For weeks and months after the plans were made public, my office was inundated with calls, emails, and visits from my constituents, who could not believe that the Liberal government would be increasing their taxes so high that they might have to fire staff, close up shop, or relocate their businesses to other countries. I am sure my colleagues in the House all were recipients of those emails and phone calls.

● (1355)

I heard from one constituent who lives in Elmira. He runs a financial service practice in the greater Waterloo region. He shared with me this email, which states that, for the first 12 years of his self-employed life, it was a real struggle. Trying to run a business and balancing a young family of four children, it was not easy. In 2011, after a particularly bad day, he considered packing it all in, but he didn't. He continued to persevere and try new ways to build his practice. In the summer of 2012, he took the biggest risk ever and he bought a practice from another adviser. That meant taking on a \$250,000 debt to do that. He also incorporated at that time, on his accountant's advice. He then took an even bigger risk, hiring two staff members to help him run a more efficient practice. In 2015, he had paid off the \$250,000 loan, bought another practice for \$500,000, and hired another staff member. He feels he's paid his fair share of taxes, both corporately and personally, over the years. Now he is being told that small business owners are wrongfully using the tax system, unfairly and perhaps crookedly. That is not right, he says.

I also heard from a veterinarian operating a clinic for large animals. His clinic not only employs Canadians but also sponsors four local fairs, two soccer teams, a baseball team, two hockey teams, three plowing matches, two 4-H clubs, a dance studio, and a local volunteer fire department. He sent me an email, which states that, as a veterinarian, he has worked hard over many years to reach the pinnacle of his profession. He's spent many years in university studying veterinary medicine and many more years building his practice and working very hard to serve his clients and their animals. The government referring to his use of the tax laws as a manipulation of loopholes makes him feel ashamed of the success he has strived to achieve. He asks if he is expected to apologize for the success and the rewards he has earned. He says this is divisive, inflammatory, and flies directly in the face of the Canadian dream many of us share: that from hard work comes success.

I heard from a farm family in Elmira who are afraid of what these changes will mean for a farm that has been in the family for generations. The owner wrote as follows:

These proposed changes, will add uncertainty and complexity to farmers and small business owners across the country. I am particularly concerned with the

impact these changes would have on succession planning. It is unacceptable that the government of Canada would make it easier and more beneficial from a tax perspective for a farmer to sell their farm business to a stranger, rather than their own child or grandchild. This type of policy threatens the tradition of the Canadian family farm.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not mention my friend Mike from Tri-Mach. I was glad the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, visited Mike last month to share our positive Conservative plan to lower taxes on the middle class and small business. Tri-Mach employs more than 100 Canadians and has been considering—

● (1400)

The Speaker: I apologize. The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga will have a minute and a half left following question period. We need to get on to statements by members. I am sure members will look forward to his last minute and a half, followed by questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

IBM CANADA

Ms. Mary Ng (Markham—Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to highlight an outstanding company in my riding of Markham—Thornhill.

Celebrating 100 years in Canada this year, IBM is one of the world's most successful companies and a staple of the local economy in Markham since 1983. Over the last century, IBM has showcased what it means to be a truly innovative company and a leader in our community. Its innovation extends beyond the organization, with the IBM innovation space in the Markham Convergence Centre, home to the next generation of entrepreneurs and start-up companies working in the global marketplace.

I want to highlight Peyman Moeini, an entrepreneur in the innovation centre, who started as an engineering student in a campus-led accelerator and now an employer, whose company is scaling and growing. It is a really inspiring Canadian story.

[Translation]

I would like to take a moment to thank IBM for its remarkable work in Markham and across Canada, and for the work it will continue to do over the next 100 years.

Statements by Members

[English]

CURLING

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pride to inform all members of the House that in 2019, the Tim Hortons Brier is returning to Brandon for the first time since 1982. As only a fellow Manitoban may truly understand my excitement, this is a huge announcement for our curling community, the Wheat City Curling Club, and western Manitoba.

After Brandon put on such a successful Canada Cup last year, the organizers proved that our small prairie city has the right stuff to put on such an elaborate bonspiel.

A tremendous thanks goes out to local vice chairs Ryan Shields, Nate Andrews, and Jackie Nichol, who have stepped into the hack and are busy organizing and recruiting volunteers to make this upcoming brier a huge success.

Without a doubt, Brandon is a host city. Having successfully completed the Canada Games, Scotties Tournament of Hearts, previous briers, and the first Olympic curling trials, we will once again show the entire country the depth of our volunteer spirit and our love of the game.

I welcome everyone to Brandon in 2019 to cheer on Canada's greatest curlers.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Deborah Schulte (King—Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the launch of the fifth annual Muslims for Remembrance Day campaign organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada. This nationwide campaign was first launched in 2011 to remember and show support for Canada's troops and veterans who sacrificed their lives for our country, and for those who are protecting us today.

Recently, I had the honour of attending one of the ceremonies at the Baitul Islam Mosque in Maple. The Ahmadiyya community rallied, young and old, to show support and raise funds for Canadian veterans. Donations were collected and poppies handed out at all chapters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at across Canada, and all collections will be donated to the Royal Canadian Legion.

The National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada, Mr. Lal Khan Malik, said, "We feel honored to live in this country and as such we feel that it is our duty as loyal citizens to remember the brave soldiers who made and make the ultimate sacrifice." I thank the Ahmadiyya community across Canada for showing support for our veterans in such a meaningful way.

* * *

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been five years since the provincial Liberals cancelled the Northlander train, a decision that has had a profound impact on the communities of northeastern Ontario and Muskoka. Politically it showed in no uncertain terms that to the provincial Liberals there are two Ontarios, one that counts and one that does not.

It is simply unacceptable to state that subsidized public transit will be a priority for urban, suburban regions while telling the north that they can get by with shut down rail stations and privatized highway maintenance.

All across Canada we see the abandonment of the rural north, including the shut down of bus lines in rural Saskatchewan, the closure of the train services to Churchill, the abandonment of the Huron Central and the Algoma Central, and the chronic undercutting of VIA Rail. However, in northeastern Ontario, citizens are coming together to fight for public transit.

I support the work of the All Aboard Coalition and will work with my provincial NDP colleagues. Public transit is a right across Canada and we will fight for the Northlander train.

* * *

● (1405)

YORK CENTRE

Mr. Michael Levitt (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I recently held an event in my riding where I recognized 15 constituents who demonstrate an incredible commitment to their community.

One of these extraordinary individuals is Angelita Budao. She was nominated for her tireless work with the Friends of Earl Bales Park, Action for Neighbourhood Change, and the First Filipino Canadian Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Angie's efforts have been felt throughout our community, bringing youth, families, and seniors together in common cause.

I want to also recognize the other 14 award winners for their contributions to our community. They are volunteers, faith leaders, activists, and organizers. During this Canada 150 year, I am proud to honour their contributions every day to making Canada a better place. Through their hard work, determination, and leadership, these individuals have made a tremendous impact in York Centre, and I ask all members to join me in recognizing and congratulating them.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to recognize the outstanding work of No Stone Left Alone, a national non-profit organization based in Edmonton. No Stone Left Alone works with our Canadian Armed Forces and young students to lay poppies on the headstones of fallen soldiers, to honour their sacrifices and fulfill our national promise that they will not be forgotten. Yesterday, I joined my friend, veteran and former member of Parliament, the Hon. Laurie Hawn, in laying a wreath at the ceremony. This week, No Stone Left Alone will engage 8,000 students from every province, visit 100 cemeteries, and honour 52,000 Canadian Forces members. Please join me in commending Maureen and Randall Purvis, the founders of No Stone Left Alone, for their dedication to honouring those who served our country.

*Statements by Members***IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP**

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to recognize Aline Nader of Amherst, Nova Scotia. Aunt Aline, as she has become known, has given tirelessly of herself over the past year and a half to help with the successful resettlement of new Canadians in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia. When the refugee families landed here from Syria in 2016, the community welcomed them with open arms. One volunteer, Aline, had a special impact by providing all of these new Canadians with English–Arabic translations, explaining Canadian customs and laws, and helping them adjust to their new lives in their new country, and always with a big smile. It gives me great pleasure to join the Rotary Club of Amherst, the Latif family, and the Alchegade family in thanking Aunt Aline and to welcome the whole family to Ottawa.

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[*Translation*]**MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN LAURENTIDES—LABELLE**

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the service of the 99 municipal councillors and mayors in my riding, many of whom served for a very long time, who did not run for re-election on November 5. I would also like to thank the 213 candidates who ran for the 304 municipal positions but were not elected. Lastly, I would like to congratulate the 146 newly elected and 153 re-elected officials who are returning to or changing their positions, whether as municipal councillors, mayors, or reeves, in the 43 municipalities and three RCMs in Laurentides—Labelle, as well as the five people who will eventually join them to fill the vacant positions.

These 611 people who got involved in the process of municipal governance are indisputable proof of the civic and community engagement that epitomizes the Laurentian region.

Although there are almost as many elected officials in my riding as there are members in the House, my team and I will offer them our full co-operation in advancing the issues that matter to the entire region. By working together, we will move forward on the many issues that are important to the well-being of our citizens.

* * *

[*English*]**NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. Ron Liepert (Calgary Signal Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Hard Hats on the Hill day. The Progressive Contractors Association of Canada and the Christian Labour Association of Canada are meeting with many of the members of the House to share their story of collaboration and productivity. They have an unparalleled record of getting projects done on time and on budget. They have worked co-operatively in the Alberta oil sands for the past decade. This collaborative model of construction has allowed for the completion of hundreds of billions of dollars worth of projects critical to Canada's economic future.

However, it does not stop there. Nearly half of western Canada's major industrial and urban infrastructure projects are built by PCA and CLAC. Their record of success has made them a focus in

western Canada and a force, partly due to their involvement with the local indigenous communities, youth, and new Canadians.

I encourage all members to stop by this evening to join the member for Cape Breton—Canso and me, who are hosting this group. Please come to our event.

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● (1410)

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, violence against women and children will not stop if men are not included in the conversation and made part of the solution. Every year, men in my riding of Oakville participate in the Hope in High Heels walk, marching through downtown Oakville in pink high heels to support the work of Halton Women's Place. I would like to thank the people at Halton Women's Place for the great work they do in Oakville and in Halton, providing a safe haven for women and children in crisis and providing education to build a future without abuse in families.

This afternoon, I am co-hosting Hope in High Heels on the Hill in support of the fight against gender-based violence. I extend a challenge to all of my male colleagues to join me immediately after question period to take a walk to help end the violence. If my colleagues do not have their own high heels, do not worry. We have a pair outside for everyone. I will see them on the steps.

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[*Translation*]**CPA WITHOUT BORDERS**

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out the exceptional work of CPA Without Borders, an organization of chartered professional accountants established only four years ago. It has given its volunteers the mission of providing accounting services, implementing accounting systems, and training staff of community organizations in developing countries. Over the past four years, CPA Without Borders has undertaken 17 missions in countries such as Haiti, Uganda, and Tanzania with the help of about 50 professionals and students. Through its social and humanitarian service to populations that are often underprivileged, this organization helps promote good governance practices. I salute the board of directors, the management team and all the volunteers of CPA Without Borders. I wish you continued success.

Oral Questions

[English]

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's new National Holocaust Monument commemorates the six million Jews murdered by Hitler's Nazis, but the memorial is also dedicated to survivors whose will to live is driven by a passion to educate this and future generations.

Steve Hopman's entire family was murdered in the Shoa. He survived Birkenau and forced labour camps, and was liberated from Bergen-Belsen.

Mr. Hopman came to Canada after the war and is resident now at Montreal's Mount Sinai Hospital, resisting terminal cancer.

Mr. Hopman had a last wish to visit the new National Holocaust Monument with Laura Grosman, the young Thornhiller who had a dream, and with former MP Tim Uppal who sponsored the bill to create the memorial. Mr. Hopman accomplished that visit today, and is on Parliament Hill now campaigning still to ensure that such horror and inhumanity happens never again.

* * *

[Translation]

OR SHALOM SYNAGOGUE

Mr. Frank Baylis (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 17, I will have the pleasure of attending the 40th anniversary celebrations for the Or Shalom Synagogue in Dollard-des-Ormeaux. Or Shalom is the first and only Sephardic synagogue in west end Montreal, and its mission has expanded considerably in order to meet the needs of its growing community. Or Shalom is not just a synagogue. It also has a community centre and provides many related services. This synagogue has been the pillar of its community for 40 years and will no doubt continue to fulfill that role for the next 40 years. I would like to thank Rabbi Avraham Maruani and the entire congregation of Or Shalom for their contribution to the cultural enrichment of Pierrefonds—Dollard and Canada.

Happy 40th anniversary and all the best.

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●(1415)

[English]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada C3 was a historic 150-day expedition from Toronto to Victoria via the Northwest Passage. It connected Canadians from coast to coast to coast, inspiring a deeper understanding of our land and our peoples, focusing on the past, present, and future of our country.

I spent five days aboard the *Polar Prince* travelling the west coast, days filled with challenge and inspiration. I felt a real connection to the themes of our journey: reconciliation, environment, diversity and inclusion, and youth engagement. I met incredible people like, Ahmed Saffar, Dr. Kristi Miller-Saunders, Racelle Kooy, Lillian Howard, Kevin Vallely, Andrew Strang, and our youth ambassadors, Amanda, Devin and Helena.

I was honoured to be part of Leg 15, to share my story and my passion for wild salmon, our waters, and our environment with the friends and community members I met on this significant Journey.

I thank visionary expedition leader Geoff Green and his extraordinary team. It was an experience I will never forget.

* * *

JOHN DAVIDSON

Hon. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, one of Abbotsford's finest died in the line of duty. Sadly, John Davidson, a member of the Abbotsford Police Department, was killed doing what he loved to do; protecting our community. This is a defining and tragic moment for Abbotsford. There are very few of us who do not have a friend, family member, or acquaintance who is a member of a police force. My family is no exception. The death of one brave officer affects us all.

John worked as a police officer for 24 years, and was loved and respected for his police work, and for his contributions to our community. As Police Chief Bob Rich said, "The officer who gave his life today is a hero. He will always be my hero."

I thank Chief Rich, and the entire Abbotsford Police Department, and all of those who work to keep our community safe. Our thoughts are with the second wounded officer who is recovering in the hospital. Our hearts and prayers are also with John Davidson's wife and kids.

May he rest in peace. His sacrifice will not be forgotten.

* * *

JOHN DAVIDSON

Mr. Jati Sidhu (Mission—Matsqui—Fraser Canyon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to recognize fallen Constable John Davidson of the Abbotsford Police Department who was killed yesterday in the line of duty. My sincerest condolences go to Constable Davidson's wife and three sons.

I am saddened that this senseless act has brought darkness to our community. Police departments across Canada work hard to protect Canadians. When an officer falls in the line of duty, the whole nation mourns. During this time of remembrance, it is important for all of us to recognize those who serve to protect. Whether at home or overseas, our brave men and women have put their lives at risk for their country. They are our heroes.

I ask both sides of the House to join me in celebrating the life of our fallen hero.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister put in an unconvincing performance yesterday.

Oral Questions

The Liberals love picking on local businesses, middle-class families, and even the sick. However, when the Minister of Finance and the Liberal bagman try to hide their assets or avoid paying taxes, all we get from the Prime Minister is radio silence.

How long has the Prime Minister known that his chief fundraiser stashes money in tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance.

In our last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion to crack down on tax cheats. Our plan is yielding results. We have had 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants executed, and 78 convictions.

The Canada Revenue Agency is reviewing links to Canadian entities and will take appropriate action. We will continue to work for a fair and equitable tax system for all Canadians.

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while accusing local small business owners of being tax cheats, the Prime Minister has gone out of his way to protect the interests of his rich, well-connected Liberal friends.

The paradise papers expose the Prime Minister's close friend and chief political fundraiser as having sheltered millions of dollars offshore. The Bronfmans are also known for being very effective at lobbying against closing offshore tax loopholes.

When did the Prime Minister learn that his friend and chief fundraiser had these offshore holdings, and that his lawyers had lobbied so hard to protect these tax havens?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government knows that billions of dollars are at stake. We made an historic investment of nearly \$1 billion in the Canada Revenue Agency to combat this problem.

The CRA uses the information it receives through lists disclosed by countries that are part of the BEPS project. That is why the agency, as of September 30, 2017, was conducting more than 990 audits and 42 criminal investigations related to offshore financial structures.

We are reviewing the links between corporations and we will keep at it.

[English]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like the issues surrounding the Minister of Finance, it is funny that things only start to happen when the Liberals get caught.

While looking out for his friends and insiders, the Prime Minister put a target on the pocketbooks of hard-working Canadians. He accuses local business owners of being tax cheats even while he is raising their taxes, and he turns a blind eye to the loopholes his friends enjoy using. It is almost as if there is one set of rules for the Prime Minister and his wealthy friends, and another set of rules for everybody else.

Why is it that every time the Prime Minister makes changes, it always benefits those in the jet-set life, and it always makes life harder for those in the road-trip life?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather odd to hear Conservative members say that we are not working on closing tax loopholes when for 10 years their government did nothing about tax evasion. A former national revenue minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, even said so publicly.

I find the hypocrisy of my colleagues across the way to be quite something. We have no lessons to learn from the former government.

The Speaker: I could ask every member not to make provocative comments, but that would be futile. I would therefore ask hon. members not to allow themselves to be provoked and to restrain themselves.

The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister claims that he is making the wealthiest 1% pay, he is paying his Christmas holiday with taxpayers' money, off-loading the deficit to the middle class, and attacking job creators across the country. He is being hypocritical to the point of turning a blind eye to the paradise papers scandal. I almost slipped and talked about the sponsorship scandal.

To be clear, letting one's close friends put money into tax havens and not pay any taxes, is that the Liberals' plan to make the wealthy pay?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is strongly committed to combatting tax evasion and abusive tax avoidance and making the tax system fair and equitable for all Canadians.

I am proud that we are playing a leading role on the international stage. Collaboration between tax administrations, including the exchange of tax information, is an essential tool to protect the integrity of Canada's tax base.

That is why, as of September 30, 2017, the Canada Revenue Agency had more than 990 audits and 42 criminal investigations under way focusing on offshore financial structures.

Mr. Alain Rayes (Richmond—Arthabaska, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was just about to mention the minister's department. Today, we learned that the Canada Revenue Agency is deliberately failing to disclose how much money is lost to tax evasion each year. However, yesterday, the Minister of National Revenue assured us that everything was under control.

Rather than just talking nonsense, will the Prime Minister give a clear answer for once and tell us how long he has known that his friend, the Liberal Party's bagman, has been using tax havens to avoid paying taxes?

Oral Questions

● (1425)

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite is the one who is talking nonsense. Our government is committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance, and we are tackling this problem from all sides. In our first two budgets, we invested a historic amount of nearly \$1 billion. Last year, the CRA imposed \$44 million in penalties on proponents and tax advisers. We are continuing the work that we promised Canadians we would do during the election campaign.

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister told us that the CRA would be looking into allegations of tax evasion, but he stopped short of confirming that this would be the case for Stephen Bronfman. This is the same CRA that is constantly under fire by tax experts for going hard against everyday Canadians, but for throwing back the big fish. This is the same CRA that forgave the clients who made millions from the KPMG scheme, and this is the same CRA that failed to act on the Panama papers.

When will the minister stop defending the CRA and start standing up for Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague opposite that I have a lot more experience in fishing than he does. Our government is committed to combatting tax evasion and tax avoidance, and last year's historic investment of \$1 billion proves it. Our plan is working. We had 627 cases transferred to criminal investigation, executed 268 search warrants, and obtained 78 convictions. We promised Canadians that we would get the job done, and no one is above the law.

[English]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nobody is above the law, but the law is the problem.

[Translation]

We now know that the Liberal Party fundraising chair, Stephen Bronfman, put money in tax havens. He claims that he always acted “properly...including fully complying with all applicable laws”. That is exactly the problem. That excuse sounds awfully familiar to me, actually. Oh right, it is the stock reply we hear from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance whenever a scandal crops up.

Will the Liberals stop thumbing their noses at everyone and actually do something to fight tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tax havens are one of the priorities in my mandate letter and a priority for this government. That is why, in the last two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion, with which we hired auditors and have been targeting four jurisdictions per year. We are working with our international partners to tackle BEPS. Our plan is working. Our initiatives are working. We will continue to work for Canadians, just as we promised.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP) : Mr. Speaker, if it were legal to rob a store, putting more police officers in front of the door would change absolutely nothing. The

same logic applies to tax havens. We are being robbed, but it is legal. How great is that? The revenue minister's answers are basically spin. The government is not getting at the root of the problem. We need to review and renegotiate our tax agreements with a number of countries.

Will the Liberals reconsider our agreements with tax havens? If they cannot say “yes”, that means they do not want to change anything.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working internationally to combat tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. We are an important international partner in the BEPS project. Our efforts are paying off. When I talk about the 627 cases that have been transferred to criminal investigations, the 268 search warrants, and the 78 convictions, I am not sure what the member opposite does not understand. That is what it means to take action and get the job done.

[English]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, instead of relying on meaningless stats, she should understand one thing. We are lawmakers. Instead of hiding behind the bogus excuse that it felt legal anyway, we can roll up our sleeves and do something about it. We can change the laws. We can especially change laws that allow the wealthy and the well connected to pay less tax than middle-class Canadians. The question is this. Will the government do that or will it block these efforts, as it has done for the past two years?

● (1430)

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance, which the Conservative Party failed to do for 10 years. A former Canada Revenue Agency minister, Jean-Pierre Blackburn, even said that it was not a priority for his government.

Our government took office two years ago and in that time we have invested \$1 billion. We are seeing results. We are working internationally. There have been charges, criminal investigations, and warrants. We continue to work for Canadians and for a fair tax system.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the finance minister took great pains this summer explaining that hard-working fishers, farmers, and small business owners were really not paying their fair share and were in fact tax cheats, all the while we had the Liberal bagman and the Prime Minister's close friends stashing \$60 million away in the Cayman Islands tax scheme. My question is very simple. Why is the government so adamant to make life more difficult for honest tax-paying citizens and letting its friends off scot-free?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard to combat tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. We have invested nearly \$1 billion. We are seeing meaningful results, including warrants, criminal investigations, and even convictions.

We are working on this file, unlike the Conservatives who, for 10 years and even according to one of their own former revenue ministers, did nothing. It was not even a priority for their government.

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Milton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am going to use some numbers, so that the government understands the hypocrisy of what it is talking about. As I said, a Liberal bagman stashed \$60 million away in a tax-free account in the Cayman Islands. Let us pretend that this \$60 million was put into a passive investment account by a small business person here in Canada. That would be a tax bill of \$43 million. Why is the Prime Minister allowing his friends to get off on a tax bill of \$43 million?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The hypocrisy of the members across the aisle is stunning. Former minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn admitted in an interview—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Minister of National Revenue.

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier: Mr. Speaker, former minister Jean-Pierre Blackburn, admitted in an interview that tax evasion was not a priority for the Conservative government.

That is why we need no lessons from the party that works every day to secure special privileges for the wealthy. Canadians expect to have a fair and equitable tax system.

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about privilege. It pays to be part of the Liberal leader's inner circle.

When the hon. member for Papineau told his friend, Stephen Bronfman, that he wanted to become leader of his party, the response was, "Anything I can do to help". In the same interview, he said that the goal was to raise a pile of money to help the Liberal leader become the next prime minister. That was very telling. It seems that tax fairness does not apply to those who helped the Liberal leader become prime minister.

Why is the Prime Minister going after farmers and the real job creators and refusing to do anything about tax avoidance in his circle of close friends?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tax evasion is a priority for our government.

I would remind the Conservative party that we voted in favour of the Canada child benefit to lift children out of poverty. We lowered taxes for the middle class. We increased the guaranteed income supplement. We abolished the Harper reform that attacked employment insurance claimants and we invested in infrastructure. These are all things that we have undertaken and that the party across the way opposed. We are the government that works for the middle class.

● (1435)

Mr. Luc Berthold (Mégantic—L'Érable, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is it also our fault that Stephen Bronfman fundraises for the Liberals? This is yet another instance of Liberal hypocrisy.

The Liberals see nothing wrong with raising taxes on people with disabilities. They think it is fair game to tax employee discounts. They go after farmers and small business owners, claiming they are tax cheats who are not paying their fair share.

However, the Prime Minister is willing to let anything slide if it will protect his millionaire friends, like Stephen Bronfman.

When will the Prime Minister put an end to this fiscal hypocrisy?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as Minister of National Revenue, I can say that tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance are global problems that call for a global solution.

The OECD brought nations together to collaborate on the development of a new global standard for the automatic exchange of information. We fully adopted this standard, and starting July 1, 2017, Canadian financial institutions began taking steps to identify accounts held by non-residents and report these accounts to the Canada Revenue Agency.

We are taking concrete action.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, high-tax hypocrisy is not a new sport for these Liberals. It has been perfected over the generations.

While Paul Martin was the finance minister, he put foreign flags on his ships to avoid the very taxes he was imposing on everyone else. Now the paradise papers expose that his family business has moved its assets into zero-tax Bermuda, and he is advising the Prime Minister as part of the Liberal economic team. Now that he has been exposed once again for avoiding paying his fair share, will the finance minister fire Paul Martin from his economic team?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, after 10 years of inaction by the former government, the opposition member's hypocrisy is staggering.

The OECD, of which Canada is a member, brought nations together to collaborate on the development of a new global standard for the automatic exchange of information. We fully adopted this standard. We have invested \$1 billion, hired auditors, launched criminal investigations, and laid charges. We are taking action.

[English]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, who would advise the Liberals to raise taxes on people suffering with diabetes while allowing multi-millionaire party fundraisers to shelter their money away in tax havens? Who would advise the Liberals to impose higher taxes on farmers while protecting Morneau Shepell? We know it is the finance minister whose family business has assets in Barbados, the former finance minister who we know now puts his assets in Bermuda, and of course the Liberal fundraiser, Mr. Bronfman.

Why is it that, when the Liberals raise taxes, it only affects everyone but them?

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government made a commitment to Canadians to ensure that we were engaging with them. That is exactly why we have taken historic consultations to ensure that the programs and the laws that we pass actually benefit them.

This is the government that increased taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians by lowering taxes on middle-class Canadians. This is the government that is committed to lowering taxes on small businesses to 9% by 2019. This government will continue to ensure that their voices are being heard. This government will continue fighting for middle-class Canadians and those who—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. I want to remind those members who are consistently heckling that they may be taking a question away from their own side.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

* * *

[Translation]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, LGBTQ+ communities have responded favourably to the Liberal government's commitment to apologize for past injustices against them. However, we want to ensure that the apology will be sincere.

Will the Liberal government today confirm that the Prime Minister himself will apologize, that the apology will be on the record of the House of Commons, and that there will be reparation?

● (1440)

[English]

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is an issue that we take very seriously. We respect the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We know that more work needs to be done, and that is exactly why we will continue to engage with Canadians to ensure that we are delivering for them.

This government knows that Canadians have a role in this place. We will engage with them. We will make sure we do it right.

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Saanich—Sooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is clear the government has a problem knowing who is in charge of this one.

What we are asking is that the Liberals make a commitment today to a just apology for the past injustices to the LGBTQ community. That means an apology by the Prime Minister in the House and one that includes redress measures.

Those who were kicked out of the Canadian Forces still have dishonourable discharges on their records. Those who were convicted because of who they love still have criminal records for things that are no longer illegal, and this continues to limit their ability to volunteer, travel, and work.

Will the Liberal government commit today to a just apology for my community, to righting past wrongs and not just expressing regret?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, some months ago, appointed the hon. member for Edmonton Centre to consult broadly across the country with the community to make sure that all elements of this issue were properly heard and known and taken into account, so that the apology when given can be thorough and complete and the other appropriate actions around that apology can reinforce the basic message of rights and freedoms in this country.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and his finance minister are on the hunt for Canadians to tax. If someone owns a small business, they will tax it. If someone is suffering from diabetes, they will tax that individual. If someone is dealing with autism or mental health issues, they will tax that person. However, if someone is a billionaire close friend of the Prime Minister, he or she can avoid paying taxes with impunity.

When will the Prime Minister stop treating hard-working Canadians like tax cheats and go after his own crew?

Oral Questions

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister of Small Business and Tourism, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us try this again.

This government is a government that lowered taxes on middle-class Canadians by increasing taxes on the wealthiest 1% of Canadians. This government is a government that recognizes that small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy and that they are community builders. We want to see them succeed. That is exactly why we are committed to lowering the small business tax rate to 9% by 2019.

I really look forward to members opposite recognizing that small businesses are the backbone of the economy and that they should be paying a lower tax rate.

Mr. Alexander Nuttall (Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte, CPC): Mr. Speaker, instead of going after his own friend, the Prime Minister has decided to target Canadians with autism, mental health disabilities, and diabetes.

Stephen Bronfman, the Prime Minister's close friend and chief Liberal bagman, is the poster boy for tax avoidance schemes.

When will the Prime Minister stop targeting Canada's most vulnerable citizens and stop making excuses for tax avoiders like Mr. Bronfman?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is firmly committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the tax credits to which they are entitled. We are moving forward with a national disability law that will remove barriers by focusing on accessibility for all Canadians living with a disability.

We have made it easier for people with disabilities to access tax credits. We have simplified the forms and, in budget 2017, we allowed specialized nurse practitioners to complete patients' applications. We will continue to work with the most vulnerable and with our partners.

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is making Canadians pay more and more taxes to cover his reckless spending. Meanwhile, Liberal Party cronies are putting money in tax havens and weaseling out of their tax obligations here at home. Unlike middle-class families, they are not paying their fair share.

Why are the Liberals going after people with disabilities, people with diabetes, people with mental health issues, and people with autism? Why are they treating them like tax cheats instead of going after Liberal Party friends who are hiding money in tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians get the tax credits they are entitled to. Eligibility for that tax credit has not changed.

It is important to recognize that far too many Canadians are living with challenges like these and need help. To help people who earn modest incomes keep more of their hard-earned dollars, we are enhancing the working income tax benefit to the tune of

\$500 million per year as of 2019. We are keeping the promises we made during the election campaign.

• (1445)

[English]

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the revenue minister keeps telling us she is so proud that her tax collectors are targeting Canadians. Her tax collectors are systematically raising taxes on type 1 diabetics, Canadians with mental health issues, and autism. Her tax collectors are so busy targeting the most vulnerable, they seem to have forgotten about the Prime Minister's wealthy friends.

When will the minister finally tell her tax collectors to lay off sick and vulnerable Canadians and focus on real tax cheats?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague opposite that I was a social worker for 25 years. I have always helped the most vulnerable members of our society and worked to protect them.

Our government is committed to ensuring that all Canadians receive the tax credits they are entitled to. We are moving forward with a national disability law that will remove barriers and focus on accessibility. We have simplified the forms and made it possible to hire specialized nurse practitioners to help people fill out the applications.

We promised to do that during the election campaign, and we are going to continue to work to help the most vulnerable members of our society, those who need it most.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dairy farmers are in Ottawa today and many of them are concerned. They have a right to be concerned because even though the Liberals campaigned on being inclusive and different and transparent, they continue to negotiate the TPP in the dark, just like the Conservatives.

Dairy farmers and Canadians believed this deal was dead, but we have learned an agreement could be reached this week. This agreement will contain a breach in supply management, and the new NAFTA could do exactly the same thing.

How much market access will the government allow in our supply-managed sectors?

Ms. Pam Goldsmith-Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is a strong supporter of progressive trade and the Asia-Pacific is a priority market for our government. We are actively engaged with the remaining TPP countries and the minister is in Vietnam right now working hard to deliver real change and better results for Canadians and the middle class.

Oral Questions

We are discussing options for a possible agreement and we are also discussing ways to improve the terms of trade for Canadian businesses. This work is critical, we are taking our time, and we are pressing for a better deal. We feel we owe this to Canadians to diversify markets abroad and to create jobs for people at home.

* * *

[Translation]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Ms. Karine Trudel (Jonquière, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, we learned that the U.S. commerce department has made its final decision regarding the duties that will be imposed on Canadian softwood lumber.

Export duties of up to 21% will jeopardize 11,000 jobs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. The government knew that this decision was imminent, but the Liberals continue to slip up and have made little to no progress when it comes to protecting the softwood lumber industry.

When will they take charge of the situation and save these jobs?

Hon. Andrew Leslie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Canada-U.S. Relations), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the punitive duties imposed by the U.S. commerce department are unfair and deeply troubling. Our forestry industry has never been found guilty in previous cases. We will challenge this decision before the courts and we will win, as we have done on every past occasion.

We want a good agreement for Canada, not just any deal.

* * *

[English]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Ken Hardie (Fleetwood—Port Kells, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the longest coastline in the world and the health and protection of our coasts are critical to our environment, our economy, and to all Canadians. Our Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans hears many different views on how to prosper, but everyone agrees we have to protect our waters and our shorelines.

It was a year ago today that the Prime Minister introduced the oceans protection plan. Could the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard update us on our progress?

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the four pillars of our oceans protection plan is strengthening partnerships with indigenous communities, including building local emergency response capacity. Just last week, the first session under the indigenous community response training project wrapped up in Bamfield, British Columbia. Nine members from seven northern first nations graduated from the coastal nations search and rescue course, enhancing this important capacity for the Canadian Coast Guard.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we will do what it takes to protect Canada's oceans.

● (1450)

ETHICS

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know the excuse writers in the Prime Minister's Office are working overtime as new Liberal ethics and conflict issues accumulate. However, Canadians are still waiting for a few meaningful answers from the Minister of Finance.

He was found guilty and fined by the Ethics Commissioner for hiding his French corporation for two years. He has effectively admitted guilt for hiding his shares in Morneau Shepell for two years. Now the minister still owns other numbered companies.

What new conflicts might we find if the contents were revealed to Canadians?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House that I have disclosed and will continue to disclose all my assets to the Ethics Commissioner. What that does is allow us to get on with the work we want to do for Canadians.

I am also pleased to report to the House that this work is having a real impact. We have now passed 500,000 new jobs in the country since we were elected. We have the lowest unemployment rate in a decade. Canadians are more confident than they have been in years, and it is showing up in the growth rate we are seeing across our country.

Our plan is working, and we are going to continue the hard work on behalf of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to be or not to be, that is the question. In this tragic comedy entitled, "The latest Liberal scandal", we wonder who has the lead role. Is it the Minister of Finance or the Prime Minister? We have not gotten any answers to simple questions for weeks. What exactly are they hiding? Why will they not answer? Are they rewriting a new chapter to the story, "Gomery 2", or will they finally answer this simple question. What is the Minister of Finance hiding with his companies?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is fully committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. In our first two budgets, we invested nearly \$1 billion, allowing us to hire 100 auditors and achieve record results. There have been 627 cases transferred to criminal investigations, 268 search warrants executed, and 78 convictions.

The work has only just started. We will see it through.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to know what the Minister of Finance has been hiding from them over the past two years. They know he hid his stocks in Morneau Shepell. They know he hid his ownership in a French corporation, an act for which he was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner. Over the last two years, he has not disclosed what he has owned in his various numbered companies.

I have a simple question. He may have disclosed yesterday, but the previous two years he has not disclosed to Canadians what is in his numbered companies. What is he hiding?

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is incorrect. I have disclosed what is in all my companies to the Ethics Commissioner. From day one, I have disclosed 100% of my assets to the Ethics Commissioner.

That is what allows us to do the work that we are doing on behalf of Canadians, the work that we started two years ago when we found ourselves with an economy that was not growing fast enough. We decided that we had a choice, and the choice was to create jobs for Canadians.

It is working, with more than 500,000 new jobs over the last two years, a situation where our economy is growing faster than it has grown in a decade. This is helping Canadian families to succeed.

Hon. Candice Bergen (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very typical of the Minister of Finance, playing games with words and semantics. However, the spirit of disclosing his assets, by which he was found guilty by the Ethics Commissioner, he is absolutely guilty of and he does not have the decency to admit it to Canadians. This is why they do not trust him.

I have a very simple question. If the Minister of Finance had nothing to hide over the last two years when he was regulating industries that he may have owned shares in, why does he not tell Canadians what he owned in the last two years in his numbered companies? No semantics.

Hon. Bill Morneau (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we do not play games and we do not use semantics. What we do is we disclose what we need to disclose in order to make sure we can get on with the work. By disclosing all my assets to the Ethics Commissioner—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1455)

The Speaker: Order, please. Earlier I asked members to try to not be provoked by things. People on both sides will sometimes say things that some might find provocative, but the challenge for all of us is to be like most members in the House, of all parties, who are able to sit through question period and hear things they might consider provocative without reacting.

The hon. Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Bill Morneau: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing on this side of the House is we are very focused on ensuring Canadians are successful. The good news is that it is absolutely working. Canadians have a higher level of confidence because they actually have more money. The Canada child benefit and the tax reductions we have put

in place have allowed people to put money back into our economy, which is helping all of us to succeed. It is a good news story for Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really cannot figure out what the Minister of National Revenue does not understand.

While she drags her feet, the Liberal Party's cronies continue to take advantage of the system that she is keeping in place. The Liberal Party of Canada's bagman, for example, sheltered millions of dollars from taxes in the Cayman Islands. The Cayman Islands are a notorious tax haven with which Canada has signed a tax information exchange agreement. This agreement should have made the Canada Revenue Agency aware of the scheming Liberal cronies have been involved in.

Why do we have agreements with tax havens such as the Cayman Islands if they let the Liberal clique dodge their tax obligations?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unlike my colleague opposite, at least we have results to announce.

Over the past two years, we have invested more than \$1 billion and our plan is bearing fruit. Four jurisdictions are identified each year. More than 100 auditors have been hired and 627 cases have been transferred to criminal investigation. There have been 268 search warrants and 78 convictions. That is just for starters. We are continuing our work as we promised Canadians in the last campaign. We will continue with this work all through our mandate.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we all wondered how the Liberals were going to try to change the channel from the Morneau Shepell fiasco. Who knew they would be using a massive tax haven scandal to get our minds off their massive ethics scandal. To make matters worse, the Liberals have been hiding how much money is lost to these tax havens. For years they fought against the release of the so-called tax gap in Canada. Just like Bill C-58, their no access to information bill, the Liberals deny basic information that is owed to Canadians.

Therefore, I have a very simple question. Will the government finally tell Canadians how much money its millionaire and billionaire friends actually owe this country?

[Translation]

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we promised Canadians that we would look into the tax gap, and that is exactly what we are doing. Unlike the previous government, which systematically refused to look at the tax gap, we have opted for an evidence-based approach.

To date, the Canada Revenue Agency has proven its commitment to estimating the tax gap by producing three studies since June 2016. We are pursuing our efforts on this issue. That is what Canadians expect, and in the summer of 2018, we will be publishing a report on the international aspect of the tax gap.

Oral Questions

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the latest Liberal budget, which joins Canada to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, will send up to \$500 million overseas for infrastructure, yet the Liberals are not delivering on infrastructure at home.

Just several weeks ago, Toronto said that Ottawa was making unreasonable demands and could pull \$121 million in TTC funding from the federal government. Why are the Liberals so eager to send infrastructure money overseas, while neglecting to spend on desperately needed roads and transit right here at home?

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are proud to have approved, as the member well knows, more than 4,000 projects since taking office, with a combined investment of more than \$35 billion. Federal investments are enabling these projects to move forward. As the hon. member knows, the federal contributions are paid when the expense claims are submitted by our partners.

We will continue to work with our partners to move their priorities forward and provide the flexibility necessary to meet those requirements. We are in ongoing discussions with the province, and we trust its judgment in telling us what the priorities are.

[Translation]

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the municipalities have yet to enjoy the benefits of this supposed flexibility.

After receiving some generous donations from Asian proponents, the Liberal Party is going to invest \$480 million in the Asian infrastructure bank. It is sad to see this government unwilling to give our infrastructure here in Canada the same attention.

The Liberals are dangling tons of money before the municipalities, but some projects have been cancelled because of all of the unnecessary conditions being imposed.

Instead of prancing around Asia and working against our taxpayers and our municipalities, will the Prime Minister be a true partner to our municipalities?

• (1500)

Mr. Marc Miller (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will say it again: as the member well knows, we are proud to have approved more than 4,000 projects since taking office, with a combined investment of more than \$35 billion. Federal investments are enabling these projects to move forward. As the hon. member knows, the federal contributions are paid when the expense claims are submitted by our partners. We will continue to work with our partners to move their priorities forward, and provide the flexibility necessary to meet those requirements. I am very proud to announce that several hundred projects are in the works in Quebec.

[English]

HEALTH

Hon. Alice Wong (Richmond Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the first quarter of this year, opioids killed over 900 Canadians. The government needs to help. The Liberals gave only \$10 million to fight the opioid crisis but has no problem giving \$500 million to the Asian infrastructure bank.

Why is the government sending \$500 million to foreign billionaires, when we have Canadians dying in our streets by the hundreds? Canada is our home.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that the member opposite has given us an opportunity to talk about some of the things our government is doing to address the opioid crisis. For example, our government has provided \$10 million in urgent support to our provincial partners in British Columbia and \$6 million to the Province of Alberta to assist with its response. That is in addition to \$22.7 million ongoing of the \$100-million commitment in budget 2017 to support national measures associated with the Canadian drugs and substances strategy to respond to this terrible health crisis.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Brenda Shanahan (Châteauguay—Lacolle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, residents living on the shores of Lake Saint-Louis are concerned about the notorious *Kathryn Spirit*. The former government took no action with respect to this ship, which has been abandoned since its arrival in Beauharnois, and it was our government that got the dismantling process started. One year ago today, the Prime Minister announced our oceans protection plan.

Could the minister tell us how this plan will affect abandoned vessels like the *Kathryn Spirit* in future?

Hon. Marc Garneau (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Châteauguay—Lacolle for her question and for her hard work.

Our government is especially proud of what our oceans protection plan has done for abandoned vessels, not just in Beauharnois, but across the country. We are passing legislation strengthening owner responsibility and liability for their vessels. We are funding the removal of small high-risk vessels and empowering the government to address problem vessels more proactively. We take this work very seriously.

* * *

[English]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brantford—Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite promising not to do so in the last election, these Liberals took veterans back to court. Now we have learned that veterans are being forced to wait longer and longer to get the benefits they have earned.

Oral Questions

Today the Prime Minister is hurrying off to Asia to deliver on his priority: infrastructure handouts to the world's wealthy. Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us why veterans are being shortchanged while the Prime Minister sends half a billion dollars to wealthy bankers in Asia?

Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, delivering timely benefit decisions is an area where we can and we must do better. In 2015-16, we saw a 25% increase in the number of disability claims, and that is a good thing, because that means more veterans are coming forward for the help they need.

To address this increase, we are simplifying the benefits process, hiring more staff, and giving the benefit of the doubt to the veterans. When it comes to veterans' care, we can always strive for excellence, and we will.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Rachel Blaney (North Island—Powell River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over 235,000 people are without a home in our country. In Canada, housing should be a right. Liberals like to talk about the right to housing but are unwilling to enshrine it in law. Maybe this explains why not a single Liberal spoke on my bill, Bill C-325, during its second hour of debate.

Are the Liberals keeping silent because they are just too ashamed to speak against the human right to housing?

• (1505)

Hon. Jean-Yves Duclos (Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to take this opportunity to say how important the right to decent housing is in Canada for everyone, and in particular for more vulnerable Canadians. We know how important housing is for life in communities and for life in a proper home to participate in the lives of everyone else around us.

I have good news to announce in a very short time. I invite our colleague to listen very carefully.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna—Lake Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's network of protected areas help to mitigate the impacts of climate change. They protect and restore healthy, resilient ecosystems and assist in the recovery of species at risk. Canada is committed to conserve at least 17% of our country's land and fresh water by 2020, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, indigenous peoples, and other key partners.

Can the government please update this House on the recent progress towards this target?

Hon. Catherine McKenna (Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians love our national parks and national heritage places, and we saw that clearly this year with record attendance at our parks and historic places with free entry for Canada 150.

On Friday, October 27, I was extremely pleased to be joined by the member for Kelowna—Lake Country as Canada, British Columbia, and representatives of the southern communities of the Syilx Okanagan Nation announced a renewed commitment to move forward together to establish a new national park reserve in the south Okanagan. After many years, we are pleased to be moving forward to protect this iconic place, and I want to thank the member for his help.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, the Liberals made a specific commitment to support justice and reconciliation in Sri Lanka following terrible crimes committed at the end of the civil war and in light of ongoing human rights concerns for the Tamil community today. Instead of acting, the Liberals cancelled the office of religious freedom, undercutting existing initiatives to promote pluralism and human rights, and their new office has been completely absent on this.

Why has the government failed to take any concrete action to implement its commitment with respect to human rights in Sri Lanka?

Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, human rights is a foundational part of Canada's international work. I will correct the record, because the member knows full well that this government tripled funding to the new Office of Human Rights, Freedoms and Inclusion.

When it comes to human rights around the world, this government is taking a leadership role. We are doing this in all of our engagements. I hope the Conservative opposition will join us in helping to promote and defend human rights, as we are doing around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals say they are going after tax havens, but that is hypocritical.

For the past 30 years, nobody has done more to facilitate tax evasion than Canada. The loopholes that the Liberals claim to be tackling now were created by Ottawa in the first place. Tax evasion is actually legal. When the Bloc Québécois exposed these loopholes, all of the Liberals voted against our bill.

Why does the government hide when we ask it to change the law? Is it trying to protect its Liberal bagmen?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is absolutely committed to fighting tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance.

We have invested close to \$1 billion over the past two years. We have targeted four jurisdictions per year and hired 100 auditors. Our plan is working. We have transferred 627 cases to criminal investigation, executed 268 search warrants, and obtained 78 convictions.

Nobody has accomplished as much as our government has over the past two years. Certainly not the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, tax cheats must be subject to fines and prison sentences. We are fed up with the government's rhetoric. Ordinary Canadians are the ones who are suffering because the wealthy are using tax havens to avoid paying taxes.

The money that Stephen Bronfman has hidden away in the Cayman Islands is not being used to help our hospitals and schools. It is staying in his pocket, with this government's blessing. Our taxes are paying for the roads that these tax cheats are driving around on in their big limousines.

When will this government stop thumbing its nose at Canadians and put an end to the use of tax havens?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want my colleague opposite to know that the issue of tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance is a priority for the Canada Revenue Agency.

Here is what I can tell him. For the last fiscal year alone, the CRA's work resulted in 37 convictions with sentences totalling over 50 years in prison and millions of dollars in fines imposed by the courts. That is on top of the \$44 million in penalties that were imposed on tax advisers last year.

We are getting the job done, and we are going to see this through to the end.

* * *

● (1510)

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP who have been chosen to participate in the 2017 Remembrance Day Sentry Program:

Sergeant Kevin Beauchemin, Leading Seaman Richard Balbuena, Corporal Michel St-Pierre, Aviator Sarah Comeau, Lieutenant Elodie Tremblay, Sergeant Mike Polegi, and Sergeant Jimmy Lavalliere.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I also draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the 2018 Inspire Awards:

Greg Hill, Nicole Bourque-Bouchier, Kye Cecilia Dick DeRose, Theland Kicknosway, Dr. Lorna Wanosts' Williams, Dr. Evelyn Voyageur, Paul Chartrand, Dr. Mike DeGagné, Michael Linklater, Ashley Callingbull, Donna May Kimmaliardjuk, and Tracie Léost.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Privilege

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, you will find that during question period, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons seems to have inadvertently misled the House, since we know that eight out of 10 families in Canada are paying more in taxes. I am calling on the hon. member to withdraw her statement. I am seeking unanimous consent to table the Fraser Institute report that shows that Canadian families are paying more in taxes under the Liberals.

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

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[English]

PRIVILEGE

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wanted to provide a response to the question of privilege raised by the member for Thornhill on November 2, respecting the Prime Minister's response to an oral question on Tuesday, October 31.

I submit that the matter is a dispute as to the facts, and therefore does not meet the criteria for finding a prima facie question of privilege. Page 86 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, sets out the criteria for establishing whether a member has deliberately misled the House. It states:

it must be proven that the statement was misleading;...it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect;...that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

I submit, these criteria have not been met. On October 31, 2017, in response to an oral question from the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, the Prime Minister stated the following:

...two ministers had controlled assets held indirectly. The finance minister has announced that he is moving forward, going above and beyond what was originally asked. In the case of the other minister, those assets were divested 18 months ago.

The Ethics Commissioner has confirmed that there is no difference of opinion on this issue between her and the Prime Minister. In fact, on November 2, 2017, the Ethics Commissioner released a statement that refutes the allegation that the commissioner is at odds with the statement made by the Prime Minister.

I agree with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley who intervened on this issue. “Now the reasons she has as Ethics Commissioner to keep the number somewhat vague, as less than five but more than one, is something that is at her discretion. That is not for us to judge.”

Allegations of breach of privilege are often dismissed as disputes as to the facts. There are numerous precedents in support of this. Most recently, on May 5, 2016, the Speaker ruled:

Speaker's Ruling

As members can appreciate, the threshold is very high, purposely so given the seriousness of the allegation and its potential consequences for members individually and collectively. From this, it stands to reason that a finding of a prima facie case of privilege is an exceedingly rare occurrence in cases with respect to disputed facts.

I submit that the matter is a dispute as to the facts and therefore does not meet the conditions for a prima facie question of privilege.

• (1515)

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader for his arguments on this point. I will come back to the House on the matter. I will take it under advisement for now.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

STANDING ORDER 69.1—BILL C-56—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on October 31, 2017 by the hon. opposition House leader concerning the applicability of the new Standing Order 69.1 to Bill C-56, an act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and the Abolition of Early Parole Act.

[*Translation*]

I thank the hon. Opposition House Leader for raising this matter, as well as the hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby for his contributions.

[*English*]

The opposition House leader contended that Bill C-56 contains two parts that should be separated through the application of Standing Order 69.1. One part amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to address issues relating to the use of administrative segregation. The other part aims to amend the Abolition of Early Parole Act in relation to accelerated parole for certain offenders. She argued that these two matters were unrelated and therefore invited the Chair to divide the question on the bill.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Burnaby agreed with these arguments, and indicated that dividing the question on the bill would better allow members to represent their constituents.

[*Translation*]

As members will recall, the House adopted a series of changes to the Standing Orders on June 20, 2017. Since this is the first time I have been asked to render a decision using this new Standing Order, I would like to elaborate on certain aspects of its application. New Standing Order 69.1 provides as follows:

In the case where a government bill seeks to repeal, amend or enact more than one act, and where there is not a common element connecting the various provisions or where unrelated matters are linked, the Speaker shall have the power to divide the questions, for the purposes of voting, on the motion for second reading and reference to a committee and the motion for third reading and passage of the bill. The Speaker shall have the power to combine clauses of the bill thematically and to put the aforementioned questions on each of these groups of clauses separately, provided that there will be a single debate at each stage.

• (1520)

[*English*]

The power of the Chair to divide a complicated question has long existed in our parliamentary practice, though it has only rarely been

exercised. The second edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, at pages 562 and 563, describes this power and enumerates the few examples of it being used. It also makes clear that this power had never traditionally applied to bills, but only to motions.

In her presentation, the hon. opposition House leader elaborated on several of these examples. In the Flag Debate of 1964, Speaker Macnaughton divided a motion into two questions, the first concerning the establishment of a new Canadian flag and the second concerning the continued use of the Union Jack.

In 1991, Speaker Fraser divided a 64-part motion to amend the Standing Orders into three separate questions.

In 2002, Speaker Milliken divided a lengthy motion to reinstate certain items of business into two questions, while ordering that another portion of the motion be considered separately.

Though not mentioned, a similar decision was rendered by my predecessor on October 17, 2013 in relation to a motion to reinstate certain items of business, where two separate votes were held.

The opposition House leader also referred to several examples of motions being divided in British practice, dating back to the late 19th century and the early 20th century.

[*Translation*]

Standing Order 69.1 empowers the Speaker, for the first time, to divide the question on a government bill both at second reading and third reading, except where the legislation has as its main purpose the implementation of a budget. In so doing, the Chair is to consider the degree to which the various provisions of a bill lack commonality.

Where a bill contains unrelated initiatives, the Speaker may group clauses thematically for the purposes of voting, maintaining a single debate. Though there may be multiple questions put to a vote for second or third reading, there remains only one bill. This is in contrast to cases where bills themselves have been divided, either as a result of a motion adopted in the House or an instruction given to a committee.

[*English*]

Since the analysis and division of a bill into different parts can sometimes be complex, I am grateful that the member raised her point of order as early as she did, prior to the commencement of debate at second reading.

Government Orders

Where members believe that the Standing Order should apply, I would encourage them to raise their arguments as early as possible in the process, especially given that the length of debate at a particular stage can be unpredictable. If an objection is raised too late in the process, the Chair may have no choice but to allow the matter to go to a single vote at second reading or third reading, as the case may be.

[Translation]

When the Chair finds that the Standing Order does apply and that the question should be divided on a bill, I will indicate to the House which elements will be grouped together for the purposes of voting. As I noted earlier, legislation is often complex and such divisions are not always simple. This is particularly the case when a bill contains coordinating and consequential amendments, as well as coming-into-force provisions, which impact various sections of the bill. In presenting their arguments in favour of the division of a question, members are encouraged to indicate which provisions they feel should be grouped together.

[English]

In the event that the House rejects certain provisions at second reading while adopting others, the adopted portions of the bill will be referred to committee. In such cases, I would order that the bill be reprinted for the committee's consideration. In our current practice, reprints of a bill are generally only undertaken upon an order of a committee following the adoption of amendments or upon the passage of a bill at third reading. I believe, however, that when a portion of a bill has been rejected by the House at second reading, it would be useful for a committee to have a new version of the bill so that the measures contained in its order of reference are clear.

In the specific case of Bill C-56, after having examined the bill, I also concluded that the bill does indeed contain two distinct measures. The first part amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to implement a new regime for the administrative segregation of inmates. The second part, essentially clause 10 of the bill, amends the Abolition of Early Parole Act, dealing with the eligibility of certain offenders for accelerated parole reviews.

I note that the Abolition of Early Parole Act is the short title of "An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accelerated parole review) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts". This act was enacted in 2011 and repealed the accelerated parole review framework established by sections 125 and 126.1 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. With Bill C-56, the transitional provisions contained in the Abolition of Early Parole Act will be amended so that offenders who committed their offence prior to the law coming into effect in 2011 but who were sentenced only after that date may be eligible under the previous framework.

• (1525)

[Translation]

The hon. opposition House leader argued that, in this case, the two initiatives are unrelated and that members may well support the first and oppose the second. Members will know that many bills contain a number of initiatives on a number of policy areas, some of which members support and some of which they might oppose.

The amending process affords members an opportunity to propose changes, including the opportunity to remove portions of a bill to which they object. The question for the Chair, in applying Standing Order 69.1, is whether the matters are so unrelated as to warrant a separate vote at second and third reading.

[English]

At first glance, it may appear that the provisions in clause 10 of Bill C-56 are unrelated to the rest of the bill. However, the accelerated review process envisioned in that clause, as indicated earlier, was in fact set out in sections 125 to 126.1 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, the very act which is amended by the other clauses of the bill.

Since the subject matter of the bill as a whole deals with the treatment of inmates, either in the case of administrative segregation under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act or in the application of the accelerated parole review process under that same act, it is my view that the two parts are indeed related and that, consequently, the question on Bill C-56 should not be divided.

[Translation]

I thank all honourable members for their attention in this matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga had a minute and a half remaining when I so rudely cut him off before question period. The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I was so politely interrupted, I was talking about my colleague Mike from Elmira who operates Tri-Mach. Tri-Mach employs more than 100 Canadians and was considering expanding its business in my riding, but it has halted those plans as a result of these proposed tax changes. Additionally, he and other business owners I have heard from have been contacted by American investment firms to expand their businesses in the United States rather than in Canada due to these tax increases. The uncertainty these proposed tax changes have created will not go away easily. The damage is done.

Government Orders

Canadians have been sold a bill of goods. In 2015, the government said it would do one thing and has spent the past two years doing exactly the opposite. It is time for it to rein in its out-of-control spending and end its attack on middle-class Canadians. The interest costs on this debt alone are exorbitant. This year, over \$24 billion goes to just pay the interest; that is billion with a b. That number increases by another \$9 billion per year by 2021, just four years from now, to \$33 billion each year just to pay the interest. This is not even reducing our national debt by one nickel and just goes out the window as interest.

Think of where that money could have been better spent. Even our defence budget is not that high, and there are dozens of other initiatives that should be receiving this support. Why not invest some of that money, for example, to stand up against persecution and for religious freedom in the Middle East, Iraq, Syria, and North Africa?

In 2003, there were 1.5 million Christians in Iraq, but today there are only around 150,000, yet the Liberal government eliminated the office of religious freedom. What amount was saved by that? Five million dollars, or .02% of the amount we spend on interest. The government has many misplaced priorities.

There is far too little effort going into Canadian infrastructure, into restraining spending, into reducing the tax burden on my children and grandchildren, and into encouraging small business success. I simply cannot, in good conscience, support this irresponsible economic policy.

● (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member made reference to Tri-Mach as the company with concerns in terms of future employment and so forth. I would like to assure the member that different businesses have different approaches. Overall, when we take a look at what is trending in Canada today, what we will find is a high sense of optimism and hope, and that is realized in very tangible ways.

The member just commented on one business with which he has concerns. What we do know is that close to half a million jobs have been created in the last two years, most of which was done in the last year. We have seen a tangible commitment to have small business tax reduced down to 9%. There are so many wonderful things within this budget implementation legislation in terms of the prospect of future jobs the member commented about.

He might want to rethink how he is going to vote if he believes, as I do, that Canadians want to see the generation of the type of job numbers we are seeing today. That is a strong positive. Obviously, there is a far better sense of opportunity. We have far more jobs being created today than Stephen Harper ever created in his 10 years. They got about one million in 10 years, while we are talking about close to half a million in two years. That is good news for Canada's economy and having an overall healthier middle class.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure where to ramble on with my answer to that rambling question. I would like to remind my colleague that they often speak on the other side about the incredible growth in the last couple of years. We all understand that the global economy is doing very well right now.

When we were in government, we also experienced the best job growth in the G7. However, because the numbers were not as high as they are now, the members opposite point to that as failure. The time we were producing those jobs through our government policies was through an economic recession. Currently, we are not in a recession and there is no reason to keep spending and spending, especially when we are borrowing the money on the backs of future generations.

Then he talked about the small business tax reduction. That is a bit of a joke, because we all know in this House that there is no way the Liberal government would have followed through on that commitment were it not for the extreme pressure put on it by ordinary Canadians asking for this reduction, as well as the pressure put on by all the opposition parties, recognizing the Liberal government had not lived up to its campaign promise. The Liberals knew that if they did not do that they would have to answer for it.

● (1535)

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer—Mountain View, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague spoke about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and about being able to build infrastructure in Asia using Canadian funds.

When we look at having an opportunity to use Canadian investment dollars to build infrastructure here, unfortunately we find, with projects such as LNG and other opportunities to move our natural resources to other places in the world, that it is a bit ironic that we are holding back our own natural resources while helping other countries build ports, so that they can move other people's natural resources into their communities.

Could the member talk about some of the serious issues concerned with this Asian infrastructure bank?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, one of the glaring questions we are dealing with is the investment of nearly \$500 million in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, with virtually 1% control over what that money will be used for. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that, if we invest money in infrastructure in Asia, paid for by hard-working Canadian taxpayers, that is infrastructure spending that cannot happen here.

In my own riding I have bridges, water treatment facilities, and roads that could be resurfaced. We have the light rail transit system, which is nearing completion in the Waterloo region. Currently it is scheduled to go from the north of Waterloo to the south of Kitchener with an extension of the bus service down into Cambridge.

If this money that is available for infrastructure were spent in my area, we could finish this project now. It is a misplaced priority, and that is the reason I cannot support this irresponsible economic policy.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to Bill C-63. I am going to take a moment to go back to the campaign, before I get into my comments on this piece of legislation.

Government Orders

During the campaign, we put forward a really ambitious platform, one that focused on the middle class and those working hard to join it, one that focused on investments in people and in communities much like my community and home town of Whitby. We did this very strategically and very deliberately to ensure that Canadians knew they would be electing a government that would have their best interests at heart, that would look out for them, that would ensure we had a strong middle class, which is a sign of a thriving economy, but also to look at the most vulnerable in our communities and ensure we were looking out for them in the plans that we brought forward.

I have been listening to the debate on Bill C-63, and there were a couple of points that I will address in my comments, which require some clarification. Three points were brought up quite a bit yesterday: criticism of our feminist budget; the fact that this is an omnibus bill; and concern about our investment in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. I am going to tackle each of those items in my comments.

First, what is most disheartening was the criticism around the fact that this is a feminist budget, that we have approached it in a very feminist way. The fact that the 2017 budget was the first time we had a gender statement in a piece of legislation, especially as important as budget legislation, is critically important. It is a sign of a government that understands that policies we put forward have a disproportionately negative impact on women, and as the vulnerability of women increases, so does the impact that they could possibly have.

I really want to emphasize that women of colour, racialized women, indigenous women, women with disabilities, women with different sexual orientation, women who belong to religious groups, and women who are too old or too young face significant barriers in this country. To have a budget that looks at the intersectionality of vulnerable groups and applies a lens to decide and evaluate how those policies can impact women of various groups negatively, and how we can adjust the policies to ensure that they are benefiting from the policies we put forward, is a really important component of this piece of legislation. I am particularly proud of it because it has this intersectionality lens that has been put forward. It really speaks to the fact that not everyone is part of the middle class and it is incumbent upon us, when we look at a gender-based analysis, when we look at the intersectionality of other components that provide barriers for women, that we do so cognizant of the fact that we have individuals who are not part of our middle class, who are seriously working hard to join it, who are struggling on a day-to-day basis, and we have made sure we are looking at those individuals.

I now want to move to the conversation around this being an omnibus bill. I could reassure members that it is not. Everything in the bill relates to the budget. It is about growing communities. It is about growing our country. It is about investing in Canadians, investing in young people, investing in our future. It is about investing in innovation and skills. We know that making investments in these things today will ensure longevity, a promising future for our children and for our grandchildren.

● (1540)

I am going to rewind a little. As we came out of our election and looked to implementing our budget, we did a couple of things. We cut taxes for middle-class families and raised them on the top 1%. Many of the families in Whitby are middle-class families. Many of those families have children.

When we introduced the Canada child benefit, it was for families to be able to use that money, not to wait to get a tax rebate later on. They were able to get that money right away, so they could use it for books, sports programs, good nutritional food, or daily activities. The Canada child benefit has helped nine out of 10 families, providing more money to those families to pay for the things they prioritize, and has raised hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty.

When we look at the impact of the Canada child benefit in Whitby, 12,000-plus payments have been made, benefiting over 21,000 children in my riding alone. Let us look at that across the country, when we are talking about making investments in our future. We have done so with the most ambitious social policy in the Canada child benefit.

In Whitby and in the Durham region, we have invested in public transit. We have invested in clean water and waste-water infrastructure. We have invested in our colleges, Durham College and UOIT, and in our seniors.

This plan is working. Two years in, we have the best fiscal growth in the G7, and since being elected have created 500,000 new jobs, most of them full-time jobs. When we talk about our young people really struggling to get out of college or university and to do things with their life they want to do, these kinds of numbers, including decreased unemployment, really give a boost to Canadians and give them confidence.

I will take my last couple of minutes to wrap up and talk about Canada's leadership globally, and the investments in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. We are engaging in multilateral infrastructure efforts. We are renewing our commitment to engagement around the world.

When we look at our sustainable development goals, sustainable development goal no. 17 is around partnerships. We understand as a country that we cannot achieve the sustainable development goals of 2030 agenda to leave no one behind if we do not take the time to make those investments and to develop those very strong partnership. We have taken leadership to do so. We will continue to do that, because those 17 goals and 169 targets are very much interconnected. We understand that, and through that investment, we will help to ensure that the most vulnerable in our world also thrive.

This piece of legislation is really about ensuring that we have a sustainable future for our children and our grandchildren. We are making smart, strategic, green investments in our communities at home. We are ensuring that we are growing the economy. Our plan is working. We are putting more money in the pockets of Canadians and ensuring that we are taking leadership on the world stage.

Government Orders

● (1545)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is certainly raising matters that my colleagues and I would like to see the government committing our budget dollars to.

Regrettably, we are in fact falling down on the commitments that we have made. So far, we have only committed a little over half of what we committed for international aid, for climate mitigation adaptation. We committed to having a 50-50 balance in our global assistance for adaptation and mitigation, and that most of that would go to grants, not to loans, and through public dollars, not through private dollars. However, Canada is taking the complete opposite direction.

We have just heard that the head of the OECD is deeply disappointed in Canada's falling far behind in our commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

I wonder if the member could speak to what she sees in this budget that will in fact shift us toward what we committed to.

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Mr. Speaker, we decided that we were going to put a price on carbon pollution, to put a price on the things that we do not want. We decided to invest in green infrastructure. We wanted to ensure that we have communities, roadways, and bridges. We wanted to ensure that we have infrastructure that we can use now, and infrastructure that is sustainable into the future. Those are the investments we have been making in communities to allow us to meet the climate target.

Our government has made investments, as I mentioned, of over \$700,000 in clean water and waste-water treatment in Whitby. It might not seem like a big deal, but we are ensuring that our communities are safe, that our water is safe. We are making investments that are sustainable and forward-looking.

These are the types of investments we have made through this particular piece of legislation.

We must keep in mind that it is not just about one component. It is about investing in skills and innovation. It is about investing in an innovation agenda that allows us continuously, with a dynamic approach, to look at climate change and at ways in which we can reduce our impacts on and footprints in the world.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the wonderful speech she gave today about how the government is empowering Canadians and lifting them up at a time when they need our help, at a time when they need their government to be reaching out to partner with them and not be dictatorial in how we approach things.

My colleague has travelled internationally. She has represented our country at a number of engagements around the world. I ask her today, in all that we do in this country and how we are seen globally, is our government on the right track in being there not just for our citizens at home but also for those who depend upon us around the world?

Mrs. Celina Caesar-Chavannes: Mr. Speaker, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, I can tell the House that we have recently introduced our feminist international

assistance policy. We are certainly taking a leadership role in how we work and demonstrate Canada's strength around the world.

I have had an opportunity to travel to many different places, where we speak very strongly about human rights, where we speak very strongly against female genital mutilation and about the fact we do not want girls forced into marriage. We want our children in schools. We want to ensure that we are making investments that will help countries not only to develop in a way that will allow them to combat climate change but also to grow and become economically viable so that one day they will be able to trade with Canada.

We are focused on ensuring that women and girls stay at the centre of our policies. We cannot eliminate poverty and we cannot reach our sustainable development goals if we leave 50% of our population behind.

● (1550)

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to this particular bill. As members know, Bill C-63 looks at different provisions within the Government of Canada and the budget tabled in the spring of this year. It looks to see what needs to change for government to respond effectively to Canadians, and to ensure that their requests and expectations of their government are being met.

I know that many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have already spoken and given tremendous applause for this budget. They have certainly recognized that the investments we have been making as a country are smart investments, long overdue in many cases, but very smart, wise, and strategic with respect to meeting the growing needs of Canadians for jobs, infrastructure, and business development, allowing everyone the opportunity to move forward in this country. That includes many aspects of what government is involved in.

We talk a lot about skills training and trades, providing education to people who need it, and supporting our educational institutions. We talk about innovation and research, new models, and new ways of doing things for Canadians, always helping them to find better ways of making that a reality. We talk about how we need to do more with respect to social infrastructure, housing, and supporting families and children. Those have been the key policies of our government since the day we took office. The Prime Minister has made no apology about the fact that we are a government that came to office to lift up Canadians and the middle class, and to provide the long overdue infrastructure and supports they need in this country to be able to continue to grow and contribute.

Government Orders

We know that we are a strong nation. We know that, as Canadians, we are strong people. However, we always know that we can do better. No matter how good that job is today, we know we can do better tomorrow. That is what makes us the great country that we are. Therefore, when we talk about providing for child benefits in Canada, we may already have had a system that has contributed benefits to Canadians, but we can always do better, and that is what our government did. Will there be other ways to change and improve as we go along? Whenever we see a need to make that happen, and there is a better way, we are a government that has always been open to doing that.

We talk about how we are able to invest in our communities. I know that opposition members will sometimes say that the government is spending too much money. In many of our communities across Canada there has been tremendous neglect of infrastructure over a long period of time. If we want those communities to grow and contribute to the country that we are building together, then we need to invest in them. We need to invest while believing that they too can do better, and they know they can.

When we talk about all of these things, they are broad strokes. However, I am a member of Parliament who came to office to represent a riding that was neglected and left behind. Why? It was because it was rural, remote, indigenous, and was so far away from the centre of power that its needs were often not recognized. There are many areas like the riding I serve, the great riding of Labrador, that exist across Canada. Many of those ridings have been neglected. Why is it that when we came to office there were hundreds of boil water advisories on reserves and inadequate housing after 50 to 100 years of governments in Canada? Why is it that we came to office realizing that those who are rural and remote in Canada still do not have connectivity, who cannot access online services or be a participant in the global economy we are building? That is not building Canada together; that is about building a country and leaving distant people behind. If we are going to build this together, we have to work together and invest together.

● (1555)

I have a riding that is getting paved highways to remote communities for the first time. When I came into politics a number of years ago, no road existed to these communities. It was through the support and lobby of governments and partnerships that roads were built to connect these communities. In the last two years, we have invested nearly \$100 million to pave those roads and bring those communities together.

We have launched a program to provide infrastructure to connect rural, remote, and indigenous communities. We have allocated \$500 million for broadband across Inuit regions, regions like the one I represent. Today, people in many of these communities cannot go online. They cannot send me an email today if they want to, because they do not have the ability or the infrastructure in their communities to do so. Is that how we want to continue to run a country? No, it is not. As a government, we have seen the need to invest in every corner of the country to allow people to rise up and participate.

We know there are challenging issues. I talk about connecting communities with roads, bridges, and technology, but there are so many other challenges faced by rural and remote areas around the

country, which our government has had to tackle. Many of these challenges, as we know, have been around the trauma that has impacted many indigenous Canadian, many of whom I represent. This government recognizes that the residential school survivors in Newfoundland and Labrador were left behind.

When the apology was made to the survivors of residential schools, those I represent were left behind by the Government of Canada. Now they have been included. In a couple of weeks, the Prime Minister will go to Labrador to personally apologize to the survivors, to right a wrong in Canadian history. That is what we should be doing in government. If we are to lead, we have to own up to the black marks on our record as a country and make those things right. When we are talking about reconciliation, we are talking about making those things right.

I went to a reception a few minutes ago in the Speaker's lobby for the Indspire Awards across Canada. I met a young Inuk lady named Donna. She is a doctor. I met another young first nations lady named Ashley. She has been a role model for youth. I look at what those two ladies have accomplished, despite the many challenges they have faced in indigenous Canada, and what tremendous role models they are. They are so many more out there who are unrecognized.

I want to highlight some things in my own riding. When I came into office, 5 Wing Goose Bay, for example, had no official mandate from the former government. It lived in fear every day that the military base would close. It did not have a contract that was extended more than two years in a 10-year period. Now 5 Wing Goose Bay has a mandate and investment under this government. The investment in two years at that base has grown from \$15 million a year to \$30 million a year. We have been able to establish full Inuit-crown relationships and invest in many of the social issues that have plagued Canadians around the country, including some in my riding.

There have been unprecedented investments in indigenous housing projects, infrastructure, fisheries development, in all the pieces that are so valuable in building communities. However, we still have a lot of challenges and we need a government that has vision and leadership to lead us through those challenges. When I think of what is happening with Sears workers today, my riding went through the same thing with Wabush Mines, where 1,600 pensioners lost 24% of their pensions.

Are there things we can do to continue to improve upon our record as a government and make life better for Canadians? There certainly are, and we will work together to make that happen.

● (1600)

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have posed questions to the parliamentary secretary around a court case the Nuu-chah-nulth has been involved in with Canada for over a decade.

Government Orders

Over 10 years ago, the Nuu-chah-nulth and Canada went to court. The Nuu-chah-nulth won and reaffirmed their right to catch and sell fish in their territories. The Government of Canada, the Conservative government, appealed and delayed, and appealed and delayed. Both times in the Supreme Court of Canada, it was thrown out in favour of the nations and the government was ordered to get to the table and negotiate.

The current government has not done that in a meaningful way. In fact, these nations are often in remote areas. They cannot access the very fish running by their communities. Most of them are living on income assistance, which up until a month ago was \$235 a month. To go and get groceries for some them, it is \$50 each way, leaving them with a mere \$135 to buy food, medicine, and clothing.

They want to find their rightful place in our country. They want to be out fishing and not in court. Therefore, when the government talks about its most important relationship, why is it fighting its most important relationship in court?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member opposite, because it gives me an opportunity to talk about how our government has preferred negotiation over litigation. There are dozens of examples of how we have been able to resolve cases outside of the court system so people can move forward, especially in indigenous regions of Canada.

The unfortunate thing is that indigenous people have not had the fortune of having a historical attachment to resource development. I firmly believe it is a trend we need to change going forward. I have been very active in saying to the Government of Canada that new allocations around things like fisheries resources need to be looked at in the context of the aboriginal governments and indigenous people to see how these people can benefit from a resource that is directly on their shores.

Historically, governments of the past have allocated these resources to other interests. In my case, there are resources off the coast I represent adjacent to indigenous communities that are fished by people from other regions of Canada, and even quotas are owned by fishers who live in the United States. How did that happen in Canada?

I agree it is a historical trend that has to be corrected going forward. However, I am never convinced the courts are the way to do that. The way to do that is to work together to ensure these things do not happen in the future.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a perfect example of what the parliamentary secretary just said about not being in accord with Bill C-17, which hopefully we will get passed soon and have this dealt with that way.

It was great she mentioned access to resources. The Prime Minister was recently in my riding and announced \$247 million, maybe the biggest announcement ever, for infrastructure. For time immemorial, the northern premiers and politicians have been arguing that the resources are there but we cannot access them.

On top that, for a lot of the rural and remote communities, there are infrastructure projects for almost every community I have announced so far, which have put so many people to work. We now are basically at full employment economically.

Has the member had the same experience in her riding with investment in infrastructure and the great economic benefits that has had?

• (1605)

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to work with the member for Yukon the last couple of year in the House of Commons. At one point, he was actually my seatmate. I know how passionate he is about his riding and the north.

What the member has said is absolutely accurate. Many ridings like his in Yukon and mine in Labrador and other remote indigenous ridings across Canada have been left behind for a long time. When the Government of Canada steps up and invests \$270 million in infrastructure in Yukon or \$200 million in infrastructure throughout my riding of Labrador, it creates jobs. It not only creates jobs, but it allows people the opportunity to go back to school, to do skilled trades, to become equipped for those new opportunities that are now on their doorstep. It is really giving a tremendous sense of hope that has not existed.

Mr. John Nater (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to debate Bill C-63, a second act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures. I find the “other measures” part interesting. It almost indicates that it may be an omnibus bill, despite the protestations to the contrary. It certainly seems like an omnibus bill. One would have hoped we might have been able to apply the provisions of Standing Order 69.1. Of course, the government carefully worded that Standing Order change to specifically eliminate the provision to budget implementation acts. However, I digress. That is certainly a debate that would be joyfully had on another occasion.

This bill further indicates the problem with the Liberal government. It has a spending problem. Time and again, we have seen the Liberal government commit to tiny deficits of \$10 billion, small one-time deficits over three years, and to quickly return to balanced budgets by 2019. However, that is not happening and yet we see reckless spending time and again, like, for instance, \$212,234 on a budget cover. We cannot invest in the priorities of Canadians when money is recklessly spent by the Liberal government.

Looking at the projections going forward, we see at least \$100 billion in new deficit spending over the next six years, far beyond what was promised by the Liberals in the last election campaign.

Government Orders

It is intriguing. On the day before Christmas eve of last year, the government, through the Department of Finance, released its long-term economic and fiscal projections. Already the Liberal finance minister has projected that he will once again release these figures later in the year. I suspect we will all be feverishly refreshing finance.gc.ca to see these new figures released, perhaps on Christmas eve or perhaps on New Year's Eve. Either way, I am sure it will not be done with much fanfare.

When the figures were last released on December 23, 2016, we saw that the government would not be able to balance its books until at least 2055. That means high school students graduating this year, at the age of 18, will not see a balanced budget until they are 56 years old. They will spend nearly their entire working career dealing with the reckless spending of the Liberal government. That is 30 years. My children, who are now three and one, will spend this time paying for the reckless spending of the Liberal government.

It is not just Conservatives who are saying this. In fact, the parliamentary budget officer is saying similar things.

● (1610)

[*Translation*]

In the October 31 report entitled “Economic and Fiscal Outlook”, the parliamentary budget officer predicts that program spending will continue to rise every year until 2023. Public debt charges will also rise, surging from \$24 billion this year to \$38.5 billion by 2023. A lot of hard-earned taxpayer money will be going to service debt. The parliamentary budget officer predicts that the federal debt itself will also rise every year, reaching a total of \$700 billion by 2023. It is unprecedented for our national debt to grow so steeply in the absence of a world war or global economic crisis. Moreover, such incompetent fiscal management is both inexcusable and intolerable.

[*English*]

Throughout the debate on the original budget tabled on March 22, I received a number of emails, phone calls, and letters from people in my riding. They were concerned that taxes were being raised on families, students, small business and, particularly in my riding, on family farms. Now, we see this going even further, with taxes being raised on those suffering with type 1 diabetes. This is all being done to garner more money for the government's out-of-control spending.

Last spring I received an email from a constituent in Arthur, Ontario. I should mention that Arthur, Ontario, is known as Canada's most patriotic village. As we lead into Remembrance Day later this week, I want to comment on the bravery of our brave men and women who serve today and have served in the past.

A constituent from Arthur wrote, “I feel compelled to pass on this feedback in regard to personal income tax, as I recently filed our taxes. We're virtually a single income family, as my wife makes less than the personal basic amount. We saw very limited changes in our income and deductions in 2016 relative to previous years. However, our tax refund is 50% less than it was in 2015. I know we are not alone, as others have told me similar stories.”

This is reflective of the changes the Liberals undertook in their first two budgets, which included cancelling the fitness credit for kids in sporting activities, the arts credit, the textbook credit for those undertaking post-secondary education, and the public transit tax

credit. Time and time again, the Liberal government has made hard-working Canadians pay for its fiscal mismanagement.

What is more, the burden is being placed on the middle class. A recent study found that 87% of middle-class taxpayers are paying more in income tax now than they were just two years ago, as much as \$800 more per year.

In division 2, clause 176, of Bill C-63, we see the government sending money overseas. In fact, the Liberals are sending nearly half a billion dollars to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Canadians may have heard about the bank, but for those who have not, let me read from the Department of Finance backgrounder. It says:

Founded in January 2016 and based in Beijing, the AIIB is an international financial institution focused on addressing the estimated US \$8 trillion infrastructure gap in Asia.

Just last week we found that the Liberals will be delaying \$2 billion in infrastructure spending here in Canada, yet half a billion dollars would be sent for overseas infrastructure projects. I think of my riding of Perth—Wellington and so many of the important infrastructure investments my municipalities are calling for. I look at places like West Perth and the town of Mitchell, which are looking to put in a second bridge and a second water crossing to connect the two sides of the town and to allow the flow of the water system to be more efficient and with a better flow capacity. There should be funding for that, but we have yet to see the government reopen the new building Canada fund to allow for investments in important infrastructure, such as roads and bridges.

I think of places like Arthur and Drayton, which have important waste water projects that need to be undertaken to allow those communities to continue to expand and development. I look at places like Perth South and the town of St. Marys, which are continually updating their roads, bridges, and important infrastructure to make sure those towns remain viable.

I look at places like Stratford, where there is strong cultural infrastructure and they are looking for funding through the Government of Canada, yet we see \$2 billion in domestic infrastructure spending being delayed. The government sees fit to send half a billion dollars overseas, rather than investing in important projects in Perth Wellington and across Canada.

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I was very pleased recently to be named by our leader to serve as the shadow secretary for interprovincial trade. I note that division 10, part 5, of the budget implementation bill deals with the implementation of the Canada free trade agreement. This alone could take hours and days of debate in the House, but we are not being given that opportunity. The free trade agreement is 353 pages long but has 147 pages of exceptions and exemptions, especially those related to the sale and import across provincial boundaries of beer, alcohol, spirits, and wine.

The government has not acted on interprovincial trade, and this sham of an implementation of the free trade agreement does not address the true interprovincial trade barriers that exist within Canada. We must work together to remove those trade barriers to see our communities and small businesses prosper.

• (1615)

Ms. Kim Rudd (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member was a little all over the place in the number of points he was trying to make, but I want to clarify something. At first there was mention of a reduction in taxes, but then it was half a refund. We all know that a refund really has nothing to do with a reduction in taxes, so we need to clarify that.

One of the things that is important is the increase in the Canada child benefit and the indexing of that benefit. I do not know about the member opposite's riding, but that benefit brings about \$6 million a month into my riding. When we talk to local businesses in my community, they tell us it has been a boon for them, because those people in my riding are shopping locally and are helping those small businesses.

Speaking of businesses, the member mentioned the global economy. Certainly the larger businesses in my community, such as Team Eagle, Horizon Plastics International, and National Shunt Service, are all working very hard to compete in that global economy, and they appreciate the work we are doing on the international stage in securing trade agreements that are good for Canadians.

Can the member speak a little about the international trade agreements and the Canada child benefit?

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that I was a little all over the place. It is tough to get in a lot in 10 minutes. I note that she was a little all over the place as well in her question. However, she had a couple of points. Let us talk about free trade deals. I am very proud to be part of a party that implemented trade agreements with over 50 countries when we were in government, including the European Union, which is one of the largest and richest trading markets in the world.

She talked a little about small businesses. That is awfully rich coming from a Liberal member, after the Liberals spent the last three months calling small businesses tax cheats and accusing them of hiding their money and trying to cheat the tax system, when all the while we knew it was this finance minister and his Liberal friends who were really the ones doing all they could to avoid paying taxes. It was this finance minister who held shares in a company he regulates. It was this finance minister who forgot about a corporation he owned in France that housed his French villa.

It is rich to hear the Liberal government talk about small businesses, when in fact, for the past three months, it is the one that has been accusing them of being tax cheats.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, tackling climate change is of the utmost priority, especially in the Comox Valley. We have heard loud and clear support for an eco-energy retrofit program, similar to what the Conservatives had in the last government, which they killed because it was so successful. It was one of those things the NDP had in common with the Conservatives when it was up and running. We would have liked to have seen it extended. In fact, we would like to see the government of the day take it on and bring that program back.

I received an email last night from Jason Jackson, who is an energy systems designer at Hakai Energy Solutions. He said, "As our company hears the thoughts and motivations of homeowners, we understand that those ready to invest in renewable energy are immediately demotivated by the fact that, unlike other regions of the world, Canada has no public strategy and provides no financial incentives directly to home and business owners that want to participate in the clean energy economy."

The opportunity is right in front of us for people to actually have self-determination over their energy dependence and also to help move us forward in tackling this huge challenge we have. Does the member support bringing that program back to where carpenters and electricians could get into homes to help install clean energy? Does he support the NDP's call to bring that program back and to call on the government to do so with urgency?

• (1620)

Mr. John Nater: Mr. Speaker, regarding the eco-energy retrofit program, certainly in my riding of Perth—Wellington, it was a very popular program, as was the home renovation tax credit. Both were very popular and important to organizations, carpenters, and home builders.

Recently, members of the Stratford & Area Builders' Association have brought up this very topic, whether it is a home energy retrofit or a home renovation tax credit, like the one provided in the Conservative platform in the last election. Both programs were hugely valuable to Canadian families and those in the industry. It also worked to help drive the underground economy into the public. These types of programs force those who would normally operate underground, under the table, to go into the public sphere to file things legally and on the up and up. It allowed these families to receive beneficial tax credits but also encouraged those within the industry to do so legitimately.

Mr. Bill Blair (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada and to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise today. I intend to focus the majority of my remarks in the brief time that is available to me in speaking specifically to part 4 of this bill. It states:

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Part 4 amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act to allow the Minister of Finance on behalf of the Government of Canada, with the approval of the Governor in Council, to enter into coordinated cannabis taxation agreements with provincial governments. It also amends that Act to make related amendments.

Before speaking to the rationale and requirements of that part of the bill, I would like to make an observation on behalf of the constituents of my riding in Scarborough Southwest. My community is a working-class neighbourhood where many families struggle making ends meet, particularly families with young children. Census Canada tells us that nearly 57% of the children in some neighbourhoods are living below the poverty line. I have gone into those communities and seen the remarkable, and often unrealized potential of those children. We have not done enough for them over decades.

When we introduced the Canada child benefit, we were able to substantially increase the amount of funds that went into those families on behalf of those kids and in those communities. I want to share with every member of this House the positive impact that it has had. That money did not go into savings accounts or investment instruments. It went into the fridge, new shoes, new programs, and opportunities for those kids to participate in their community. It created new potential for those kids.

I wanted to say thanks to this House, and to all those who supported that investment, because it has made a huge difference to those families. Over 90% of the families in my riding benefited substantially from the implementation of the Canada child benefit. It has made a difference in my neighbourhood even beyond those families. Others have benefited substantially from this investment, such as those running small businesses in my community like a barber shop, grocery store, or kids' shoe store, and those who provide a place where someone might go and get a little recreation or fast food.

Of all the things the government can do, changing the lives of children and the quality of life in neighbourhoods is something that we can all be proud of. I want to share that pride and my appreciation with every member of this House. It is something we can agree is the right thing to do.

Speaking of the right thing to do, I want to talk a bit about the implementation of the cannabis bill. Members of this House have often heard me rise to speak to this. I want to provide a little insight into how the taxation scheme and investment at all three levels of the government are important to achieve the public purpose goal of changing the way cannabis is controlled in this country.

Currently, we have a system of cannabis control that is predicated almost entirely on criminal prohibition with significant legal consequences for those who break the law. We have seen the failure of that system where the young people in our country use cannabis at the highest rates of any country in the world. The cannabis they use is produced and sold by individuals involved in a criminal enterprise who have no concern for the health and safety of our kids, and do very little, with the billions of dollars in profit, that is helpful to our communities. Rather, they invest in other harms.

Our purpose is that we need to do a better job. I think that would be agreed across this country. We may have different ideas on how to achieve that, but I believe there is overwhelming consensus. We

need to do a better job of protecting our children from the potential health and social harms resulting from the early onset use of cannabis, or from using cannabis of unknown potency and purity, or from buying cannabis from a criminal enterprise.

We also recognize that one of the harms that has been far too often visited upon young people in our society is criminalization and the impact of a criminal record. When I talk to parents across the country about the fears they hold around cannabis, they fear for the health of their kids, and whether they will achieve healthy social outcomes, complete school, or hang around with people they do not want around their kids. They are also afraid that late at night the kid may be pulled over by the police and end up with a criminal record.

● (1625)

We have tried our very best to respond to those things, but we do not believe that a prohibition, whether criminal or civil, is sufficient. The right way to manage all of the potential social and health harms of this substance is by investing in a significant regulatory framework predicated on public health principles intended to reduce those social and health harms. Based on the experience of other jurisdictions, we believe the only way to achieve that public health framework is by lifting the prohibition.

I have heard people ask why we do not just merely decriminalize it, but that leaves the prohibition in place. We cannot regulate the distribution or the production of a substance that is merely decriminalized, because it remains prohibited, so we have brought in a different system. Simply regulating a substance and its production and distribution will not achieve everything that needs to be achieved.

It is necessary for a government to make investments in such things as public education, because there is so much misinformation, ignorance, and myth associated with this substance. We need to clear up that fog. We need to make sure people have good information. We need to make sure our young people know the facts and know what will make a difference for them.

Our government has committed to investing \$46 million in a public education campaign to make sure that information is available to our kids, to their peers, to their parents, to teachers, and to health professionals. That is an important investment that needs to be made.

We also want to ensure that we invest in those organizations that are given the responsibility of enforcing these new regulations, to administer this new system and the testing that needs to be in place. We have invested close to \$440 million in Health Canada. We have invested another \$161 million in law enforcement for those things. In order to make those investments, we have had to make them up front.

Part 4 of the bill also enables us to enter into negotiations and discussions with our provincial counterparts through our minister to ensure that a taxation system is imposed upon a regulated supply of cannabis, which will ultimately result in a price that is both competitive with organized crime's price and also would not provide an incentive for individuals to begin to use this drug.

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Those are important discussions that need to take place between the Minister of Finance and his provincial and territorial counterparts to establish a harmonized taxation regime, so that discussion has begun. Our finance minister has met a number of times with his federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts. Senior officials in our government have met with provincial government officials to begin those discussions, and a consultation process will begin shortly, which will be public. We will engage with all stakeholders on this important issue. We believe in public consultation.

That is why part 4 of the bill is so important. We want to make sure the resources are available to those who are given the task of regulating, managing, and administering this system—putting that infrastructure in place, making sure it is appropriately funded, and making sure we make the investments that put substance behind our words and reality behind our intentions.

If our intentions are to do a better job of protecting our kids, if our intentions are to take this criminal opportunity away, take those billions of dollars away—the easiest money organized crime ever made—and create a harmonized taxation structure that would support those goals but also produce the revenue that could be reinvested in prevention, research, treatment, and rehabilitation, those are the things that make this amendment and part 4 a worthwhile endeavour, an appropriate investment.

I would ask every member of the House to support that initiative so that we may achieve the things that we all agree on. We need to do a better job of protecting our kids. We need to protect the health of Canadians. We need to take opportunity away from organized crime. We need to protect our kids from the threat of criminal sanctions. All those things could be achieved through appropriate investments and changing the legislation.

I thank members for their thoughtful attention to my remarks.

•(1630)

Mr. Wayne Stetski (Kootenay—Columbia, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was going to ask a question about the Liberals' infrastructure bank, which I truly believe does not work in favour of rural Canada at all, but given the flavour of the hon. member's words, I will ask him a question about marijuana, which I asked in the House last week.

First, let me say that I absolutely agree that its use should be decriminalized and that we need a strong educational program as this moves forward. There is still a debate in my riding about whether it should or should not be legalized, but I know the government is heading down that path.

The people in my riding of Kootenay—Columbia want to be part of the future from an economic perspective and have formed a co-op in the West Kootenays to provide a solid way of moving forward with outdoor growing of marijuana through a co-op, so it would be a single source that the government has to deal with. There are about 120 people who have expressed interest in being part of that co-op. When we look at concerns about things like how to manage quality control, there would be a grading system in place to know what the percentages are for the health part versus the euphoria part. It is manageable, but so far it appears that the Liberal government only wants to include large corporate growers as part of the economic future for marijuana.

Will the government try to provide opportunities so that small growers who work together co-operatively in a co-op can be part of the future? I can pretty well assure the member that, if that is not the case, the illegal growing of marijuana will continue in Canada.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, at some point in time, we could perhaps have a greater debate on the merits of legalization versus decriminalization, but I would simply and succinctly say that experience has shown us that one cannot regulate that which is prohibited, and decriminalization maintains a prohibition. It simply replaces a criminal sanction with a civil sanction, but the prohibition remains in place, and as long as there is a prohibition, there cannot be a regulated supply or distribution system. That is why I believe so firmly that, in order to get this right, we have to lift the prohibition in order to implement a proper and comprehensive framework for the regulation of production and distribution.

With respect to the specific question that he asked about the opportunity for small growers and craft growers, I can assure the member that the regulations Health Canada has brought forward do not in any way impede the participation of small business. In fact, the overwhelming majority of licences that have currently been issued have been to companies with fewer than 100 employees and, therefore, qualify as small businesses.

There are, of course, very strict regulations in place to ensure that the purity and potency can be known and verified before anything moves to market. Those standards are in place to protect the health and safety of our citizens, so we will not compromise on those, but we will not, in our regulations, impede the participation of the small business owner or the small craft producer. As long as they are willing and able to abide by the strict regulations that are being put in place, they should be able to participate in the market.

•(1635)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has been a public servant his entire life, serving his community in Toronto and rising to chief of police. I was wondering if he could tell the House what he has heard from other chiefs of police and what the government is doing to assist police forces in implementing the legalization of cannabis.

Mr. Bill Blair: Mr. Speaker, I have been very much engaged in consultation with my former colleagues in public safety. What they have told us unequivocally is that, in order to address law enforcement capacity issues for the enforcement of these regulations, they need training, access to technology, and resources. We have listened, perhaps better than any other government, in my experience. I have been doing this for 40 years, and I can say that from my experience, I can recall dozens of times where very complex legislation was basically thrown over the fence to us and we were wished good luck with it. Instead, we have been working with law enforcement leaders in this country for over two years. We have listened to what they said they needed, we have responded to that, we have announced up to \$274 million to make those investments in training, technology, and resources that they said they needed, and we will be there to help them be ready.

Government Orders

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for Vancouver East, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship; the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, Employment Insurance.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby South, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this has been a very wide-ranging debate today on the budget bill, as it should be. I am going to add to that wide-ranging discussion of what we are faced with here in the House. I am speaking to Bill C-63, and it is the second budget implementation bill. I regret to say that I will be voting against the bill, and I hope to outline in this speech why that is the case.

In a nutshell, there are many things in this bill. It proposes to bring into effect new spending and new regulations with which I do not agree. There are many things that are not in this bill that I would like to see; for example, money for a national pharmacare program or more money for housing, which is of such critical concern in my riding of Burnaby South. However, that money is not there.

I want to bring to the attention of the House today that I am voting against this bill in part to protest and bring attention to the way the current government presents information to the public. In many cases, data are used to promote certain economic activities; the data that are used by the government are badly distorted, whether on purpose or through incompetence; or it is just plain wrong.

In the last Parliament when I would get up and talk about budgets, especially on the science portfolio, which I oversee for the NDP, I would ask for the presentation of data adjusted for inflation, for example, if they are looking at longitudinal data. I remember the Conservatives telling me that was some socialist voodoo economics, but in fact it is just a realistic way of looking at how money is spent over time.

I have not heard back from the current government, but I expect to be heckled a bit as I go through this talk today.

I would like to bring attention to the way the government throws around job-creation figures. As we did with the Conservative government in the last Parliament, we often get hyper-inflated numbers of job creation that always tie back to the budget, the spending, and those types of things. The Prime Minister's cabinet members are talking about jobs associated with their plan to ram a pipeline through British Columbia. That is of course the Kinder Morgan pipeline. If members will recall, this project was approved and the Prime Minister broke his promise to British Columbians and said that he would thoroughly review the project to see how many jobs and what would be the effect on the environment. However, he did not do that, and the Liberals are pushing it through against the wishes of the provincial government, most first nations communities, mayors and councils, and millions of British Columbians. Therefore, what I take specific issue with is the way the Liberals portray their job-creation numbers, not only in relation to the budget but in this specific case.

When the Prime Minister announced the approval of the pipeline, he said he would create 15,000 new middle-class jobs, and we see this in the budget document where we hear about all the jobs that the

spending would create. However, in this case with the pipeline, the Prime Minister and his other ministers and parliamentary secretaries have said that this would create “15,000 new middle-class jobs”. This is repeated over and over. This is a lot of jobs; 15,000 jobs is a big number, and people might be tempted to overlook the environmental damage and the damage to relations with first nations that this might create, and they might support the project if, in fact, the figure of 15,000 jobs were true, but it is not. Really, the number is straight out of the mouths of the pipeline company proponents, the spin doctors, right onto the lips of the Prime Minister and of the parliamentary secretaries who defend the pipeline, and of the entire Liberal caucus in British Columbia, which is also solidly behind pushing this pipeline through our province.

The Prime Minister's ministers in cabinet repeat this number over and over again, so I feel it is important to delve into the number because it exposes the incompetence and duplicity of the current government when it comes to its economic statements. The first thing to note is that 15,000 jobs that the pipeline supposedly is going to create is just plain wrong, according to many analysts—for example, Robyn Allan, who has written extensively on this and testified both as an expert to the National Energy Board and on her own in many publications, is taking on this number firmly and convincingly.

● (1640)

Ms. Allan is no slouch. She is a former president and CEO of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, the vice-president of finance at Parklane Ventures Ltd., and senior economist for the B.C. Credit Union. She is an expert witness on economic and insurance-related issues right here in Ottawa. She has taught money and banking, public finance, and micro and macroeconomics in universities. She has written numerous articles and books. If we were to call a witness to talk about how many jobs a project or a budget would actually create, this is the type of person we would want to advise us.

According to Ms. Robyn Allan, this number of 15,000 jobs associated with the Kinder Morgan pipeline is six times the number of temporary construction jobs actually presented by the company in its National Energy Board application. The Prime Minister, the parliamentary secretaries, the cabinet, and the B.C. caucus are all saying that the Kinder Morgan pipeline will create 15,000 jobs during its construction. However, that is contrary to what the company presented in its documentation to the National Energy Board. Therefore, the government has inflated this number sixfold. If we extrapolate that over other parts of the budget and other parts of the claims by the government, this makes us doubt almost everything that it is putting forward.

Government Orders

The 15,000 jobs number comes from a fantastical calculation based on a doubling of the amount of construction time this proposed pipeline is allowed to take. The pipeline is supposed to be constructed over two years. This 15,000 job number comes from a four-year construction period. Therefore, according to Ms. Allan, “Trans Mountain's estimate of 15,000 construction workforce jobs is a scam. The more realistic figure is less than 20 per cent of that size.”

Therefore, when Canadians are here listening to this debate in the House about the Liberals and their fiscal plans, the latter are flat out telling falsehoods about what we can expect with respect to one of the biggest projects in the country. They downplay the environmental damage that just one spill from this pipeline or its construction would create in communities right across British Columbia and have artificially inflated the number of jobs that will be created.

What is also important is the second part of the Prime Minister's statement that these jobs will be middle-class jobs. These 15,000 jobs the government claims will come from this pipeline are not permanent. This is of course from documents submitted by the company to the National Energy Board, which state, “Once the proposed Expansion Project is complete, operating and maintaining...[this] Pipeline system will result in approximately 90 new operating positions”. In fact, we will never see the Prime Minister stand up and say that he has justified this pipeline because it will create 90 permanent jobs; rather, he uses the inflated number of 15,000 jobs, which is clearly wrong.

The idea that these jobs are middle class is also wrong. Kinder Morgan president Ian Anderson was here at committee and admitted that he hires temporary foreign workers, and that those are the workers who will be hired to build this pipeline. Therefore, these 15,000 are not full-time middle-class jobs, but 90 full-time jobs, and perhaps 2,000 or 3,000 temporary construction jobs filled by temporary foreign workers.

What is worse, Kinder Morgan has contracted with CLAC, which is not an official union. It is not, for example, the BC Building Trades union. Therefore, it is skirting the unions in British Columbia that would ordinarily protect workers in order to make this happen.

Once we actually start looking at the facts from the company and the National Energy Board, we see that this 15,000 job claim is wrong. We have temporary foreign workers, we have temporary jobs, and we have 90 full-time jobs. That is hardly worth rupturing our entire relationship with first nations people or local communities. In fact, 45% of British Columbians oppose this pipeline, and 30% are strongly opposed and are willing to take action to stop it. Many people who have not been to British Columbia are not aware that we do not have treaties with the first nations there, and they have significant rights. We are seeing this play out right now. We have 18 court cases, many of which were filed by first nations, including one yesterday by the Squamish Nation challenging the legitimacy of the review process for the pipeline.

Therefore, I would suggest that the government go back and take a look at these numbers for real and come back with realistic numbers that we could debate more fully.

• (1645)

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about the indexing of the Canada child benefit in the budget implementation act. We know the Canada child benefit has had positive impacts across the country, including in the hon. member's riding. Could he tell us what he has heard from his constituents about its benefits for low and middle-income Canadians, such as reduced child poverty, and if he is happy to hear it will be indexed in the future?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to tell the hon. member about what my constituents are saying about what I was speaking about. In fact, in 2014, 125 of them were arrested for trying to stop the pipeline. Thousands and thousands have protested against it. I polled my own riding, and 75% of those in Burnaby are against it.

They are really mad at the government, which keeps outlining in false way the benefits from this pipeline in order to spread the mistruths the company itself puts forward. I definitely listen to my constituents, and they care about this.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to do something I rarely do, which is to forgive the hon. member for Burnaby South for not speaking to the bill before us, because I passionately share his opposition to this wrong-headed project.

I would like him to expand on the theme. He carefully laid out how Kinder Morgan's claims that it will create vast numbers of jobs are completely erroneous, but what was not mentioned in his speech was the threat to jobs by building Kinder Morgan. The largest trade union in northern Alberta representing oil sands workers is Unifor. It attempted, as I did, to intervene in the process. It attempted to enter evidence into the record before the National Energy Board that Kinder Morgan threatened jobs as a direct threat to the Chevron refinery, which I believe is either in the member's riding or very close.

Could he comment on the threat to jobs at the Chevron refinery if Kinder Morgan proceeds?

• (1650)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the member's interventions and really appreciate her support on this issue.

Of course, the threat to jobs in Burnaby or the rest of British Columbia is not covered by examinations at the National Energy Board, because the government relies on the process created by the Conservatives, which is to limit debate and stop cross-examination of companies. As a result, we really get a very pro picture of almost all projects.

Government Orders

The Prime Minister had said he would change the process and would send the pipeline proposal back to the drawing board. He immediately broke his promise, did not revise the process, and here we are.

Getting to the hon. member's exact point, we do have a refinery in Burnaby that I support. However, what has happened is that Kinder Morgan is pinching off supply to that refinery and it is in danger of closing. I fully support those jobs, which are good, union-paying jobs. It is a shame the government is not paying more attention to the welfare of people in British Columbia.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for talking about jobs. As someone from a coastal community who ran a chamber of commerce, I understand how important it is to protect the marine economy for our jobs. There are over 100,000 people who rely on a clean ocean for their jobs in coastal British Columbia.

As my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands just mentioned, we need to do everything we can to protect jobs in coastal British Columbia. We also have an opportunity to build a marine economy for the future. Where I live in Port Alberni, we want to build a marine economy through enhancements and investments in our ports, through investments in rehabilitating our salmon, investments in salmon restoration, and habitat protection and salmon enhancement.

Perhaps the member could talk about the jobs that are being threatened by this proposal and future opportunities for coastal British Columbia, which British Columbians are going to stand up and fight for, and how important it is that we listen to British Columbians. If we underestimate the will of British Columbians, we will find out what people in my community know, that when logging was taking place in 1993, the largest civil disobedience in Canadian history took place when good jobs and the future of the economy were created in Clayoquot Sound were threatened.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, the government says that it is an evidence-based government that makes policy based on evidence, but basically it decided that this pipeline was going to go through no matter what, and then it fit the facts to support its case. Of course, one would perhaps expect that from an undergraduate writing their first paper, but not from a government that is supposed to run the country. The Liberals need to take in more evidence and, in fact, they need to cancel this project.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been some discussions among the parties and if you seek it, I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion.

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on Thursday, November 9, 2017, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, November 20, 2017, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, the House shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, November 10, 2017.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): We do not have unanimous consent I am afraid.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if it is appropriate to ask, but is it possible to ask the question again?

There may have been a misunderstanding. My understanding is that there was unanimous support for the motion. Therefore, if it is possible, could you ask once again? I had thought all parties were in support of the motion.

• (1655)

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): Okay, we will try one more time.

Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Assistant Deputy Speaker (Mr. Anthony Rota): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2017, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-63, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 22, 2017 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Michel Picard (Montarville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to speak to Bill C-63 today. The budget implementation act, 2017, no. 2 includes key measures from the government's second budget, which outlines the second phase of the government's plan to make smart investments that will create jobs, grow our economy, and provide more opportunities for every Canadian to succeed.

Thanks to these smart investments and an overall commitment to equity, the government is ensuring that Canada's best days are still ahead.

Before I get into the budget implementation bill, I want to talk about the measures the government has taken so far to give all Canadians, including those in the middle class and those working hard to join it, the opportunities they need to succeed.

To begin with, we asked the wealthiest 1% to pay a bit more in taxes in order to be able to give the middle class a tax cut. That tax cut for the middle class benefited nine million Canadians, and we are very proud of that.

Government Orders

[English]

Then we brought in the new Canada child benefit, which has lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty. As a result of our CCB, nine out of 10 Canadian families are getting more in benefits than they did under the previous system. Compared to the previous system of child benefits, the CCB is more generous and better targeted to those who need it most.

[Translation]

In the fall economic statement released on October 24, the government announced that it would strengthen the Canada child benefit by indexing it to annual increases in the cost of living as of 2018, which is two years earlier than planned. What does that mean in practical terms? For a single parent with two children and an income of \$35,000, the enhanced Canada child benefit will contribute an additional \$560 in the 2019-20 benefit year towards the cost of raising his or her children. That means more money for books, winter coats, and skating lessons. The added confidence that the Canada child benefit brings to families can have a positive impact on economic growth.

Our government has also enhanced the Canada pension plan in order to provide Canadians with financial security when they retire from their hard work life. Enhancing the Canada pension plan ensures that Canadians will have more money in retirement so they are less worried about saving and can focus more on enjoying the good times with their families.

Starting in 2019, we will be enhancing the working income tax benefit by an additional \$500 million per year. This will put more money in the pockets of low-income workers, including families without children and the growing number of single Canadians. The enhancement will be in addition to the increase of about \$250 million annually that will also come into effect in 2019 as part of the enhancement of the Canada pension plan.

These two actions alone will boost the total amount the government spends on the WITB by about 65% in 2019, increasing benefits to current recipients and expanding the number of Canadians receiving this essential support.

This extra money could pay the family grocery bill or buy warm winter clothes. The improved benefit will help low-income Canadians make ends meet.

The government is also showing that it is committed to helping small businesses invest, grow, and create jobs by lowering the small business tax rate to 10% effective January 1, 2018, and to 9% effective January 1, 2019. This will provide a small business with up to \$7,500 per year in corporate tax savings to reinvest in and grow its business. These kinds of savings are crucial for businesses to grow and prosper.

Lastly, the government intends to make important changes to the tax system that will ensure Canada's low corporate tax rates serve to support businesses, not to provide unfair tax advantages to the wealthy and the richest Canadians.

● (1700)

[English]

The steps taken to date are having a real positive impact on our economy and for Canadians. Optimism is on the rise, and with good reason. Job creation is strong with over 450,000 new jobs created in the last two years. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level since 2008. Youth unemployment is at a historic low.

Canada has the fastest growing economy in the G7 by a wide margin, growing at an average rate of 3.7% over the last year, which is the fastest pace of growth since early 2006. Growth is forecast to be 3.1% in 2017, significantly above the expectation at the beginning of the year.

The fiscal outlook has improved by more than \$6.5 billion annually on average from what was projected in budget 2017 last March.

[Translation]

The tax measures that we have taken for the benefit of families and children are having a real impact every day in my riding, Montarville. Approximately 97% of the people of Montarville clearly define themselves as being part of the middle class. These positive impacts are reported back to us regularly. They are felt in a very real and tangible way in peoples' wallets. This kind of investment is crucial, perhaps even a game-changer, in giving people assurances of a better life that is easier to manage because their budget is easier to manage.

For example, the city of Saint-Bruno, where I live, has been named the best place in Canada to raise children.

This kind of tax break is key to giving families the help they all need, just as families are having more and more children. A young family with three very young kids lives right across from me. That family is benefiting directly from this kind of help. This help is making a real, tangible, and practical difference at the end of every month.

Another measure I find quite interesting among the budget measures is the government's decision to legalize and regulate cannabis, as well as the economic spinoffs that can be generated by such a measure.

Our government plans to legalize and strictly regulate cannabis. This policy is necessary and desirable and has two objectives: to keep marijuana out of the hands of youth, and to deprive criminals of any profits from illegal cannabis sales.

In advance of the government's plan to legalize cannabis, budget 2017 allocated several million dollars to public education programming and surveillance activities. On that note, I would like to inform the House that during the consultations I participated in, and even had the chance to lead in Quebec, one important concern was raised with regard to training, information, and above all prevention. Now that the system is regulated, the government can use the sales tax revenues it generates to take concrete action in certain areas, including prevention programs.

Government Orders

Taxation is one of the key factors that will play a major role in ensuring the objectives of legalization are met. As the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have clearly stated, in order for legalization to be effective, taxes must be low from the beginning, and the federal, provincial, and territorial governments must continue to work together to guarantee a coordinated approach. Co-operation is critical, and the federal government wants to engage our provincial and territorial partners in order to develop a coordinated approach to cannabis taxation.

I would like to remind all members that taxation is not the main objective of legalization. On the contrary, this is an essential health issue, given that the status quo has failed so spectacularly. That being said, by taking responsibility and legalizing cannabis, we will generate indirect tax revenue that will benefit Canadian society as a whole.

• (1705)

[English]

Mrs. Karen Vecchio (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear the government talk about the child benefit. I want to know if the Liberals have addressed the results that we are finding in places like Fort McMurray, where many of the families have lost the child benefit because of increased incomes, but the high cost of living is not being taken into consideration. Also the fact that so many people are losing their jobs as well as their homes is not being taken into consideration.

What is the government doing to address those issues where families have a new situation and the government is not there for support at all?

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, simply put, we decided to change the former strategy where the child benefit was taxable to something that is not. Therefore, people who get the child benefit at the end of the month every month, net amount, pay their expenses with what they receive.

Mr. Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the election campaign, the Liberals made a promise that they were going to invest in language revitalization for indigenous peoples. We have been through two budgets, a budget implementation act here today, and again, there is nothing for indigenous language.

Right now we are in an emergency situation when it comes to languages. We lose more and more elders and the holders of that language. Cliff Atleo, who is one of our Nuu-chah-nulth elders at the council of the Ha'wiih, which is the hereditary chiefs of the Nuu-chah-nulth, says that their language is their identity. When they lose their language, they lose their identity.

If the member supports language revitalization and investments in the holders of the language, there are young people like Victoria Wells and Ivy Martin who want to carry on the legacy of their language and their culture, and holders of the language like Levi Martin, who want to share that knowledge, but we need assistance to help them carry on their culture and their traditions.

Will the government take urgent action on language revitalization as the NDP has repeatedly asked it to do?

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, initiatives for reconciliation with the indigenous peoples are at the heart of our commitment. I am a member of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security with opposition colleagues, and all the members are unanimous that the first nations need as much collaboration as necessary to improve their situation. When it comes to identity or security, no stone is being left unturned.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, increasing the Canada child benefit, for instance, for lots of low-income aboriginal people, indigenous people, and others in my riding is crucial. As the member said, it is not taxable. There are 5,840 children in Yukon who receive this, an average amount of \$6,240. Will the increases we gave to low-income seniors, low-income students, and the working income tax benefit contribute to the economy? Obviously, all of these people are going to reinvest that money right away. They really need it.

I will clarify what two opposition members said on northern benefits. We have increased the northern benefit so that people living in the far regions of the north get an increase, which was delightful for the north. Over three years, we will put in \$89.9 million for indigenous language and cultures, so we agree with the NDP on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Picard: Mr. Speaker, I want to share something that happened to me one day when I was talking to my constituents. A woman came up to me in front of the grocery store and showed me what she bought. The total came up to about \$5 or \$6. She said that would probably be her food for the day, which was rather discouraging. She clearly did not have enough for three meals.

The government assistance being provided is probably not enough to make everyone rich, but it is meant to help meet basic needs. It is not enough money to invest. People need this bit of extra money on a daily basis.

This money is being invested in the public and in turn it will be reinvested in our market. It is reinvested in our grocery stores, our schools, our shops, and our services.

Our constituents confirm that this money is helpful. They are very clear, definitive, and consistent about it. They need this money and are very appreciative of this type of initiative.

• (1710)

[English]

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a chance today to discuss the latest iteration of the Liberals' budget implementation legislation, Bill C-63.

When the Liberals were running their election campaign back in 2015, they made a number of promises to Canadians. One of those promises was that they would incur a small deficit of less than \$10 billion. During that same time, they also promised they would balance the budget by 2019. We now know that neither of these things are true, and that every time the Prime Minister gives with one hand, he takes more with the other.

Government Orders

As the Liberals like to make up words and change their meaning, I have made up a word for this action. It is “dispocketnesia”, which means using one hand to take from one pocket to the other and forgetting about it.

When the Minister of Finance tabled the government's fall economic statement just a couple of weeks ago, he confirmed the Liberals were borrowing \$20 billion this year to pay for their out-of-control spending; that is \$20 billion this year alone. That means the current deficit is more than double what the Liberals initially promised. This also means, as confirmed by the government, that the budget will never be balanced under the Prime Minister.

Of course, with reckless spending comes the need to increase taxes, which is in part what Bill C-63 would do. Since the Prime Minister is adding debt at twice the rate he promised and since his government projects that debt will grow every year into the future, someone needs to foot the bill. Unfortunately for my constituents and for all Canadians, it is the taxpayer who will bear the burden of the government's irresponsible spending.

I say all this because the Liberal track record of the broken promise after broken promise has fostered an environment of distrust and skepticism among the residents of my riding, and certainly across the country.

The Liberals constantly say that they are helping the middle class and those who wish to join it, yet over 80% of middle-class Canadians are now paying more taxes than they did before the Prime Minister took office. Bill C-63 would not help these people, but rather would push our country further and further into debt.

The 80% figure I just quoted does not even include a measure that will drastically affect my constituents in a multitude of ways. That measure is a carbon tax, or do the Liberals hope Canadians have forgotten about that, because that is 54 days away?

The good people in my riding just simply cannot afford another tax, certainly not one that will affect so many aspects of their lives. They will now need to pay more to heat their homes, to drive their cars, run their tractors and combines, get to work or see their doctor, and operate their businesses. What do these people get from their government in return?

I would like to say my riding is currently booming with government-funded infrastructure projects that it sorely needs, but that would be a lie. I would like to tell my constituents that in return for the increase in their household bills due to a carbon tax, they would have a government that cares about western Canada, but I definitely cannot say that under the Liberals.

I would very much like to tell the small business owners in my riding that the government will start making life easier for them by not changing the tax rules to the point they are unsure if their businesses will even be viable in the future. Alas, I cannot do any of these things. The government lacks the credibility, as shown by their dismal track record, and Canadians expect better.

One of the major measures contained in Bill C-63 that I would like to touch on is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the effect this investment will have on Canadians. The Liberals are investing \$500 million, half a billion dollars, to be a part of an

investment bank in another country. We would think that an investment of that size would be overwhelmingly beneficial to the Canadian public, especially given the fact that the federal government is not exactly swimming in dollars at the moment.

Unfortunately, there will be very little direct benefit to Canadians as a result of this investment, and those who do benefit are the wealthy 1% who are the only ones who can afford to consider bidding on contracts through the infrastructure investment bank. We do not know how our investment will be used. We do not know what it will be used on or whether it will be to fund a pipeline. No, not a pipeline in Canada, despite the fact energy east was cancelled, but rather a pipeline in Asia. Instead of making it competitive for Canadian companies to see their oil, this makes it easier for foreign countries to compete against us.

• (1715)

How can the Liberals claim to be helping and representing the middle class when they are investing in measures such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank rather than using even a portion of that money to helping Canadians at home? The Liberals love to spend and we understand the need to create strong relationships and international partnerships through initiatives like investment banks, but it should not be at the cost of the Canadian taxpayer who will see no direct benefit. This is yet another reason why my constituents tell me they have completely lost faith in the government's ability to spend money responsibly.

It appears that the Liberals have a hard time understanding the needs of the middle-class Canadians for whom they say they are working. This is not surprising, given that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have never actually been middle class. The finance minister cemented this general lack of faith when it was recently discovered that he failed to disclose financial assets to the Ethics Commissioner. He should have done this as soon as he became a minister, and yet it was overlooked.

If average Canadians failed to disclose their assets to the appropriate government body, they would be punished accordingly, but when it is the Prime Minister's right-hand man, the problem seems to simply disappear. How are Canadians supposed to trust the finance minister with control of our country's finances when he cannot even properly take care of his own?

The finance minister also refuses to disclose whether he recused himself from important conversations surrounding legislation that would have an effect on his multi-million dollar company, Morneau Shepell. As far as we know, he took part in discussions surrounding Bill C-27. Was he involved in the talks on pensions for Bombardier and did he fail to recuse himself from discussions on the Bermuda tax treaty? Thankfully, he was unable to recuse himself when the Ethics Commissioner came calling. He paid the \$200 dollar fine for his actions, but this leaves the question of just how open and honest our finance minister really is.

Government Orders

Canadians expect the Liberal government to do better and be better. We expect that cabinet ministers will uphold the rules to the letter of the law and will also do the right thing. The government has shown that the conduct of its cabinet ministers is not befitting the expectations of the people they represent. Not only are they unable to follow the rules themselves, but they expect the support of Canadians who are being punished for doing just that, as they stated in their messaging surrounding the tax changes to close perceived loopholes.

Those tax changes are going to hurt Canadians, especially in my riding where there is a plethora of small businesses, including farms. There are huge concerns over the cost to transfer a farm down from one generation to the next, something people in my constituency have been doing for over a century in some cases. The cost of doing business is going to go up for all business owners too, not just farmers.

Who is the cost not going to go up for? The Prime Minister and the finance minister, whose family fortunes are safely tucked away and will be unaffected by these tax changes. This just goes to show how out of touch the Liberals are when it comes to the needs of hard-working middle-class Canadians.

Bill C-63 contains many provisions given that it is an omnibus bill. Unfortunately I am failing to see how this “sunny ways” legislation will actually help the people in my riding. My hometown of Estevan is known as the “Sunshine Capital of Canada”. Even with that moniker, everyone knows the Liberals are not building green transit lines in rural Saskatchewan.

On this side of the House, we believe in responsible government spending, lower taxes, and making life more affordable for every Canadian. We have learned that we absolutely cannot trust the Prime Minister to give Canadians a tax break. In fact, the only thing we can trust is that he will continue to break his promises and put us further and further into debt, one tax increase at a time.

This is not what my constituents want. It is not what Canadians want. We will continue to fight the Prime Minister's continued tax hikes every step of the way.

• (1720)

Ms. Anju Dhillon (Dorval—Lachine—LaSalle, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague's speech. Since our government came into power, we have had extremely good growth. Canada has one of the fastest growing economies in the G7, and there is no denying that. I think my hon. colleague cannot deny that fact.

Budget 2017 will continue in the same way to help our economy grow further and continue to cut taxes for the middle class, small businesses, and help us move people into the middle class. I think my colleague across the way cannot deny that either.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I have had a number of conversations with my hon. colleague over the last two years, which I appreciate. I have always found her very open in her conversation.

To answer her question, the Liberals cannot on the one hand take credit for the economy and jobs and on the other hand go after small businesses, farmers, and workers and tell them they are tax cheats. They cannot have it both ways. They either work one way or the

other. If they are going to take credit for it, then they need to take credit for the fact that they are going to try to close all these loopholes they are accusing small businesses of having, and that is going to hurt my economy.

The economy in Estevan in my riding has lost many jobs because of the downturn in the oil industry, and it has not recovered. Those people are not back to work. They are still suffering. Back five years ago, my home town had a vacancy rate of 0.1%. Today it is 30%-plus. People are leaving rural Saskatchewan. The jobs in this infrastructure suggestion will not put any work into my riding.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is the member's plan to deal with the climate change crisis the world faces? I will give him a minute to think about it, because it may not be the number one priority for his party. I will make two comments while he is doing that.

First, it is fascinating how the Conservatives can make a loss out of a great win, and that is on the deficit. It has gone down from what was predicted because of the flourishing economy, and that is a great news story.

The other point is related to the fact that employment is at the highest in 10 years, as is growth, which was called “dismal”. Therefore, if the adjective for that is “dismal”, I wonder what the adjective for the Conservative record is.

Mr. Robert Kitchen: Mr. Speaker, I did have a quick chance to think about the member's question.

First, I am not in government. The member is in government.

Second, when we talk about what we can do, it gives me the opportunity to talk about what is happening in my riding. In my home town of Estevan, we have the only working carbon capture coal-fired power plant in the world. Basically, it is equivalent to taking over 2.5 million vehicles off the road by what it is doing. It is capturing 98% of the carbon through emissions. It is capturing 100% of the sulphur, which is being reused. It is taking those carbon emissions and pumping them down into the ground, which is also helping oil enhancement. It is making it easier for our oil industry to access the oil at a cheaper cost, which makes us more competitive.

Therefore, yes, we are stepping forward on the aspect of carbon capture, and we are very proud of that.

• (1725)

Mr. Bob Bratina (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-63, a bill to implement certain provisions of the budget. I want to first say how proud I am to be a colleague of the finance minister and to sit in the government with him.

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The finance minister has led what most people would understand as an exemplary personal life. He has used much of his fortune to assist people in various parts of the world. He has to suffer the innuendo that is being offered almost every day, that perhaps he joined public life in order to enrich himself. I do not think anyone would seriously believe that we would engage in the election campaign and be successful in public life in the hopes of leaving this place as much wealthier people than when we came. The other thing I want to say about the finance minister is that his area of expertise is critical to the future of so many Canadians, because we have an aging population, we have many issues with regard to pensions, and it should be seen by most Canadians as a benefit to have someone with the profound expertise in the world of pensions such as our minister has.

The biggest take-away from the finance minister and the government legislation that we have put forward is the economic success of the country. All the numbers show it, and we have heard about the job creation. In my own city of Hamilton, we have an unemployment rate of 4.2%, and for the seventh year in a row we have over \$1 billion in new building construction.

I also want to point out the success we have had with the Canada child benefit. In my own riding in the month of July, which is the latest for which I have the final figures, 9,470 families received cheques that affected 16,560 children for a total of \$5.8 million. In the entire city of Hamilton, all five ridings, 44,700 families were affected, 80,620 children received the benefits, and the total amount for one month in Hamilton was \$27.4 million. This money not only goes directly to the families involved, but one would assume it would immediately be reinvested in the community, in the neighbourhood stores, and in the small businesses in the neighbourhood where purchases are made. Therefore, this investment in the Canada child benefit plan is paying dividends that are almost impossible to understand. It is worth saying that in my city there are 80,000 children who are benefiting from this policy that stems from our budget, which was created in part by the finance minister.

I also want to briefly touch on the notion that comes from across the way referring to the costs to be borne by future generations. As a former mayor, I can say that the cities of Canada are in a desperate situation with a huge municipal infrastructure deficit that they cannot solve through the local tax revenues that they generate. Therefore, what would it be like for our future generations if the roads and sewers were even further incapacitated in the years ahead? In our case, we have just made a significant investment in safe drinking water. These are problems that exist now, and fixing them will be to the benefit of those future generations, so I am proud of what we have been able to achieve.

I will leave it at that for now.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will have five minutes remaining in his time for his comments on the motion when the House next resumes debate, and also of course five minutes for questions and comments.

[Translation]

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

FIREARMS ACT

The House resumed from June 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-346, An Act to amend the Firearms Act (licences), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Ramez Ayoub (Thérèse-De Blainville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-346, An Act to amend the Firearms Act (licences).

As my colleagues know, we campaigned on a promise to implement reasonable, effective measures with respect to firearms that promote public safety while ensuring that law-abiding firearm owners are treated in a fair and reasonable manner.

I believe it is fair and reasonable to require firearm owners to obtain a permit to own firearms. It is also fair and reasonable that people applying for a permit be required to provide information proving that they do not pose a threat, including information about any new mental health conditions as well as the attestation of current or former conjugal partners. It is also fair and reasonable that that information should be updated regularly, since circumstances can change in life.

That is why firearms permits currently have expiry dates. Every five years, firearms owners must apply to have their permits renewed and they must submit updated information on their eligibility. That is fair and reasonable.

Licences for many other things, such as cars, work the same way. However, the bill before us would eliminate the very idea of an expiration date for the firearms licensing system. In other words, this bill would allow people to go 10 years without having to update their licence information. That is not right or reasonable. This bill would not be in the interest of public safety. That is why I cannot support it.

Let us take a closer look at what Bill C-346 is proposing. Under the bill, a firearms licence would essentially be valid for life for any licence holder over 18. The idea behind the licensing provisions of the Firearms Act is to protect public safety by ensuring that applicants are appropriately screened.

The provision of the bill regarding lifetime licences will weaken the regime and undermine the very purpose of the act. What is more, it is dangerous to let people go for 10 years without updating the eligibility information on their permit. The information that is collected every five years under the current regime is critical to protecting the public. It is an invaluable tool for the chief firearms officers who review this information.

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Chief firearms officers use this information to determine whether there are safety risks associated with allowing an individual continued access to a firearm. This is done based on the understanding that people's personal circumstances change over time. The chief firearms officers feel it is very important that this information be kept up to date, as do most Canadians.

Neither communities nor law enforcement officers would want a firearm owner who is not eligible to be able to go for 10 years without undergoing any kind of assessment, while maintaining continued access to firearms.

As I mentioned earlier, applicants have to provide a statement from their current or former partner confirming that they are not a threat. This statement is essential for several reasons.

For one thing, studies have shown that battered women are five times more likely to be killed by their aggressor if he owns a firearm. A study by the Violence Policy Center in the United States showed that nearly two-thirds of the women murdered with a firearm were killed by their intimate partner.

If that is not proof enough, we are seeing more and more evidence of the link between domestic violence and mass shootings. A recent American study that looked at mass shootings between 2009 and 2014 showed that 57% of them involved the murder of a family member or a current or former intimate partner.

• (1735)

If we were to pass this bill, a person could have serious concerns about a former partner owning a firearm, but Canadian authorities would be unaware of those concerns for 10 years.

Let us look at what would happen after 10 years if new information about eligibility were not supplied. First, the licence would not expire because it would have no expiration date. Essentially, the bill introduces the concept of a suspended licence for those who do not renew their licence, and it enables people to voluntarily relinquish their licence.

However, this proposed legislation does not adequately explain what a suspended licence means. The concept of a suspended firearms licence does not exist in the Firearms Act, nor is it defined in the Criminal Code.

There is nothing in the bill before us that defines this concept. It would introduce a vague system that would create uncertainty and jeopardize public safety. For example, if a person's licence is suspended, can that person buy, sell, or exchange a non-restricted firearm? The bill does not say.

Since the bill does not explain how it would amend the Firearms Act with regard to the transfer of non-restricted firearms, a person could buy a non-restricted firearm with a suspended licence, because their laminated card would still look valid.

By all accounts, this is not the only point on which this bill is too vague. It also fails to state whether people who continue to possess firearms after their licence is suspended could continue to hold a suspended licence, even though this would violate our firearms laws. We still do not know whether this means that those who have access to restricted or prohibited firearms could simply choose to allow

their licence to be suspended indefinitely while still possessing a non-restricted firearm.

This type of omission is unacceptable in a bill dealing with such an important issue as firearms and community safety. The bill's inconsistencies go against the government's sensible and effective approach to firearms. In the past two years, the government has implemented reasonable basic measures to ensure Canadians' safety, while continuing to treat responsible firearm owners in a fair and respectful manner.

The government allowed decisions on technical classifications to be made by the law enforcement community rather than allowing politics, instead of public safety, to determine how a gun is classified. These decisions are made by the RCMP, in accordance with criteria established by Parliament in the Criminal Code and other regulatory regimes.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness overturned a ministerial directive from the previous government that would have allowed firearms manufacturers to determine the classification of their own products, and a new and more representative Canadian firearms advisory committee was established. It includes representatives of women's groups and public health organizations, as well as police and the firearms community. That makes sense, because decisions about firearms concern all of us.

In summary, we are putting public safety first while remaining respectful of responsible gun owners. Since Bill C-346 does not make public safety a priority, I invite all honourable members to join me in opposing it.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Red Deer—Lacombe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would have thought after all the debacles the Liberal government has been through in the past that maybe, during the debate on something as important as the rights of law-abiding citizens and their property, there would be someone in the Liberal Party who would actually know what they were talking about when they got up to speak. Virtually everything we just heard from the previous member is untrue, and unqualifiedly untrue, because it simply reflects a complete lack of knowledge of how the current system actually works.

I am proud to be a member of a political party, the Conservative Party, which, under former prime minister Stephen Harper and the previous minister, brought to this House in the previous Parliament the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act. I can tell everyone why that was so important. What my hon. colleague over there does not understand is that in no other jurisdiction in Canada does someone need to have a licence for the privilege of owning property. This has nothing to do with the use of a firearm or the deployment or activities pertaining to it, but is a licence to possess and acquire only.

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We could go anywhere in Canada and buy a car, a house, or any other piece of property and would not need a licence to do so. The fact that a licence and the licensing requirement for firearms owners is already in place is a precedent. All that this bill by my hon. colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies seeks to do is to keep law-abiding citizens from becoming arbitrary criminals because of bureaucratic delays.

One of the things the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act did was to provide a grace period of up to, I believe, six months on the expiry of a possession acquisition or possession-only licence, and it merged the possession-only and possession acquisition licences into a common one. It made things easier for the police when it came to enforcing the laws with regard to background checks and the authorizations to transport. The Liberal government has already gone back on this to a paper system, despite the fact we had the ability, through the Canadian Police Information Centre, to have this digitally. Indeed, the police officer would have had the information instantly on an authorization to transport for any restricted firearm anyone had.

However, no, we are going to go back to the old ways, the old ways where the Liberals hide behind institutions. They love institutions. Over here on this side of the House, we trust in Canadian citizens and in their ability to make decisions that are best for themselves, and we trust law-abiding firearms owners. I grew up in the countryside, where if a police officer were in trouble, my friends and neighbours would come to the aid of the police officer. These are the kinds of people who own firearms in my community—farmers, hunters, sport shooters, patriotic Canadians who love the sport or need that tool for their way of life. These are not criminals.

I have a big news flash for everyone on the other side of the House: laws only pertain to law-abiding citizens. The more onerous we make the laws, and if we create laws that artificially make criminals out of people, we are not doing justice to anyone.

Here is the problem with what the Liberals are doing. Basically, they are now going back to hiding behind the RCMP. Now, I love the RCMP. What an iconic symbol it is for our country. I love the men and women on the front lines of the RCMP who serve and protect us every day. In fact, a member of the Abbotsford police force gave up his life on Monday. They are salt of the earth hard-working people, and virtually every RCMP officer I know likes hunting, and is maybe a firearms enthusiast. Most of them would disagree with the opposite side's notion that they should be voting against this piece of legislation.

A few years ago, I followed what was prescribed on the firearms site maintained by the RCMP. It said that if someone's possession acquisition licence were about to expire, the person should fill out a renewal at least six months beforehand. I had to go through the exact same process I had gone through in the first place to renew the licence. In that time frame, I was at the mercy of the whims of the RCMP bureaucracy to process my renewal. Guess what happened? That renewal did not come back within the six months.

• (1745)

The day after my birthday that year, I was automatically a criminal, through no fault of my own, after following the advice of the RCMP. I had firearms and ammunition in my possession that I

had lawfully purchased, while I had a valid possession and acquisition licence. Simply because the bureaucracy did not return my possession acquisition licence renewal, I was an automatic criminal. If anything had happened to me, or if my house had been robbed, or if I wanted to go hunting and something happened or someone stole a firearm from my vehicle, I would have been in serious trouble, potentially criminal trouble, for doing something I did every hunting season.

Every time I go out to my parents' property to do varmint control, or whatever the case might be, I am a law-abiding Canadian citizen. I have no intent whatsoever of being in violation of the law. However, the law made a criminal of me. This is wrong. This is no different than the Liberals changing their minds and moving away from their elected responsibilities as members of Parliament and members of an executive branch of government through orders-in-council. They are now letting the RCMP, again, with a stroke of a pen, change regulations pertaining to firearms in our country, rather than taking the political responsibility and the decision for themselves on the advice of the RCMP.

I love this legislation because it simply suspends someone. It is not a complicated thing to understand. If a person's licence is suspended, it cannot be used, but the person does not have to go back and start the process all over again. Updating information every 10 years is no different than providing the same information again in an application. It just avoids the rigamarole. It is not a complicated concept to figure out. We do it for a passports now. The precedent is set for government-issued IDs for 10 years to be valid. What is so complicated about that? Is it just the love of bureaucracy and creating jobs in the bureaucracy that the Liberals admire and adore so much?

This is an attack on law-abiding citizens. I will remind the House that no one in Canada wants to see any type of violent crime. This issue is not about violent crime; it is about law-abiding Canadian citizens and is another attack or assault on their rights.

Bill C-346 would amend the Firearms Act to eliminate the expiry of firearms licences within the mandatory provision that the licence holder updates the relevant information every 10 years. In the government's mind we cannot have that. We need to have it every five years and start the process all over. God forbid if one's licence expires, as he or she will immediately be a criminal. What is so complicated about this?

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It simplifies and streamlines a process. People have already been vetted and if their licences have been revoked in some way, they would know that, because 365 days a year, the RCMP, through the Canadian police information centre, and the CPIC database, would have verified and validated every Canadian firearms licence owner. If something was flagged through either a trial or court decision that someone's firearms licence should have been revoked or the person lost his or her privileges, the RCMP or the local police force would remove the licence from the individual and take he or she off. That is how someone who is in trouble is flagged, not by going through an application process all over again.

If people's licences are suspended, they cannot buy or sell their firearms or buy any ammunition. What an incentive to actually get the paperwork done in that 10-year period, to get the information into the police, and have the licences returned from the suspended mode. People should be able to turn their licences in at any point in time. This bill makes it easy for people who realize they no longer need their firearms licences to hand them in and be done with them. That is how the process should be stopped.

This bill is full of common sense. Obviously, anyone voting against it has none.

• (1750)

Ms. Julie Dabrusin (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak about Bill C-346. For those who have just joined us, Bill C-346 amends the Firearms Act to eliminate the expiration of firearms licences for those over the age of 18. It essentially makes licences valid for life, only requiring an update of information every 10 years, with a penalty of a licence suspension if the information is not updated.

The current legislation requires owners of firearms to renew their licence every five years. As part of the process, they must update the information relevant to their licence eligibility. I will discuss this in further detail, but at this point I would like to clearly state that this does not seem like an overly onerous requirement to balance against the requirement and responsibility of having a firearms licence.

I believe everyone in this place can agree that we want to keep firearms out of the hands of people who could be dangerous. Our safety and the safety of our communities is paramount. Canadians, including my constituents, want to live in a country with effective gun regulations.

Millions of Canadians lawfully and responsibly own firearms. Responsible firearms owners understand why it is important for firearms to be kept out of the wrong hands. As of Sunday, the Toronto police showed that 324 shootings had occurred in the city of Toronto this year, including 26 shootings in my community.

Canadians understand the importance of doing everything to combat gun crime and to keep communities safe. This includes keeping firearms out of the hands of individuals who can be dangerous. At the heart of this is the fact that whenever we talk about guns, we need to focus on responsible gun ownership and the safety of our communities.

Our government believes in an effective approach that prioritizes public safety while respecting law-abiding firearms owners. The fundamental principle of the Firearms Act is ensuring public safety.

Bill C-346 disturbs the balance, and for that reason, I cannot support this bill.

First, I cannot support the primary premise of this bill, which appears to be that the current requirements that a firearms owner renew their licence every five years is too onerous. I talk all the time with my kids about privileges and responsibilities, that when we have certain privileges, we must accept the responsibilities that come along with those privileges. For example, many Canadians have the privilege of driving a car. We all accept that that this privilege comes with the responsibility of driving the cars responsibly, and of renewing licences to ensure that the driver continues to meet the eligibility requirements, including whether or not the driver still meets the eyesight requirements?

That is the idea. Under the current legislation, every five years a responsible firearms owner must renew their licence. They update the information relevant to their licence eligibility. A renewal notice is sent to licensees about 90 days prior to expiry, and they have a six-month grace period if, for some reason, the licence is not renewed within that timeline.

The licence renewal forms can be completed online, and the cost is \$60 for five years. Does this sound too onerous a responsibility for maintaining and fulfilling the obligations of having the privilege of maintaining lawful firearms ownership? It does not to me.

What I cannot understand is the problem that the member across the way wants to address. I can understand that we would want to see people update their information and to keep their eligibility information current. I cannot accept that we would be promoting responsible firearm ownership, or keeping our communities safe, by taking away this renewal every five years.

We can all logically understand the principle behind license renewals. Circumstances change, and we can all understand that an individual might qualify for a firearms license at one point but in the future might not meet the requirements. Under the current regime the information collected every five years is critical to protecting the public. It is an invaluable tool for the chief firearms officers, who review the information to determine whether there are safety risks associated with allowing an individual continued lawful access to firearms.

One of the most critical parts of the current five-year licence information update is what information can be investigated under section 55 of the Firearms Act to determine whether an applicant is eligible to hold a licence. Subsection 55(1) states:

A chief firearms officer or the Registrar may require an applicant for a licence or authorization to submit such information, in addition to that included in the application, as may reasonably be regarded as relevant for the purpose of determining whether the applicant is eligible to hold the licence or authorization.

• (1755)

Subsection 55(2) states:

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Without restricting the scope of the inquiries that may be made with respect to an application for a licence, a chief firearms officer may conduct an investigation of the applicant, which may consist of interviews with neighbours, community workers, social workers, individuals who work or live with the applicant, spouse or common-law partner, former spouse or former common-law partner, dependants or whomever in the opinion of the chief firearms officer may provide information pertaining to whether the applicant is eligible under section 5 to hold a licence.

A firearms licence holder's personal situation, including mental health, employment, and marital status, can change numerous times in a 10-year period. By moving the requirement to update the chief firearms officer every 10 years, it will make it more difficult to determine all the factors in a person's changing life.

I also would like to address a specific part of the renewal eligibility requirements that should be emphasized and viewed through a gender-based analysis. One aspect of licence renewal eligibility concerns the owner's role in domestic violence. The key part of the five-year licence information update is that current or former partners of an individual may be contacted about concerns regarding extending the privilege of that person to acquire a firearm and to continue with his or her licence.

A 2011 Statistics Canada report on family violence in Canada found that from 2001 to 2009, in 53% of spousal murder-suicides, the cause of death was shooting. According to the RCMP 2015 Commissioner of Firearms report, in 2015, almost 400,000 new or renewed individual licenses were issued, and 688 applications were refused. Of these refusals, 40 were because of domestic violence.

I am proud that our government has adopted Canada's first gender-based violence strategy. Taking that into account, and the fact that women who leave an abusive spouse are at particular risk of violence, it seems reasonable to me that we have a system that allows for this factor to be reviewed every five years. I should add that domestic violence can be the basis for a licence to be revoked if an issue arises before the five-year renewal, but every five years, we have a chance to review.

I would add that 112 of the refusals were because of mental health, 203 refusals were because there was a concern that a person would be a danger to him or herself, and 132 refusals were because there was a concern that a person would be a danger to others. The refusals were just a handful of the new and renewed licences issued, as we would hope and expect. However, can we not all agree that it is better for us to remove the privilege that comes with a firearms licence from a person who is involved in domestic violence and is viewed as a threat to him or herself or as a danger to others? Is that not at the heart of public safety?

This is not just a question of renewing a licence every five or 10 years. Under this proposed legislation, if the licence is not updated at the 10-year timeline, it does not expire. It is not a 10-year licence that expires. At 10 years, the licence is suspended.

My colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, laid out very clearly all the unanswered questions in Bill C-346 in respect of suspension. It is not a defined term in the legislation. What does a license suspension mean? Would people who have suspended licences be allowed to continue possessing firearms? Would they be allowed to purchase ammunition? Would they be allowed to buy, sell, or trade firearms? Can a suspended licence be confiscated? All this ambiguity in the

Firearms Act is unacceptable, and it clearly does not prioritize public safety.

I understand that when we talk about all these matters in the House, there are different perspectives. I have heard them. I am not a gun owner, and I represent a community of fewer gun owners that many of my colleagues. I understand that. In my community, there are incidents of shootings that make the community feel unsafe. Two weeks ago, a man was shot a couple of blocks from my house, with a child in a vehicle. I spoke to constituents recently who have bullet holes and broken windows from a shooting at the beginning of the summer.

Our government will be implementing measures consistent with our platform and will ensure that criminals and individuals who pose a danger to themselves or the public are not able to obtain and use firearms.

I will not be supporting this bill. To me, it is not a heavy burden for gun owners to renew their licences every five years, as the current legislation requires.

● (1800)

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand here today. I have to comment on my two hon. colleagues across the way. I respect them as members of Parliament. However, good Lord, when one does not understand a topic like this, one should not be speaking to it. It is very clear that neither of them does. There were comments in there that have nothing whatsoever to do with this bill. The mindset over there just baffles me.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss Bill C-346, a bill to amend the Firearms Act with respect to licences. It is a common-sense piece of legislation that has been put forward by my hon. colleague from Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies. He knows what this issue is. It is not hard to fix. I wish the people on the other side of the aisle would get a grasp on it.

To begin, I would like to commend my colleague for bringing this forward and for the tireless work he does for law-abiding firearms owners in Canada. He truly understands the issues that firearms owners face, and his bringing this legislation forward certainly reflects that.

I am hopeful that the government will finally stop the attack on law-abiding firearms owners in this country. Last year I brought forward legislation that could have closed a loophole that allowed the RCMP firearms program to make arbitrary firearms classifications. Like Bill C-346, my bill was a very common-sense measure that simply would have given a legal definition to the term "variant", a term used close to 100 times in regulations related to firearms. Unfortunately, the government could not bring itself to side with law-abiding firearms owners and do the right thing. It is my hope that, this time around, common sense will prevail.

This legislation is certainly very timely. This week, deer hunters across Ontario are gearing up and heading out to their deer stands, waiting for the perfect buck to stroll into plain sight.

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In fact, Mr. Speaker, you know me, and if I were not here in Ottawa today, I think you know where you would find me.

I can assure the House that law-abiding firearms owners accept that they need to be licensed. That is not an issue. However, the last thing that hunters and law-abiding firearms owners want to be thinking about when they are out in the bush is the expiry of their firearms licences. This legislation would help to ease the minds of law-abiding hunters, anglers, and sports shooters so they can get back to what they love.

This legislation would do three key things that would improve Canada's firearms licensing system.

First and foremost, Bill C-346 would eliminate the expiry of firearms licences, with a mandatory provision that the licence holder must update his or her information every 10 years. This is simply a common-sense measure that would solve a problem faced by Canadian firearms owners every day.

Going back to my colleagues across the way, they both mentioned the fact that 10 years was too much and that public safety would go to hell in a handbasket. If we look at passports, we see they have to be renewed every 10 years. I know that the colleagues across the way support that. Public safety is involved in passport applications as well, because of illegal entry or otherwise, and that is accepted. However, when it comes to firearms owners, those scary, bad, firearms owners, it just blows me away. I really took exception to the last speaker when she basically said that we are at risk of firearms owners going out and shooting people. It just shows a clear lack of knowledge and understanding when it comes to this issue.

Bill C-346 would eliminate the expiry of a firearms licence, with a mandatory provision that the licence holder must update that information every 10 years. This is simply a common-sense measure that would solve a problem faced every day by us Canadian firearms owners. Furthermore, it reflects the reality of the RCMP's continuous eligibility system. Every single day, the RCMP firearms program verifies the validity and conditions of licence requirements of licence holders across Canada.

Second, the bill also proposes to create a mechanism to ensure that updates are in fact provided every 10 years, just like with passports. Through Bill C-346, if individuals did not update their information with the RCMP firearms program after 10 years, their licence would be suspended.

• (1805)

The suspension would prohibit the licensee from being able to make purchases, but would not go as far as to criminalize the licensee for simply an administrative error. The suspension would be lifted as soon the licensee provided the necessary update.

This provision would ensure compliance with the licensing system, but would not criminalize firearms owners simply because they have forgotten to update their licence. This is, again, a common-sense measure.

Finally, Bill C-346 would also allow for the relinquishment of licences. It would create an environment in which someone who no longer desires a firearms licence could voluntarily relinquish their licence to a chief firearms officer with no negative consequences.

This is another common-sense measure. My father-in-law actually went through this a few years ago, prior to his passing.

Now, I want to take some time to speak to why Bill C-346 is necessary, and why it is good news not only for firearms owners, but for the RCMP firearms program, and for Canadians in general. I know not all members in this place own firearms, but as a law-abiding firearms owner, I know the provisions in Bill C-346 go a long way in easing the tensions between firearms owners and the RCMP firearms program when it comes to licensing.

Time and time again, firearms owners have felt personally criminalized for simple administrative errors. In 2014, our Conservative government passed the Common Sense Firearms Licensing Act. The act created a six-month grace period when a firearms licence expired to ensure that firearms owners would not feel criminalized for administrative errors. This bill goes even further and truly solves this problem once and for all. Essentially, when a firearms licence expires, the RCMP firearms program deems the person to be in possession of an illegal firearm.

I would like to cite the Criminal Code to demonstrate to the House just exactly what this could mean for a firearm owner with an expired licence. The Criminal Code says, "every person commits an offence who possesses a prohibited firearm, a restricted firearm or a non-restricted firearm without being the holder of (a) a licence under which the person may possess it". In terms of punishment, the Criminal Code states that anyone in violation of the section above is "guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years; or (b) is guilty of an offence punishable on summary conviction".

Five years for failing to renew on time. This is why there is so much angst among firearms owners when it comes to licensing. Under this system, the moment a licence is expired, firearms owners face the possibility of not only losing their property but facing up to five years in prison. The elimination of expiry would go a long way in creating a system that is respectful of firearms owners, which will in turn make firearms owners respectful of the system. It is truly a win-win situation.

Furthermore, this would decrease the administrative burden on the RCMP firearms program. There would be fewer administrative tasks to deal with, such as numerous renewals. Attention could then be paid to tasks that would truly make the system even safer. Imagine, less bureaucracy. What a concept.

Private Members' Business

I would like to say to my hon. colleagues across the way that this is truly a common-sense piece of legislation that would not only maintain the safety of Canada's firearms licensing system but would in fact enhance it. By creating a licensing system that is respectful of firearms owners, we would in turn see a greater appreciation of the licensing system, rather than distrust and angst from firearms owners.

I know the government has made a number of promises related to firearms in Canada. These are promises I would certainly like to see the government break. The promises made in the 2015 campaign do not reflect the reality of Canada's firearms safety regime. This legislation does.

I urge my colleagues across the way not to listen to all the talking points coming out of the PMO, to do the right thing on this and support Bill C-346.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. There being no further debate, I invite the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes.

The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies.

Mr. Bob Zimmer (Prince George—Peace River—Northern Rockies, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleagues for speaking in support of the bill, my colleagues who are friends of firearms owners across this country and friends of hunters and anglers, which is actually quite a large group in Canada.

I want to especially thank the member for Red Deer—Lacombe for perfectly illustrating exactly why this bill was brought forward. He gave an example of a firearms owner who, in good faith, went through the renewal process of his PAL, which is a firearms licence in Canada. He did it six months prior to the expiration date and because of slow-moving bureaucracy, especially with respect to firearms licences in this country, the day that particular licence expired he became a criminal. That is the way the Criminal Code views a law-abiding person who in good faith did what he was supposed to do. This example perfectly illustrates why we have a need for this kind of legislation in our country.

I am disappointed that members on the other side would go into different parts of a question and always throw violence and different kinds of issues at firearms owners in this country. I am a law-abiding firearms owner. I have several firearms in my house. I know there are a lot of people in the chamber right now who own firearms and do so lawfully. To equate the entire group of firearms owners across this country, literally millions of them, to bad people who do not obey the law and are somehow more violent is a stretch, to me. I struggle with that.

This would be a reasonable firearms change. I call all firearms owners "Grandpa Joe". I have referred to him before in video that I have done. The last thing we want to see is Grandpa Joe go to jail simply because his firearms licence did not come in the mail in time. That is why I proposed the bill.

I hope members on the other side actually read the bill and understand what they are saying in their speeches. By what I have

heard them say in the debate, they clearly do not know what the bill says or what it would help lawful firearms owners do.

The 10-year licensing, in terms of renewal time, is in the bill. It is very similar to what we have now with respect to our passport regime in Canada, 10 years to update.

What is evident across the way is a lack of understanding of the continuous eligibility system in Canada. Every firearms owner gets checked every 24 hours. If somebody should not own a firearm anymore because of violence or some other kind of issue, that licence is immediately red flagged and the RCMP is tasked to revoke the licence.

We already have a system in place that takes care of this. I am just trying to help firearms owners with delayed bureaucracy. They should not be criminalized simply because they own a firearm.

I have used one example many times. We all have a vehicle licence, but just because it expires does not make one a criminal. With a firearms licence, it does.

We have heard about five years as a minimum time in jail for simply not renewing a firearms licence. This is exactly what the bill is trying to fix. Lawful firearms owners across this country support the bill. It is very straightforward.

I will give the House one quote. My bill reflects "the reality that every firearms licence in Canada is reviewed every day by the police. The RCMP's Continuous Eligibility should equate to continuous entitlement to possess firearms." Tony Bernardo of the Canadian Shooting Sports Association said that.

One of the largest sport shooting groups across this country supports licensing firearms owners. We are not saying we do not want licensing for firearms owners, not at all. We are just saying that we do not want Grandpa Joe to go to jail simply because a bureaucracy did not get his licence back to him within six months. We have a sitting member of Parliament who did not get his licence in time and would have been a criminal at that particular moment in time. To me, that is exactly what the bill would fix. I trust members on both sides and across the way in government will support my bill.

• (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

Adjournment Proceedings

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 8, before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

IMMIGRATION, REFUGEES AND CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I first drew the attention of the minister to the situation facing the Inland Refugee Society of BC, the IRS-BC was facing a 300% increase in its caseload, much of it resulting from the irregular crossing situation.

The IRS-BC offers a unique set of programming for inland claimants, who often lack access to services while waiting for decisions to be made on their claims. Unfortunately, as a result of its unique situation, IRS-BC does not receive any federal funding.

From the time I rose in the House at the beginning of June to the end of September, an additional 271 irregular crossings resulting in asylum claims have occurred in B.C. This brings the total from January to September to 564 in British Columbia. I have risen on this broader issue numerous times. The government continues to claim that it is handling the situation well, but the reality on the ground tells a very different story.

The IRS-BC has informed me that the Canadian Red Cross had to step in to help it due to its funding shortfall. The Red Cross, in August alone, was supporting over 90 individuals in hotel rooms. The IRS-BC had a number of clients in temporary shelters. It informed me that it was stretched so thin that even the Red Cross assistance was insufficient and that people were not getting housed. In some cases, some individuals were rendered homeless. The increase in caseload was forcing the IRS-BC to turn individuals away, as it had neither the capacity to help these individuals find housing, nor to support them with food or transportation.

Irregular border crossers in B.C. are not being fast-tracked for work permits like those in Quebec are, highlighting the government's haphazard approach of taking one-off measures in response to this situation.

Throughout the year, I have also highlighted for the government the underfunding and understaffing of the IRB. To date, despite the fact the government knows about the shortfall in funding for the IRB, it has continued not to provide the necessary resources for the IRB. The IRB, the minister, IRCC, and the parliamentary secretary have acknowledged that this has increased processing time for claims, but have still not committed to providing additional resources.

The IRB now has a backlog of over 14,000 cases. This backlog is increasing by 1,400 cases per month, and yet the government is still doing nothing beyond saying that it is reviewing the situation and

calling for "efficiencies". In the meantime, lives are left in limbo. Organizations that provide services to asylum claimants like IRS-BC are forced to provide services to more people, and to provide those services for a longer period of time because of the delays in hearing these cases. Of course, it does not have the additional resources to do that.

My question for the government is this. Will it commit to provide funding to organizations like IRS-BC, and when will it finally address the funding issues at the IRB?

• (1820)

[Translation]

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

First, I would like to assure the member that the Government of Canada is committed to ensuring that newcomers, including refugees, integrate and contribute fully to the Canadian economy and to their communities.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's settlement program works to ensure that eligible newcomers receive the information they need about life in Canada and the community in which they intend to settle, including language training, help finding a job, and connections with established immigrants and Canadians.

While asylum claimants are not eligible for federal settlement services until they receive a positive refugee determination, they are eligible for some settlement services funded by the provinces.

Once an asylum claim is deemed eligible and referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board, the federal government covers the cost of eligible health care services under the interim federal health program.

Once an individual has made a refugee claim, he or she can also request social assistance, which falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada provides funding to over 80 organizations and agencies in British Columbia to support the delivery of services so that newcomers, including refugees, can successfully integrate into Canadian society.

As I said earlier, the asylum claimants that the Inland Refugee Society of British Columbia works with are not yet eligible for federally funded settlement programming, as they have not yet received a positive refugee determination by the Immigration and Refugee Board. As a result, this organization does not qualify to receive federal funding under the settlement program.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is important to clarify that, once an individual has been determined to be eligible to make a claim in Canada, they may have access to social assistance, education, health services, emergency housing, and legal aid while a decision is pending on their claim.

Except for health services, which are funded by the Government of Canada, provision of all these supports is the responsibility of provinces and territories. Municipalities and non-profit organizations also provide some support services. I should also note that individuals who are found to be eligible to make a refugee claim can apply for a work permit once they have undergone a medical examination.

It makes no difference whether the asylum claim was made at the border or at an inland office. The Government of Canada also provides funding through the Canada social transfer, the CST, which is a federal block transfer to provinces and territories in support of post-secondary education, programs for children, social assistance, and other social services. The CST is provided on an equal per capita basis to the provinces in accordance with Statistics Canada's annual population estimates. Those estimates include persons claiming refugee status and family members living with them. In 2017-18, the CST will provide \$13.7 billion to the provinces and territories.

It is also important to note that the number of asylum seekers varies over time and can depend on a number of different factors.

We are carrying on in the noble tradition of providing protection to those who are seeking refuge and we are committed to doing so responsibly and effectively.

We are ensuring that our agencies are able to manage the growing volumes and we are also working to dispel the myths and set the record straight on Canada's asylum system.

Once again, I want to thank the hon. member for Vancouver East for the question.

[*English*]

Ms. Jenny Kwan: Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that these asylum seekers do come in, and we have had a large influx of them. The Province of Quebec is getting some resources from the government to deal with the asylum seekers, but Manitoba and British Columbia are not getting any resources at all.

IRS-BC has been struggling on the ground to provide support to asylum seekers. What are the officials supposed to do, just turn them away and say, "Sorry, we cannot help you"? That is exactly what is happening. Families are being turned away and left on the streets. Canada is supposed to do better, but right now our federal government is turning its back on these families and not supporting the organizations and NGOs on the ground who are doing the heavy lifting.

Again, I ask the government to look at this issue and to re-evaluate its approach to this. It is not right for it to ignore the situation the way it has. IRS-BC deserves funding and support, as do all other organizations who are doing this important work across the country.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is determined to ensure that newcomers, including refugees, integrate and contribute fully to the Canadian economy and their community. Asylum claimants are not eligible for federal settlement services until they receive a positive refugee determination. Once an asylum claim is accepted and sent to the IRB, the federal government covers the cost of eligible health services.

As the asylum seekers served by the Inland Refugee Society are claimants who are not yet eligible for federally-funded settlement programming, this organization does not qualify to receive federal funding under the Settlement Program for that group of clients. The provinces and territories are responsible for providing most support services pending a positive refugee determination, services such as social assistance, education, health services, and housing.

We are carrying on in Canada's noble tradition of providing protection to those who are seeking refuge and we are committed to doing so responsibly and effectively.

[*English*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that last Friday, I raised the question of worthwhile projects not being allowed to apply for funding under the recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program. The reason I asked the question is that for the past year, not a single new funding application has been accepted. I asked the government if it would open the program for funding proposals, such as the Killamey Lake aeration field project, and unfortunately, I did not receive an answer.

The question is not about whether there is money for the program, as I understand that the department has allocated \$10 million for this fiscal year and \$8 million for the next fiscal year. When determining if any of those dollars were available, my office contacted DFO, and it said the money had all been allocated for this year, even though no call for proposals was released.

I do not know if this is true, because when I searched the government's news release website, I thought it would be teeming with information on all the projects that had been allocated funding under this program, but I was surprised to find only one project listed.

Adjournment Proceedings

I thought it must be an oversight that the Government of Canada did not post any news releases on the website. The next logical step was to go to Google to maybe discover any local stories over the past two years. I found only two more projects. After searching the government's news release website, searching Google, looking for a full list of projects on DFO's website, and even asking the Library of Parliament to get involved, I am no closer to finding out how the government has allocated two years' worth of money and is refusing to accept any new proposals.

I am certain the parliamentary secretary will laud the success of the program, and I hope he does, because it was designed by none other than a Conservative MP, the hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Neepawa. When I say designed, I literally mean the member was involved in every aspect of the program and almost single-handedly spearheaded this initiative.

There is one specific element of the program I want to highlight. It is that it was specifically created to fund small and medium-sized projects of \$20,000 to \$100,000. With that evidence in hand, I would suspect that there would be hundreds of projects that would have been allocated the \$10 million from last year and the \$20 million found in the department's budget this year.

Taking the government at its word that all the monies have been allocated for the multi-year projects, there is little evidence to suggest what it is being spent on. Second, if the government has strayed from the original intent of the program, to support smaller projects put forward by local fishing groups, healthy lake groups, and conservation districts, is it not forgetting why the program was originally put in place?

The government has millions of dollars for a number of different projects, including rinks and Stanley Cup tributes. Could it not open the program for worthwhile initiatives like the Killarney Lake aeration field for this fiscal year?

Now that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries has had a full weekend to prepare for this question, it is my sincere hope tonight that I could get a clear answer. My question is simple. Will the government allow funding proposals, such as the proposed aeration for Killarney Lake, to be accepted for this fiscal year?

• (1830)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brandon—Souris for this question. I appreciated it when he raised it on Friday; I appreciated him giving me the weekend to research it. Certainly, if he does not get the answer that he wants tonight on Killarney Lake or any other project, I would invite him to meet with me personally, and we can talk more about the program.

Fishing has historically been one of the country's popular leisure activities, both for Canadians and visitors alike. Currently, countless people rely on recreational fisheries for their livelihoods, culture, and enjoyment. Every year, anglers from all around the world come to visit and participate in recreational fishing activities across Canada. The important socio-economic contributions of recreational fishing are felt in all of Canada's provinces and territories, particularly in some of the more remote areas of Canada.

The recreational fisheries conservation partnerships program, RFCPP, is a \$53-million contribution program that supports recreational fisheries habitat restoration projects led by recreational fishing groups, conservation organizations, and indigenous groups to rebuild and rehabilitate recreational fish habitat.

The RFCPP was established in June 2013 to support multi-partner projects at the local level aimed at restoring recreational fisheries habitat in order to enhance the sustainability and productivity of Canada's recreational fisheries. Specifically, the program, through contribution funding, enables proponents to manage and execute projects that restore compromised or threatened recreational fisheries habitat.

These projects restore fish habitat for many different species, such as trout, chinook and coho salmon, Atlantic salmon, walleye, and perch. By restoring compromised recreational fisheries habitat, the RFCPP projects will help support more productive and sustainable fisheries and by extension, increase fishing opportunities.

During its first five successful rounds, RFCPP provided funding to a total of 618 projects that restored more than 14 million square meters and more than 6,000 kilometres of habitat. RFCPP projects leveraged almost \$55 million from project partners and triggered the participation of 16,388 volunteers. My hon. friend is quite right, it was and is a very successful program.

One of the most important aspects of this program is that it brings together like-minded partners to address important conservation issues across the province and, indeed, the country. This unique approach helps us leverage our resources and expertise to achieve results that would not otherwise be possible.

The RFCPP is a unique initiative that capitalizes on the knowledge of local anglers, conservation, and indigenous groups that share our vision of a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Our government is especially committed to a nation-to-nation relationship with indigenous people, which is why the program is open to all indigenous organizations right across Canada.

At the local and community level, RFCPP proponents possess important knowledge and capacity that can be used to help improve recreational fisheries across Canada. We strongly believe that if we work together toward common goals, tangible progress can be made.

After six years, the RFCPP is due to sunset in 2019. Due to the success of the program, all the funds have already been allocated to support multi-year projects. That said, our government is committed to working with groups that share our concern about the health and well-being of fish and other species. Fisheries and Oceans Canada is presently reviewing our existing programming and remains committed to working with all stakeholders to address future concerns related to the sustainable management of fish and fish habitat.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would again repeat my offer that I made at the start of my speech, from me personally to the member for Brandon—Souris. I would be happy to work with him on the Killarney Lake issue or any lake issue in southwestern Manitoba or otherwise.

Mr. Larry Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments in regard to the program tonight, as well as in regard to my question.

I am a bit surprised that the Liberals do not have an answer for this simple question about this particular lake right now. I just want the member to know that there are other worthwhile projects that are being ignored.

The Killarney Lake action committee is now ready to apply for funding to install an aeration field to improve the water quality and combat the toxic blue-green algae that is plaguing its lake.

Will the parliamentary secretary commit today to allow the Killarney Lake action committee to apply for funding for an aeration field that has the potential of dramatically improving the quality of the water in Killarney Lake?

• (1835)

Mr. Terry Beech: Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, after six years the RFCPP is due to sunset in 2019.

During its five successful rounds, RFCPP provided funding to a total of 618 projects that restored more than 14 million square metres and more than 6,000 kilometres of habitat.

The program's projects leveraged almost \$55 million from project partners and triggered the participation of 16,388 volunteers.

Our government is committed to working with groups, like the one the member opposite just mentioned. I would be happy to sit down with him to see how we could work together.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada is presently reviewing our existing programming, and remains committed to working with all stakeholders, including recreational fishers, to address future concerns related to the sustainable management of our lakes, rivers, and oceans.

I would just close by saying that our government is making historical investments in restoring our fish habitat, restoring protections around the Fisheries Act, protecting our oceans under the Oceans Act, and we will continue to do everything we can to make sure that recreational fishers, as well as future generations, have lots of great opportunities to fish.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 7, I rose in the House to ask a question about the spring gap problem that affects seasonal workers.

The Liberal government promised to restore the extra five weeks pilot project. Even though promises were made, many seasonal workers will again have no income next spring. It is unacceptable that the government cannot find a real solution to help families who are in a precarious position because of its failure to act. The government does not seem to realize that the situation is urgent.

More than 16,000 seasonal workers are grappling with the spring gap, and almost 40% of them are Quebeckers. The majority of these seasonal workers will run out of employment insurance benefits up to four months before they are to return to work. These workers in the agriculture, forestry, tourism, and fishery industry will have difficulty finding another job to make up for the lack of income.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to reform the employment insurance regime and solve the spring gap problem. Some organizations, such as the Conseil national des chômeurs et chômeuses, are still waiting for the government to keep its promise. The CNC is asking the government to establish a program that would take into consideration the situation of seasonal workers. However, after two years, nothing has been done. What is the government waiting for to take action?

Every year, these workers and their families experience terrible hardships. There are so many examples. Last June, workers in the shrimp industry in the Gaspé region were deprived of at least six weeks of work. As a result, the number of weeks of EI benefits they are entitled to after their contract will go down. Shrimp industry workers could therefore be left without any income next spring before being rehired.

This is not only a problem in the Gaspé. According to the group Action Chômage Haute-Côte-Nord, the spring gap can result in anywhere between five and 15 weeks of extreme poverty for certain families. We are talking about people who earn less than \$20,000 a year and are going into debt. Imagine living for three or four months without any income. It is impossible. This is also the case in my riding of Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, where we have a lot of seasonal workers in the agrifood industry.

Many seasonal workers in New Brunswick will no longer have access to employment insurance next spring. The explanation given illustrates how serious the situation is: the unemployment rate in their region has dropped over the past year, so that is to blame. It dropped from 15% to 11%, and this changes the employment insurance formula used. An individual who accumulated 420 hours of work last year could receive 30 weeks of EI benefits. Now, 490 hours of work are needed to be eligible for 23 weeks of EI benefits. It makes no sense.

When the unemployment rate is low, seasonal workers have to accumulate more hours of work but receive fewer weeks of benefits. Seasonal workers in New Brunswick will now have to work two more weeks, yet they will end up with seven weeks less of employment insurance benefits.

However, the government insists that everything is fine and that the solution is to wait for the unemployment rate to rise. What a joke. This is totally unacceptable. Seasonal workers are essential to the Canadian economy. The government ought to fulfill the promises it made them, starting with reinstating the extra five weeks program. Employment insurance is important for everyone, especially seasonal workers.

When will the government finally take the necessary steps to help seasonal workers and prevent the recurring spring gap problem?

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1840)

Mr. Jean Rioux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot for giving me the opportunity to talk about the measures our government is taking to help Canadian workers.

We have been consulting Canadians in recent months. These consultations are very important because they will help us to identify needs and determine the best measures to take to help Canadian families deal with growing pressures.

We have taken real action to support Canadians. For example, our government has made a series of improvements to the employment insurance system in order to make it more consistent with the realities of today's labour market and thereby respond to the needs of Canadian workers and employers.

Some of the improvements that have already come into effect are the elimination of the higher EI eligibility requirements that restricted access for new entrants and re-entrants to the labour market, the simplification of job search responsibilities, the temporary extension of EI benefits in the 15 economic regions that were most hard hit by the drop in commodity prices, the implementation of a more flexible working while on claim pilot project, the extension of work-sharing agreements, and the reduction of the two-week waiting period to one week.

Most of these changes were made during the past year, so that more Canadians could get the help they need, when they need it. Some of these measures are particularly beneficial to seasonal workers, such as the working while on claim pilot project.

This pilot project helps employment insurance claimants stay connected to the labour market and increase their overall income by allowing them to keep receiving a portion of their employment insurance benefits along with all earnings from their job. This means seasonal workers receiving employment insurance can work part-time during the off-season without being penalized by having their overall benefits reduced. This pilot project ensures seasonal workers are better off accepting available work.

Furthermore, by reversing the 2012 changes to employment insurance and simplifying job search responsibilities, we made the obligation to search for and accept available work the same for all claimants, regardless of claim history. These measures benefit all Canadian workers.

As these measures show, our government is taking immediate action to improve Canada's employment insurance program for all

Canadians across the country, so it can more efficiently meet the needs of today's labour market.

We want to make sure that the employment insurance program provides workers, families, and the regions with the security they need. We are committed to helping middle-class Canadians and those working hard to join them.

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Mr. Speaker, it is always the same old answer. There has been no progress for months. Eighteen months of consultation is starting to feel long. The government needs to change its tune and start taking immediate action. It is time for the government to keep its promises and truly address the spring gap problem.

Seasonal workers across Canada are fed up with having to continue this fight. Many workers believed the Liberals' promises during the electoral campaign, but their situation has not improved since then. Once again, come spring, they are going to end up without any income for several weeks or months.

This proves yet again that we cannot trust these promises. It is sad to see that after two years in government, the Liberals still have not listened to seasonal workers and what they are asking for.

I will ask my question again: when will the government finally take the necessary measures to help seasonal workers and prevent the spring gap? All they are asking for is five extra weeks.

• (1845)

Mr. Jean Rioux: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it very clear to the members of the House that our government took immediate action to improve the employment insurance system for Canadians across the country, specifically to make it more effective in light of current labour market conditions.

For instance, thanks to our government's actions last year, more Canadians are eligible for employment insurance support, the job search rules have been simplified, and more assistance is being offered to people hit by the economic downturn.

A number of improvements have already been made, and we continue to try to find new ways to improve our employment insurance system. We are determined to support Canadians when they need it most.

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 6:46 p.m.)

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