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Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 17, 2011

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

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•(1105)

[*English*]

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13 today. I will start by taking about what Bill C-13 should be doing and what we should be doing with any budget bill in 2011. The most recent economic slowdown has made it clear that policy makers and legislators, we in this chamber, have some really important decisions to make to ensure that Canada has an economy that is healthy and responsive to not only the realities of 2011 but also beyond that. This budget is not just about today or next week; it is about Canada's economic future.

The decisions that we are about to make are, in reality, an opportunity to establish an economy of the future for Canada. It could be a green economy. It could be an innovative-based economy. It could be a knowledge-based economy. It is such a gift that we actually get the chance to think about the future and about the direction toward which we want to bring Canada.

I would like to see an economy that is based on green technologies and renewable energy, for example, not fossil fuels. I would like to see an economy where students would not come out of school graduating with crushing student debt, but would have a chance to start work right away, to contribute and invest in their local communities. I would like to see an economy of the future where older workers are supported to transition into new work as industries evolve. I would also like to see an economy where we realize that it costs less to eradicate poverty than it does to pay for the negative effects that poverty has on our system as a whole, in particular our health system and our social security system.

We need to invigorate productivity in the country and we need to promote research and development. I have been working on this in

the riding of Halifax. As members probably know, Halifax is an emerging knowledge-based economy. We understand that an innovation and knowledge-based economy will give Canada the flexibility it needs to help the country weather economic ups and downs in a global economy.

I think a paper came out this weekend for the Institute for Research on Public Policy. It said that we needed a renewed research and development strategy, one that stressed the fact that innovation was a key component to the future of our economy.

A report from the Mowat Centre for Policy Innovation points out that there are successful and productive systems in countries considered innovation leaders where targeted grants are used instead of just tax breaks. This makes really good sense because Canada has an innovation problem. This has been noted internationally. One way we can help our entrepreneurs, our knowledge thinkers and innovators get a leg up is by having very targeted incentives to reward innovation, to reward solid R and D plans and to reward commercialization of innovation. This is an area where we are lacking. It is not the money per se. We are doing okay when we look at other countries and when we look at what and how much the government is investing. The problem is the lack of strategy. The government is investing in blanket tax cuts and not saying in what direction we should be going.

For example, Halifax has so many PhDs in oceans research. It is really a hub of oceans research and innovation around oceans and marine technology, but we do not have a real strategy to build and develop that. Luckily, we have some incredibly innovative thinkers and civic entrepreneurs who have taken it upon themselves to bring the Bedford Institute of Oceanography together with Dalhousie, the National Research Council and Bionova and facilitate a hub development in Halifax around oceans and marine research.

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A lot of that had to do with one person, the vice-president of research and development at Dalhousie, Martha Crago, who said recognized that the people were there and suggested they get together and have coffee. Believe it or not, having a cup of coffee with innovators and entrepreneurs can do a lot to come up with good ideas and strategies for the future that will catapult us toward an innovation and knowledge-based economy.

I point out that the Conservatives do not seem to want to do any of this. They are sticking to their own outdated policies, their pretty ideological policies. It is all about tax cuts. It is not about thinking strategically. This way of thinking is contrary to many of Canada's leading thinkers on this issue.

The government is also ignoring what history and current statistics have taught us; that is tax breaks do not necessarily lead to greater investment by companies in research, innovation or in capital and that improving the conditions for productivity through investment, infrastructure and research is often much more responsive and effective.

However, are we really surprised by that? If we think about recent history, in 2008 the Conservative government was dragged kicking and screaming toward the realization that we actually had an economic crisis. If it were not that the NDP and opposition parties were relentless in telling the Conservatives to wake up and recognize that we were in an economic crisis, pointing it out and showing that there was a way we could get out of this, we would not have even had the stimulus package that was brought forward. We are grateful there was some recognition that we needed a stimulus package, but it lacked that vision for critical investment. It was about policies to give tax cuts and not targeted investments.

Three years later the New Democrats are still focused on addressing the real priorities of Canadian families. We know what those are: jobs, health care, pensions and helping seniors in need. On May 2, Canadians voted for change. This budget is a fantastic opportunity to recognize that and to have that vision for change.

The government should be looking at ways to make life affordable for people. We could look at ways to do the "belt tightening", but we could invest targeted moneys that would help us save money, for example, and I have talked about it in the House before, pharmacare. Imagine if we had a program that would take a very small amount of initial investment that would save Canadians and the government possibly billions of dollars.

We are one of the few G20 countries in the world that is not negotiating prices for drugs. We just pay whatever the drug companies want us to pay and say that is fine. That makes no sense. The Conservatives purport to be great business leaders. Why are they not at least saying that they will negotiate, because company A has a better price than company B.

Bulk purchasing is a very small step that we could take. We see it happening in individual provinces, like Nova Scotia, and they are saving buckets of money. Why would we not look at programs like pharmacare that could bring down the expenses for government and Canadians, make life more affordable and provide a framework like this?

•(1110)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member alluded to the fact that in the stimulus package brought in by our government there were no targeted investments.

In my community, Wilfred Laurier University had a research and academic centre built, which is very targeted toward the very things the hon. member talks about, and those are technology, innovation and being world leaders. It is extremely targeted to our community because it is a satellite campus that is growing by leaps and bounds. It gives the stimulus for more economic activity around the knowledge economy in my community.

This happened, not only in my community, but there were 13,000 projects across the country, which the member's party voted against. In her opinion was that not targeted?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member was listening. Yes, that is targeted when it comes to a particular community or building, but not in thinking strategically about a future in where we are going with all of this. I will give an example.

In the north we have an incredible research facility north of the Arctic Circle, just about at the North Pole. It does incredible work on climate and predicting weather patterns. It is a top-notch, state-of-the-art, beautiful facility, but no one is there. It is empty. We built it, but there are no scientists or researchers there because we are not continuing to fund the thinkers. We are not continuing to fund the innovators so they can actually use the equipment that is there and work toward a better future for Canada.

•(1115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party has talked a great deal on the priority of this session, which is jobs, jobs and jobs. The government has fallen short in coming up with innovative ideas that would materialize those real jobs necessary in our community.

My question for my colleague is with regard to housing programs and investing in programs that would improve our housing stocks across the country, particularly in some of our urban centres where there is a need for that. Does she see a benefit in having a home renovation program put in to place on an annual basis? I believe this would guarantee good solid jobs within an industry that is in need, especially when we look at the importance of housing across the country.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right to point out what investing in housing could do for people.

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I held a press conference in an empty lot in Halifax to talk about the fact that the lot was slated for affordable housing development. I had members from the construction trade unions with me who said that these were jobs, that they were ready to build and that they had the expertise. A fantastic woman, who does home retrofits, talked about the impact of building energy efficient housing and how it could help our environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also had folks from the low-income community saying that if it was built, they would have housing.

What is the solution to the housing crisis? It is building houses. It is a win, win, win.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I have a question for her about the government's lack of vision. She said that the government's budget was lacking vision. What suggestions does my colleague have for turning our economy into a green economy, as she said?

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives do not like the word "strategy". I know they do not like the word "plan". However, that is what we need. We need a strategy and we need to think about how we move forward. I see no plan. It is just willy-nilly and it will not help us in the future.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, it is not about this week or next week. It is about the future of our economy and we need strategy.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to have the opportunity to address the House on this issue. As this is the first time I have been able to formally stand in the House since my election in May, I hope the House will indulge me for a few moments for some brief comments.

First, I want to thank all those constituents who had confidence in me and voted for me to return to Ottawa as their representative to our federal government. It is an honour and a privilege to be returned to Ottawa as the member of Parliament for the great riding of Medicine Hat, and I am humbled by the opportunity and the overwhelming support I received from constituents from Bassano to Brooks, Barnwell to Taber, Vauxhall to Scandia to Rosemary, Bow Island to Foremost, Elkwater to Irvine, Redcliff to Medicine Hat, and all those exceptional communities in between.

I especially want to recognize some individuals who volunteered and worked so hard giving their time and energy to re-elect me under the excellent direction of my campaign manager, Dan Hein and his wife Pat, and all their tireless work. Our sign coordinator, Bob DesRosiers; official agent, Dale Stein; our office staff managed by Judy and Earl Morris; and the many enthusiastic volunteers and friends without whom the campaign would have been much more difficult. I thank each and every one of them.

I also thank my children and grandchildren for their encouragement. Most of all, I thank my life partner, my wife, Micheline. Without her support I would not have been able to carry on the rigorous campaign or to continue the extremely important role as a member of Parliament. I promise that I will do my utmost to ensure

that their concerns are heard here in Ottawa. They deserve nothing less. Not only did they show wise judgment and character in re-electing me, but also by helping send a strong, stable, national, majority Conservative government to Ottawa they were sending a clear message to all Canadians. The people of the Medicine Hat constituency wanted a party with a solid grip on the economy and the only party with the experience to push the agenda through. Our government has shown that it cares about communities and ridings like my own.

We are assembled here today to discuss an important bill, the budget implementation act. It would create jobs and growth, which, of course, is a key part of our plan. As members know, the heart of our plan builds on five years of work that has already been completed by our government. We will continue to deliver on our low tax agenda. We will continue to support a highly-skilled, innovative workforce, which is key to growing our economy and ensuring that we will remain in the top of the pack when it comes to job creation.

Although we have made much progress in ensuring Canada has stayed strong during the global economic downturn, we have much more to do to ensure that we are well equipped to resist future economic pressures.

It is important to note that we have had seven straight quarters of economic growth since 2009. Our government's progressive economic policies have led to the creation of at least 600,000 jobs as well.

We have made it the foundation of our government's plan to support Canadian families. We have delivered numerous tax credits to families and individuals. Families now pay, on average, \$3,000 less in taxes than they did before we introduced our tax reduction in our government's economic action plan.

Our government has promised to deliver investments in education. Our plan is to invest millions of dollars in research and development.

Our plan also involves the hard-working taxpayer whose contributions allow us to make Canada a great nation. That is why we have committed to closing tax loopholes and resorting to other measures to ensure that taxpayers are getting the most bang for their bucks.

The President of the Treasury Board has also been given a mandate to find \$4 billion of savings by finding inefficiencies in all federal government departments.

We have done so much to promote job creation and economic growth. Our government has expanded tax support for clean energy generation to encourage green investments. We have extended the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors by one year to support Canada's mining sector.

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This government has simplified customs tariffs in order to facilitate trade and lower the administrative burden for businesses. We have extended for two years the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment. This will allow manufacturing processing firms in my riding of Medicine Hat to improve production efficiency and further job creation opportunities.

• (1120)

We have eliminated the mandatory retirement age for federal regulated employees. We have also ordered the formation of the red tape reduction committee. We are supporting unemployed workers by strengthening the EI system so that newly unemployed Canadians can use their best 14 weeks for EI claims. A new hiring credit for small business has been initiated. This is a temporary, one-time credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2011 EI premiums over those paid in 2010. The new credit will help up to 525,000 employers defray the costs of additional hiring.

We are also supporting our young entrepreneurs by investing \$20 million to enable the Canadian Youth Business Foundation to continue to help young entrepreneurs succeed.

What do industry stakeholders say? Well, the Toronto Board of Trade said that it:

...welcomed new initiatives to spur small-business productivity and hiring, such as the Hiring Credit for Small Business. SMEs are the engines of job growth. Spurring productivity and employment growth among SMEs, as this Budget does, should help Canada's economic recovery.

As I mentioned before, we will continue to support families and communities across Canada, communities like my own in the Medicine Hat constituency. We will legislate a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities.

We will introduce a volunteer firefighter tax credit of up to \$3,000 for volunteer firefighters who bravely serve their communities. We will implement a new children's arts tax credit up to \$500 in eligible fees for programs associated with arts, cultural, recreational and development activities. We will implement a new family caregiver tax credit in an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of loved ones with infirmities, including, for the first time, spouses, common-law partners and minor children.

Again, we have found support among industry stakeholders. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said:

...budget [2011] delivered a vital commitment to cities and communities to develop a new, long-term federal infrastructure plan.

I will go back to our plan to support education, innovation and training. Our government has committed to forgiving debt for doctors and nurses who pledge to work in remote and underserved areas. The following is what the Canadian Medical Association had to say:

The initiative to address the shortage of primary care physicians recognizes the particular challenges of providing health care in rural and remote areas of the country.

I will now talk about the targeted initiative for older workers for which the budget adds \$50 million. In particular, this program was very successful and the working in successful employment, or WISE program, has been very successful in Medicine Hat. Actually, seven

out of ten individuals who took that program have already secured employment.

Some of my colleagues talked about the housing initiative. In the Medicine Hat riding, some \$741,000 has gone toward funding for housing. I also want to talk very briefly about the Medalta historic site in Medicine Hat. We received about \$3.4 million to help with the renovations and construction on this national historic site. That was in our budget from the historic society, as well as \$3 million from the community adjustment fund.

Those are just a few examples of what has happened under Canada's economic action plan. The people of the Medicine Hat constituency live in a more prosperous and productive economic environment. Our government has continued to support the communities in the riding of Medicine Hat and other communities right across this country.

The next phase of our economic action plan, contained in budget 2011, encompasses many ways of achieving this as we deliver our great country toward prosperity. There is no doubt that budget 2011 is worthy of support.

• (1125)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on what my colleague from Halifax had touched on in her presentation, which is the failure of the government to recognize the innovation agenda.

What we have seen in other jurisdictions is that just going down the tax credit route for R and D actually fails. We have corporations sitting on tons of cash and they are not investing. However, when we look at other jurisdictions, and I will reference Germany, there are no tax credits for R and D. It invests in the public sector and is doing much better.

I am wondering why the government continues to go down the path of corporate taxes without any strings to get those companies to invest when the Minister of Finance acknowledges that he cannot get them to invest. He is trying to encourage them but he does not have the policy framework. R and D is not working in this country because of failed policies.

Why is the government not looking at other jurisdictions, like Germany which has successfully invested in the public sector to get things moving for R and D?

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to note that our government has invested more money in research and development than any other previous government.

An hon. member: The Grain Growers.

Mr. LaVar Payne: In particular, I would like to read the following quote:

The Grain Growers are also pleased with the announcement of a \$50 million fund for research and innovation.... Farmers from across Canada have lobbied aggressively for the Government to invest in this area, and they have heard us.

We have also heard them.

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In addition to that, through our knowledge infrastructure program, millions and millions of dollars have been invested in universities and colleges right across Canada, including the Medicine Hat College in my own riding.

• (1130)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it may surprise the government but I agree with some of the tax credits that have been put into this budget implementation plan. In fact, the ones dealing with home caregivers and volunteer firemen were in our own platform as well. The reason we put them in and made them refundable was because we wanted to ensure that everybody had a chance to benefit from them, including low income Canadians.

Does the member believe that the government should consider making these tax credits refundable? Otherwise, low income Canadians will not be able to take advantage of them. I am sure that his government wants all Canadians to benefit from these tax credits, which are good.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I was in Tilley, Alberta, which is a very small community in my riding. It opened a brand new fire department and has a new fire engine. The fire chief and the volunteer firefighters were absolutely delighted with the funding that we are providing through this tax credit. They told me that without that tax credit, a lot of them would have considered not volunteering again. That tax credit spurred them on and they will continue to volunteer their services to their communities.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member for Medicine Hat is with regard to innovation.

The member talked about education, innovation and training. I want to let the House know that last week I visited a company in my riding of Mississauga South called ElectroVaya. It manufactures lithium ion batteries for plug-in electric vehicles. In the last year alone, it doubled its staff to over 100 and part of that had to do with the fact that it received funding, through the Department of Industry, Science and Technology's clean energy fund, for this project.

I wonder if the member for Medicine Hat has a similar story to tell about his riding or from his travels where innovation and our policies in that area have helped out a business.

Mr. LaVar Payne: Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to hear that the innovation moneys we are providing to companies across Canada is working, in particular in the riding of Mississauga South. That just shows that our government is listening. We are putting our budget dollars in the right place to ensure we can grow the economy and create jobs.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have an opportunity to speak to Bill C-14, especially after having had a chance to talk to a number of constituents in my riding last week to see the real picture of what is happening at the ground level.

The week before the break I heard my Conservative colleagues talk about how we are ranked number one by the IMF, *Forbes* magazine and a number of different organizations internationally and how we are doing so well compared to the G7.

I also heard my colleagues talk about spending \$50 million here, \$50 million there, \$200 million here. Those are hollow words. If we look at what is happening in our communities, that is not translating into jobs. The Conservatives do not believe in statistics and real facts. They are cherry-picking some of the numbers to highlight that they are working toward a great plan. The problem is they do not have a plan. The Conservatives do not have an economic action plan that will help our communities and create jobs locally. Basically, they pretend to have a plan through a piecemeal process.

After having had a chance to visit in my community, I would suggest that the Conservatives get out of this Ottawa bubble and visit real communities and people to see what is happening. There are two million Canadians who are unemployed or underemployed.

I had a chance to visit the South Fraser Community Services Society last week. I commend the members of its staff for the wonderful job they do under very difficult circumstances with the resources and tools they have available. The South Fraser Community Services Society provides valuable services to the community. It provides shelters for homeless people. It helps them with their medical needs. It provides counselling and helps people find permanent housing. The staff is wonderful. I was pleased to see what they are doing for the community.

The Conservatives talk about the prosperity of this country. What is troubling is that 20% of the people using shelters are employed but are not making enough money to pay for housing. Not only are there those who are unemployed in this country, but there are also the working poor who are not making ends meet. In the bubble within which the Conservatives live, they do not see what is happening in the communities. In my community I did not see the prosperity the Conservatives speak about.

The Conservatives talk about a great trickle-down economics plan, but it is not trickling down to average families in my community. The Conservatives talk about a different Canada which I did not see in my community.

• (1135)

The Conservatives talk about cutting corporate taxes and giving billions of dollars to their friends yet they are raising taxes on working families. For example, over the last year gas prices have been rising almost daily. The oil companies are making big money. There is tax on gas. More money is being siphoned from average families who are having difficulty making ends meet.

If we look at the price of food, what I am hearing from my constituents is that the bag of groceries they are buying with today's dollars is not enough to carry them through the week because taxes are being raised on a number of items. If the prices of food goes up, the tax also goes up. The government is giving away billions of taxpayers' dollars to corporations yet it is taxing the working families who are having a tough time making ends meet.

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We need real action to create jobs. The Conservatives simply do not have a plan. We need to provide relief for families who are paying higher taxes, higher gas prices and higher grocery bills. We need to provide relief for students. The Conservatives say they are investing in universities but it is piecemeal investment. It does not make sense because they do not have a plan. Basically, their plan is to give away billions of dollars to corporations. They have done that consistently over the last seven or eight years.

I hear my friends across the aisle talk about the economic engine that drives our country. On this side of the House we know that economic engine is small business, the mom and pop operations that drive our economy. I do not know why the Conservatives are against small businesses. If they believe in an economic strategy and that small businesses create jobs, then we need to provide relief for small businesses.

There is \$500 billion sitting with corporations but they are not investing. When small businesses make money and prosper they spend their money locally. They do not send it to another country. Yet we do not have a plan from my friends across the aisle.

The tax rate for large corporations has been cut enough over the past years. We need a real economic action plan that would provide relief to families, that would invest in our communities, and that would create local jobs to help this country move forward. Clearly, the Conservatives' plan, which is not a plan, is not moving our country forward.

Further reducing taxes for large corporations basically gives away billions of dollars, money which comes from families, working class people and small businesses. That is not fair. We need a real economic action plan. I suggest that my colleagues across the aisle get on with it and invest in local jobs. They should get out of this Ottawa bubble and visit their communities to see what is happening.

● (1140)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised by my colleague's attitude this morning. He is generally a positive guy but he is grumpy today. Maybe he had a bad constituency week.

My colleague is implying that there is no plan. If he would take the time to look, there have been 650,000 new jobs created. There is no better plan for a person who is trying to make ends meet than a good job.

The member also complains that there are no targeted investments. Bill C-13 includes green energy investments. As well, there are targeted investments in communities. The permanent gas tax funding will help municipalities with long-term planning and initiatives.

What the member is really missing are the amazing investments that the bill makes in education and training, forgiving loans for new doctors, helping apprentices in skilled trades and improving federal assistance for students. These are all fantastic initiatives.

Why would the NDP be against helping students and our next generation get the kind of good jobs that they need to support their families?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the aisle has correctly stated that I am grumpy. I am grumpy because I have spoken with my constituents and the Conservatives' economic policy is not trickling down to my constituents. They have elected me to be their voice. I am grumpy because my constituents have told me what matters to them. Clearly, the Conservatives' action plan is not helping.

With regard to the employment numbers, the government now claims to have created 660,000 new jobs. That is also a distortion. We know the Conservatives do not believe in facts and stats. We have barely seen 200,000 new jobs since the pre-recessionary employment high point in 2008, yet the labour force has grown by 450,000.

Basically, the Conservatives fudge the numbers or cherry-pick them. That is not—

● (1145)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member will know there may be other members who wish to ask a question.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Surrey North for his capable exposition of his party's position and his support for small business. This being small business week, I do want to add my concern about the Conservative budget picking large business over small business.

The billions of dollars that would come out of the treasury and into the coffers of larger more profitable businesses is a choice the Conservatives are making. It is their choice to spend that money on large businesses rather than make those funds available for small businesses. What small businesses would receive is a tax hike.

I ask my colleague from Surrey North how would businesses in his riding deal with the 5.6% increase in EI premiums next year that would be taking a further \$1.2 billion out of businesses? How would those small businesses feel about having their payroll taxes go up?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, we have seen over the years the large giveaways to large corporations and money being taken from the small businesses which will be facing a payroll tax in the new year. I am glad the member brought that up because that is what the Conservatives believe in. They believe in taking money away from small businesses and families, taxing them, and giving it to their friends. Frankly, that is not fair.

I have talked with a number of small businesses in my constituency. They are already hurting. They were hurt by the government when it introduced the HST. That hurt our construction industry quite a bit. We are barely recovering from that. That is where small business is hurting. Clearly, the Conservatives are bent on giving away billions more dollars to large corporations.

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We have a corporate tax rate that is one of the lowest in the G7 and G20. We are competitive. We do not need to give more money away to large corporations.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan has assisted Canada to have the strongest job growth record in the G7 with nearly 600,000 net new jobs having been created since July 2009. The IMF projects that Canada will continue to have the strongest economic growth among the G7 over the next two years. We are not immune from the global economic turbulence and that is why we have to stay the course and implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

In the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing bill, our government is focused on what matters to Canadians: creating jobs and promoting economic growth. The incredible investments our government has made in my community of Mississauga East—Cooksville have enabled us to weather the economic turbulence with major investments that have enhanced the lives of those living in our community.

Mississauga, Ontario is one of Canada's most diverse and quickly growing cities. Canada's economic action plan invested in the city specifically in Celebration Square. This square will do what Mississauga has struggled to do for years: develop a city-wide spirit. The public square of the 1950s where people could go to meet and enjoy their community is back and thriving in Mississauga. Thanks to Canada's economic action plan, this dream was realized and the square is now fully functional and is being used by tens of thousands of people, bringing the population of one of Canada's largest cities together.

Canada's economic action plan investments have redeveloped the Lorne Park, Lakeview and Burnhamthorpe libraries. We have rehabilitated more than 20 roads and invested in transit priorities and garage repairs. We have added additional lighting in 73 parks and neighbourhoods, resulting in safer play spaces and communities for all our citizens.

Mississauga has had its old water mains replaced, reservoirs rehabilitated and its Meadowvale north pumping station expanded. Community centres have been resurrected. Entire communities have been raised from the ground up because our government's economic action plan was in place to help those who needed it the most.

There were 60,000 net new jobs created in September. Over 90% of those are full time and over 80% are in the private sector. Many people who were struggling before the economic action plan are now enjoying a better life because they are working at jobs they love and participating in Canadian life.

Canada's economic action plan has produced the results that Canadians needed, but the global economic turbulence means we must stay the course. We must continue on the road we are currently travelling in order to maintain the strength and stability that we are building. The second phase of Canada's economic action plan is a much needed continuation.

We will invest in job creation and economic growth by providing a temporary hiring credit for small businesses. We will expand tax support for clean energy generation to encourage green investments.

We will extend the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors by one year to support Canada's mining sector. We will simplify customs tariffs in order to facilitate trade and lower the administrative burden for businesses. We will eliminate the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery to support the manufacturing and processing sector. We will eliminate the mandatory retirement age for federally regulated employees in order to give older workers who wish to remain in the workplace the opportunity to choose the option that works best for them.

• (1150)

The second phase of Canada's economic action plan will help families by introducing a new family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers of all types to participate and make memories with their loved ones who fall terminally ill. We will also remove the limit on the amount of eligible expenses caregivers can claim under the medical expense tax credit in respect of financially dependent relatives. We will continue to help families by introducing a new children's arts tax credit for programs associated with children's cultural, recreational and developmental activities.

We will invest in education and training by forgiving loans for new doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote areas. We all want Canada's students to succeed in the global economy with the help of the best education possible. We will invest in our students by improving federal financial assistance for students so they can continue to gain the education they need to continue toward their dreams. We will make it easier to allocate registered education savings plan assets among siblings without incurring tax penalties or forfeiting Canada's education savings grants. We are doubling the in-study income exemption from \$50 per week to \$100 per week, benefiting over 100,000 students by allowing them to work more without negatively affecting their loans.

We are going to support communities by legislating a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. We are going to enhance the wage earner protection program to cover more workers affected by employer bankruptcy or receivership. This government will support the tireless hard work of volunteer firefighters by introducing a volunteer firefighters tax credit.

Government Orders

This government will respect the taxpayers by phasing out the direct subsidies of political parties and closing numerous tax loopholes that allow a few businesses and individuals to avoid paying their fair share of taxes.

The government will support seniors by enhancing the GIS, enhancing the new horizons program, and extending the eco-energy retrofit program.

We recognize the vital role that small businesses play in the economy and job creation. That is why we declared 2011 the year of the entrepreneur. We are committed to helping entrepreneurs grow their business and succeed.

The next phase of Canada's economic action plan includes a number of measures to further enable small businesses and entrepreneurs to grow and create jobs. This includes a new hiring credit for small businesses. This is a temporary one-time credit. This credit will help up to 520,000 employers defray the costs of additional hiring. We will reduce the red tape and support youth entrepreneurs by investing \$20 million in them. This builds on the government's significant action to reduce taxation for small businesses. We will reduce the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%. These reductions will help create jobs and economic growth for Canadian families and communities by making Canada the greatest country in which to develop a business.

Canada has seven straight quarters of economic growth. We will remain on track to balance the budget by 2015. This builds on top of the action the government has taken since 2006 to support Canadians. We have cut taxes over 120 times since forming government. We have cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We have removed over one million Canadians from the tax rolls. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%.

We have also introduced enhancements to the universal child care benefit, the child tax credit. We have introduced a fitness tax credit. We have brought in the landmark tax-free savings account, the most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs.

● (1155)

We introduced the registered disability savings plan to help families who have children with disabilities. Families are benefiting from other new targeted measures, like the first-time home buyers' tax credit and the public transit tax credit.

This government's strong record—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I regret to tell the member that the time allocated for his remarks has expired. We will now move on to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has cited the small business hiring tax credit. Given that that tax credit is only worth about \$165 million, and given that the Conservatives raised payroll taxes on small businesses by \$600 million last January and plan to raise the payroll taxes for businesses by \$1.2 billion this coming January, and given that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is saying that these increases will cost jobs, will the member admit that these payroll tax hikes of

almost \$2 billion in fact will cost more jobs than the \$165 million pittance of tax relief the Conservatives purport to offer small businesses?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, the Toronto Board of Trade said:

—[it] welcomed new initiatives to spur small-business productivity and hiring, such as the Hiring Credit for Small Business. "SMEs are the engines of job growth".... "Spurring productivity and employment growth among SMEs, as this Budget does, should help Canada's economic recovery".

We presented this plan to Canadians during the last campaign and Canadians spoke very clearly on our plan.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member from the other side for his speech. The government is saying that everything is good and that its economic action plan is working. But we still have 1.4 million people unemployed. If we include those who are underemployed or who have given up, we are talking about 2 million people. What is worse is that the youth unemployment rate has nearly doubled. Last summer, it reached 17.4%.

Could my colleague tell us why the government is saying that everything is good and that it will continue in the same direction?

[*English*]

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record of responsibility to Canadians. It is evident that we must focus on the economy because still there are many Canadians out of work. That is why we need to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan to secure our economic recovery for all Canadians today and in the years ahead. That includes looking after those who are currently unemployed, giving tax credits to small businesses, giving them incentives that would increase employment and productivity, and to create the right environment for businesses to stay in Canada.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his very articulate words in support of moving this important bill forward. He talked about seven quarters of growth. The unemployment rate in 2008 was high, but it is much lower now, although it is still higher than we want it to be.

The opposition has said there is no plan, but we have a plan. Could the member talk about our plan in terms of moving the economy forward?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my remarks, Bill C-13 is the plan that was presented to Canadians. Canadians spoke very clearly on May 2 and we know the results. We have the full support of Canadians on our plan. We have to make sure that we deliver what we promised to deliver. This government has a record of actually delivering on its promises.

Government Orders

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-13, the government's second implementation bill for the 2011 budget.

My comments will generally focus on two themes: first, there has been a growth in unemployment under the Conservative government; and second, there has been a deliberate decision by the Conservatives to exclude low income Canadians from many of the measures of budget 2011.

The first point is the growth in the number of Canadians looking for work. The Conservatives have been patting themselves on the back about the job situation in Canada. However, the fact is that today the job situation is worse than it was when the Conservatives took office and it is worse than it was before the fall of 2008.

Today, Canada has over 525,000 fewer net full-time jobs than in August 2008. In August 2008, there were 14,631,300 Canadians who had full-time jobs. Today, that number is down to 14,106,100 Canadians who have full-time jobs. There are more than half a million fewer Canadians with good, full-time jobs today than in August 2008.

The Conservatives like to claim credit for creating jobs, but the fact is that all of the net new jobs created since the recession have been in part-time work. Today, there are more than 1.3 million Canadians who are unemployed and looking for work, and the number of jobless Canadians has been growing. Even when we factor in part-time work, there are over 310,000 more jobless Canadians today than before the downturn in October 2008.

Job growth in Canada has simply failed to keep up with population growth, so it is harder for people who are out of work to actually find a job today. This is the reality that is faced by Canadians across the country, including in my riding of Kings—Hants and the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia.

There is also a very uneven recovery, if any recovery, in Canada. If we look at provinces like Alberta and Saskatchewan, provinces that have the wealth of natural resources of oil, gas, potash and minerals, there is a very different economic story from that which exists in provinces like Ontario, Quebec and the maritime provinces.

The reality is that if there has been any recovery, it has been a very uneven recovery, and the macro numbers in terms of employment figures in Canada simply do not reflect the disparity within Canada, and the growing gap between haves and have nots, including have provinces and have not provinces.

The economic region of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia is made up of Annapolis county, Kings county and Hants county. In this House of Commons it is represented by two members of Parliament, the member for West Nova, a Conservative MP, and myself.

This region is one of many across Canada that has not recovered from the last recession. We have seen massive layoffs at Fundy Gypsum, Eastern Protein, Maple Leaf Foods in Canard, and the Larsen's Plant. We have seen people who have worked at these companies, in some cases for 20 or 30 years or longer, who have watched their good full-time jobs disappear. Now they are struggling

to make ends meet and put food on the table with part-time work, if they are actually able to find it.

In an area with a population of just under 100,000, the Annapolis Valley now has 5,800 fewer net jobs today than in August 2008. The unemployment rate in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia has grown from 5% to 8% since the fall of 2008.

The number of people without jobs who are looking for work has grown by 1,700, and more than twice as many as that have simply stopped looking for work and have left the labour force completely.

The local population has declined by 600 people, as people give up and, in many cases, move away. The region is struggling to pay for local services with an aging population and a shrinking tax base.

This is not an isolated example. We can see this happening across large parts of Ontario and Quebec, across the Maritimes. The population we see in a lot of rural Canada is aging disproportionately. The proportion of people paying taxes is shrinking, while demand for government programs, health care, education and social assistance continues to grow.

● (1205)

There is a growing number of unemployed Canadians who are looking for work but have become discouraged under the Conservative government. They want their government to develop a real plan to create real jobs, but we see nothing, no imagination, no long-term thinking from the Conservatives.

In fact, the Conservatives are moving in the opposite direction. They are endangering Canadian jobs with their reckless increase in EI premiums.

In January, the Conservatives will hike EI premiums by 5.6% even though they know that payroll taxes like EI premiums are known job killers. This increase in January follows last January's increase by the Conservatives. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that the 2011 EI payroll tax increase will cost small businesses about \$600 million and the 2012 increase will cost \$1.2 billion. Are jobs created by increasing job killing payroll taxes? I do not think so.

The Conservatives claim that their small business hiring tax credit will create jobs. This is only a tax credit of \$165 million when the Conservatives are actually increasing premiums by almost \$2 billion. Most small businesses in Canada will not even qualify for the hiring credit for small businesses because they already pay too much in EI premiums. For the small businesses that do qualify, the Conservatives are giving with one hand and taking away with the other. They are treating the credit as business income and then they are taxing it.

The Conservatives hiring credit for small business is too small to make a significant impact on the economy. It will not even come close to matching the negative impact of the massive increase in EI premiums that they are imposing on Canadian employers. Only the Conservatives could claim that a tax credit that only increases EI premiums by over \$1.6 billion instead of \$1.8 billion is actually a measure to increase Canadian jobs.

Government Orders

The truth is that these EI premium increases will cost Canadian jobs at a time when unemployment numbers are up and our economy is teetering on the edge of recession. By refusing to act and present a real plan to create jobs, the Conservatives are failing the more than 1.3 million Canadians who are unemployed and looking for work.

The second issue that I want to comment on is the decision by the Conservatives to exclude low income Canadians from many of the benefits in budget 2011.

The Conservatives are deliberately excluding many low-income Canadian families from programs such as the family caregiver tax credit, the volunteer firefighters tax credit, and the children's art tax credit. The fact is if someone quits a job to take care of a sick family member at home, in a lot of cases that individual will not qualify for a dime under the family caregiver tax credit.

By making these benefits non-refundable, the Conservatives are excluding a lot of low-income families from receiving these benefits, so perversely, the families that need the help the most will not qualify for these boutique tax benefits because they do not have a high enough minimum income level to actually qualify, so, the person who quits a job to take care of a loved one at home, who is not making enough money, will not benefit from the Conservative family caregiver tax credit.

My riding has an aging population. Family members are taking a lot of their time away from work to help loved ones. In my own family, my sister, as an example, by day is a VON. She is taking a lot of time to help take care of my parents who are in their eighties and at home. A lot of these families do not make enough to qualify to benefit from the family caregiver tax credit. It is the same thing with the volunteer firefighters tax credit. In many cases rural Canadian volunteer firefighters in low-income families need the help to serve their communities.

It is fundamentally unfair for the Conservatives to not make these tax credits fully refundable in order to benefit all Canadian families, but particularly unfair to deny benefits to those low-income Canadian families who need the help the most.

● (1210)

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my colleague give his speech, I noted that he made a couple of comments that I found to be somewhat inaccurate. He said that of the 650,000 total employment positions that have been created under this government since July 2009, none were full-time positions, when in fact over 90% of them were full-time positions. He talked about job increases. In September alone there were over 60,000 new job increases where the unemployment rate declined.

One thing I have learned in this place is that when we want to have a fulsome debate, it helps if both sides use the real numbers. I just wonder where this member is getting his numbers from. Perhaps he could cite his sources for us.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the hon. member to look at the data collected by Statistics Canada, that organization that the Conservatives regularly try to attack, try to de-fund, and hope to de-legitimize at the same time. Statistics Canada figures are very clear that today Canada has over 525,000 fewer net full-time jobs than in August 2008. The math is pretty simple. In August 2008

there were 14,631,300 Canadians who had a full-time job. Today that number is down to 14,106,100 full-time jobs and unemployment rates are higher today than they were in the fall of 2008, so it is pretty clear.

The Statistics Canada figures are there. The Conservatives do not like to listen to data and evidence. They prefer to govern by ideology than by evidence, but the figures are there.

● (1215)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say in response to the member who has just spoken, when identifying the number of people who are on unemployment, that one of the things that is often missing is those people who have given up on looking for a job. We talk about an unemployment rate of about 7.3% but the real number is closer to 11% when we take into account the people who are not counted. I think the member, being from the east coast of Canada, is very aware of that hidden number of people because in places like the Maritimes, where there is part-time or seasonal work, there is a huge number of them.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has spent some time in the Maritimes and Moncton, and represents a riding in Hamilton. If we really look at the macro numbers for Canada, they do not reflect the disparity between regions in the country and this is a very strange kind of recovery. In fact, it is part of a global economic restructuring. There is a gap between rich and poor and have and have not, and those with opportunities and those without. That is felt in Canada.

If we look at what is happening in resource-and commodity-rich provinces and compare the unemployment figures to those that do not have the same commodity wealth in Canada, it is really troubling. As a recovery is driven by commodities, it drives up the Canadian dollar because we have a commodity dollar and it crowds out a lot of jobs in manufacturing and good high-paying jobs in the traditional economic heartland of Ontario, as an example.

This is a really challenging time for many Canadian families, so I think all members of the House and all parties must realize that many Canadians are having trouble just getting by right now.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to my colleague from Kings—Hants, I recently completed a rural economy tour in southeastern British Columbia and I heard from small business and tourism owners some of the challenges they face and the fact that the federal government is missing in action in the partnership the business owners need with the local, provincial and federal governments. They talk about the reduction in tourism marketing, and the absence of skills and apprenticeship programs that help them access the people they need.

Government Orders

I wanted to hear from the member whether anything at all in the large corporate tax breaks or in the EI tax premiums and so on helps to address those issues that the owners of small businesses and tourism businesses face.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, what I hear from small businesses in my riding is that they are struggling. I had the owner of a restaurant in Windsor, Nova Scotia say to me recently that this person is having the worst year in 20—some years of operation because when the local gypsum company closed down its operations and people were laid off, they did not have the money to go out and buy lunch or dinner with their families.

There is a lot more the government could be doing to create opportunities within the small business community and that hon. member has been a leader in small business as an entrepreneur herself and has brought to this House that experience, and has some great ideas on how to create growth. What we need is a government that listens to members of Parliament, regardless of their party, who have legitimate ideas on how to create growth and opportunity for Canadian individuals and small businesses.

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 2 Canadians made a clear choice. They voted to keep the economy on track to recovery, and they voted to create jobs for both themselves and their children.

It has been the priority of our Conservative government to secure Canada's economic recovery, encourage growth, and create jobs through Canada's economic action plan. We are into its next phase, and it is clear that this is a plan that is working, a plan that is responding powerfully to an extraordinary challenge. Since its inception, we have cut taxes, opened new markets for businesses, and created approximately 650,000 net new jobs. For the fourth year in a row, Canada's financial system has been ranked the soundest system in the world by the World Economic Forum.

However, we cannot ignore the reality that yet we find many Canadians are still looking for work and the global recovery remains fragile.

The introduction of keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act is paramount and includes key elements of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We know, as I said, this is a plan that is working, so we must move this legislation forward with perseverance and intention.

I am proud and incredibly honoured to once again be representing the constituents of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. I know that this legislation, which continues to deliver on our promise of a low-tax plan for jobs and growth, will be well received by many residents in my riding.

Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar is a diverse riding. It is home to a broad range of demographics: farmers, tradespeople, business owners, artists, students, aboriginals, immigrants, new Canadians and people of every age. It draws on several economic bases, including agriculture, manufacturing, mining and the service industry.

Though there is diversity in the population, we can all agree that there are basic fundamentals every community requires in order to thrive: families need an adequate source of income; individuals need

access to education and training; communities need stability and support to provide long-term sustainable infrastructure.

This is what our Conservative government is delivering on. By introducing measures such as the small business hiring tax credit in the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, we are helping the private sector take back their rightful place as the primary source of new jobs.

This week is Small Business Week. It is important that we acknowledge the hard work and dedication of our small business owners. Small businesses employ millions of Canadians and are significant drivers of our economy. Given the fragile state of the global economy, the contributions of small businesses are more important than ever.

That is why we are committed to assisting small business expansion by lessening the costs of hiring. Consequently, we are helping unemployed workers and people new to the job market get the jobs they need and empower them to realize their dreams.

As I mentioned, we are also doing our part to strengthen families and ease the family budget. By introducing initiatives such as the family caregiver tax credit and the children's arts tax credit, we are helping to alleviate the cost of caring for loved ones and ensuring that kids are given the opportunity to thrive creatively in art, music or drama.

We are interested in creating a legacy for our children and ensuring a sustainable future for Canada. By improving financial assistance for students and making it easier to allocate registered education savings plan assets among siblings, we are enabling greater access to higher education.

I would also like to remind my colleagues that we have kept our commitment to ensure that Canada's seniors, who have worked hard to build our country, have a secure retirement and a good quality of life. That is why we introduced, earlier this year, the measure to enhance the guaranteed income supplement for those seniors who rely almost exclusively on their old age security and GIS. This is yet another example of our government keeping its promises.

In Saskatchewan we are blessed to have one of the lowest unemployment rates and highest growth rates in Canada. All of these measures that I have mentioned will help ensure that our economy continues to thrive and that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

● (1220)

As I have already mentioned, I represent a diverse riding that is both rural and urban. Access to doctors is an issue in rural and remote areas across the country; that is why we are delivering for Canadians by offering an incentive for new doctors and nurses to practise in those rural and remote areas. By offering student loan forgiveness to doctors and nurses who practise in rural and remote areas, we will ensure that families living in those communities receive the same high level of acceptable quality health care, no matter where they choose to live.

Government Orders

Similarly, many small urban and rural communities rely on volunteer firefighters to protect their lives and property. To encourage these volunteers and recognize the important service they provide to our communities, we will be providing a volunteer firefighters tax credit to those who perform at least 200 hours of service in their communities. This is something that has been asked for. It is a promise we have made, and now it will be a promise kept.

Canadians are a responsible, practical people, and they expect the same from their government. That is why we cannot continue with deficits indefinitely, as the opposition is calling for through a new round of stimulus spending.

This Conservative government made a promise to Canadians that we would eliminate the deficit. We will cut the deficit through restrained spending and through a targeted review of our programs. Through a combination of attrition in our public service and by targeting programs that were created to solve the problems of decades past and have long since outlived their usefulness, we will ensure value for tax dollars and continue towards our goal of returning Canada to balanced budgets in the 2014-15 fiscal year.

We also promised Canadians that we would eliminate the per-vote subsidy that forces taxpayers to give money to political parties. Regardless of what opposition parties might think, most Canadians believe that political parties are not entitled to tax dollars via a direct per-vote subsidy. Eliminating the subsidy will save Canadians millions upon millions of tax dollars every year.

In summary, we have been listening to Canadians. We promised to deliver on the priorities of Canadian families and to support communities. We promised to deliver jobs and economic growth. We promised to invest in education and respect the taxpayer.

Canadians have spoken, and we have listened. Now it is time to do our part. I hope that all parties will work collaboratively to respond to Canadians and the expectations and needs that they have expressed. I encourage all members in the House to support the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. A vote to pass the bill is a vote in support of all Canadians.

•(1225)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her speech.

She spoke about the importance of small businesses, as it is Small Business Week, and she said that there were measures for small businesses in this budget. If we really analyze these measures, we can see that they are not enough, in my opinion. There are tax credits that are available only to some businesses. Instead, we propose lowering the tax rate for small businesses.

Could my colleague confirm that the best way to help all businesses is to lower the tax rate?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, by introducing the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, we are responding to all Canadians. This legislation will continue to deliver on our promise of a low-tax plan for jobs and growth across the country, continue to keep the economy on track to recovery, ensure value for tax dollars

and, as I mentioned, continue towards our goal of returning Canada to balanced budgets.

This has been the priority of our Conservative government, and indeed it should be the priority of members in the House. I would encourage the member to support the passing of the bill.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member said that "Canadians have spoken, and we will listen". In the Prairies there was a plebiscite through which wheat farmers sent a very strong message. They were hoping that the government was going to listen to what a vast majority of wheat farmers were saying, which is that they want to retain the Canadian Wheat Board. Based on the member saying that Conservatives are listening to what Canadians are saying, can she assure the House that her government will listen to what the Canadian wheat farmer is saying in the Prairies?

•(1230)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, on March 22 the government tabled budget 2011. As we all know, the budget was not adopted prior to the dissolution of Parliament, but on May 2 Canadians expressed their support for our government's low-tax plan to protect and create jobs, to secure Canada's economic recovery and to improve the well-being of Canadians in future years. As a result, the update tabled on June 6 included all of the measures that were previously announced on March 22.

As I mentioned earlier, the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act includes the key elements of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. We campaigned on that plan, and Canadians spoke on May 2. I would encourage the member to support the passing of the bill.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to ask my colleague a question in terms of the next phase of our economic action plan. Could my colleague from Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar tell us how this new budget would help people in her riding?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity this summer to spend a lot of time in my riding and to speak with constituents about the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. They told us before the election that this plan was working and that this was an opportunistic, unnecessary election. They are telling us now to get it done and to keep our promises, because there are measures in Canada's economic action plan that would make a difference in the lives of my constituents.

As I mentioned, we would have the small business hiring tax credit, the family caregiver tax credit, the children's arts tax credit, the volunteer firefighters tax credit. All of these tax credits would benefit the constituents in my riding.

Government Orders

We are delivering on our commitments and ensuring that our economy continues to thrive and that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking out today against Bill C-13, which supposedly supports economic and job growth in Canada. I do not feel that it does enough.

I will be focusing on two issues: first, the fact that this bill demonstrates that the government is out of touch with what families and individuals in Canada are facing. Second, I will talk about the lack of vision in this bill.

When we look at the current situation, it is obvious that the government is out of touch. Families are having more and more trouble making ends meet. Families are in debt and household debt sits at more than 150%. Just look at what is happening with the Occupy Canada, Occupy Montreal and Occupy Toronto movements. People are unhappy and the government is not listening. People are unhappy because the gap between rich and poor is growing. Yet the government continues to contribute to that gap. Just like the IMF, the Conference Board is saying that the gap between rich and poor in Canada is growing, and at an alarming rate.

What is the government's response? To reduce the taxes of large corporations. We know that, in reality, reducing the taxes of large corporations does not help the population. In the Standing Committee on Finance, we have heard it said that this will benefit everyone. That is not true because not everyone owns shares in large businesses and corporations. We also know that the large businesses that benefit from these tax reductions are currently keeping \$500 million in their own coffers rather than reinvesting it. So the entire population is not benefiting.

From a job creation perspective, we need look no further than the case of Electrolux, which benefited from tax reductions and then transferred jobs to the United States. Is this how the government should move forward? We do not think so, and many economists agree with us.

This government remains out of touch because it is still not taking action. The economic situation is a growing concern. People need reassurance. The New Democratic Party proposed a motion, which was unanimously adopted by the House, indicating that action must be taken; however, there is nothing in the bill to deal with this issue. We asked what Canadians want, and they said that they want more jobs and more security and that they want the government to take action.

The hon. member spoke about the election promises that the Conservatives made. However, the Conservatives are not really looking at what is happening right now, for example, the bank debt crisis in Europe or the uncertainty in the United States, which were not issues at that time. Nevertheless, the government is still not taking action. The government is therefore extremely out of touch with what is currently happening.

I spoke of this government's lack of vision. In this budget, the government could really move forward and think about a green economy. With regard to the economy, job creation and industries,

the government could think about developing and investing so that employment is created not just now, but also for a long time to come.

The hon. member spoke about Germany. Germany was one of the first countries to invest in research and development in the public sector, and the country is currently reaping the benefits. Our government, on the other hand, is giving some tax credits, but they do not benefit everyone. We are not saying that tax credits are a bad thing. On the contrary, they are important, but they are not enough. The government needs a more comprehensive, more long-term vision. The government needs a strategy. That is what this government is lacking.

We asked for investments in infrastructure. As many members know, the Champlain Bridge is in my riding. We thank the government for finally listening to the NDP and giving in to our requests. However, this still does not appear in the budget. Why are there no infrastructure investments? We are not even the ones saying this; it is the Minister of Finance. In 2009, he said himself that infrastructure investment has five times the economic impact of corporate income tax cuts.

● (1235)

This is purely economics. The government, which claims to care about the economy and job creation, should listen to what its own finance minister said. It is important to invest in infrastructure; however, we are not necessarily talking about just stimulus, but rather about a structural deficit of \$130 billion for Canadian municipalities. This government is doing nothing about that, and instead prefers giving gifts left and right, like the \$50 million given to the riding of the President of the Treasury Board. It hands out gifts instead of making infrastructure investments that would benefit Canadians now. And, in the long term, this would also mean savings in terms of productivity.

My riding has suffered a loss of \$1.3 billion in terms of productivity and, for over five years, we pressured this government to act. Once again, we still have not seen any schedule or plan for moving ahead with the Champlain Bridge project. We asked to work with this government, not only on the Standing Committee on Finance but also on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, but this government refuses to act or to work with the other parties. Quite the reverse, it stubbornly clings to its ideology and its election promises, which do not take into account the current reality. It has no vision whatsoever.

During the last campaign, I met people affected by the pension issue. A woman who had worked for Nortel told me she was devastated because she had worked for years and contributed to her pension fund only to lose everything. We know what happened with Nortel. This government did nothing to protect the pensions of those people. It is doing nothing to help seniors living below the poverty line. Do you realize that seniors are now being asked to go back to work and pay? Nothing is being done to help them, which we believe demonstrates a lack of vision and compassion.

Government Orders

As for nurses and doctors, the proposed measures are already in place, but they are not enough. It is important to create positions for doctors and nurses. In Canada, there is a problem in that regard. Just ask those around you if they have a family doctor. It is difficult to find one, especially in rural areas. This government has not yet taken action on that issue.

We are not asking for much. First, the government must listen to us and to our proposals, which are very logical. Members spoke earlier about small businesses and the fact that they create more than 50% of jobs. Why not help these small businesses not just by giving them a tax credit to hire people, but also by lowering their taxes? Instead, the government has decided to cut taxes for big business—unfortunately, the Liberals got the ball rolling on that one—which really has no impact. We can see that.

What is really shocking is that this government still continues to say that everything is fine and that it is business as usual when, in fact, 1.4 million people are unemployed. And if we add those who are discouraged or who have stopped looking, that number climbs to 2 million. That is serious.

The government lacks vision and is not in touch with reality. With regard to job cuts, this government has cut 600 or 700 positions at Environment Canada. It clearly lacks vision when it comes to the future and a green economy.

Oil and gas companies are receiving \$761 million in tax credits or reductions.

• (1240)

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite intently to our colleague across the way. We understand that the NDP is the high tax situation. It wants to increase taxes on corporations. If the NDP were in power, it would increase taxes on corporations. What would corporations do? They would not invest money in job opportunities for Canadians. In fact, most likely there would be layoffs because of the high tax burden that would be put on these organizations.

In fact, over the last number of years, the NDP has voted against every one of our budget measures, which have created well over 600,000 jobs. I ask the member if the NDP would remove its choice for high taxes for corporations.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his questions.

If we look at what is happening at the provincial level—and my colleague knows this—the NDP believes in a balanced budget. However, this time we are talking about tax cuts that are somewhat idealistic. In 2008, the corporate tax rate was very competitive with the one in the United States and it is still lower than theirs. Do corporate tax cuts help the economy perform better and create jobs? Obviously not. Almost 2.5 million people are unemployed. It is a matter of choice and the current government is choosing its friends, the corporations, over the Canadian public.

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was particularly glad to hear my colleague talk about corporate tax cuts and how they allow

corporations to accumulate vast sums of money. Yet, the Conservatives' key argument is that these corporations will reinvest in the country. In fact, the money accumulates. I would like my colleague to elaborate on that.

• (1245)

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. Indeed, the problem with the government's vision is that it gives tax cuts without asking for anything in return. Some \$500 million is going into the coffers of large corporations and is not being reinvested. If tax cuts are given to the corporations and they can do what they want, then that money will go to the shareholders or in their coffers. That is only natural. Companies are worried about the economy and the government is doing nothing about it.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard a Conservative colleague talk about tax breaks for large corporations being a way to reinvest in the community and jobs. However, we know that the largest corporations are not net producers of jobs. It is the small and medium-sized enterprises that are the net producers of jobs. We also know there is no research to suggest that this next layer of tax breaks will actually be invested in new Canadian jobs or in upgrades.

Would the NDP member comment on what impact the increased taxes on small businesses, through the EI tax increase, is likely to have on small business job creation?

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, it is true that the small tax credit the government is offering to small businesses does not compensate for the losses small businesses will have. It is really shocking when the government says that this is small business week and that small businesses are important. In the end, it is increasing the burden on small businesses, which we know are creating more than 50% of new jobs. Basically, the government is not heading in the right direction and that is why we are opposed to the proposals in Bill C-13.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to rise today and speak to Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. This is important legislation, which seeks to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

The bill seeks to implement a number of important initiatives announced in June's throne speech and also in the spring election, and reiterates our government's firm and strong commitment to continued economic growth and job creation for all Canadians. Our government's record speaks for itself and speaks loudly.

Since July 2009 our government has created 600,000 net new jobs, most of which are full-time, and our economy is consistently rated as one of the strongest in the world.

Government Orders

This weekend we saw protests concerning the banking system. We know Canada's banking system is on solid ground because of appropriate regulations regarding lending habits. Thanks to that, we have a strong economy and it is consistent with our government's overall vision for the economy. However, we are not immune to turbulent events occurring in the world economy and that is why we must pass the legislation before us to ensure that we are capable of withstanding whatever lies before us.

Bill C-13, also known colloquially as the budget implementation act, would create five general themes in which there are many provisions to implement the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. The five general themes include: first, the promotion of job creation and economic growth; second, support of communities; third, help families; fourth, investment in education and training; and, fifth, respect for taxpayers. What I propose to do today is highlight one or two specific implementation measures contained in Bill C-13 under each of the five broad categories.

With respect to job creation and economic growth, it is important to note that this legislation would provide a temporary hiring credit for small businesses to encourage additional hiring. There is some agreement on both sides of the House that small business really is the engine of economic growth in Canada.

I talk to small businessmen and women frequently when I am back home in Edmonton—St. Albert and they have told me that the cost of hiring is an impediment to the expansion of their business. It is not just simply a matter of salary. With respect to an individual who might draw a salary of \$40,000 per annum, I understand the actual cost to that small business is probably closer to \$55,000 or \$60,000 when benefits, unemployment insurance premiums and training are calculated. The government's solution to this is the \$1,000 hiring credit for small businesses to encourage them to hire individuals and add to their payroll. I think we would all agree that is an appropriate tax credit and one that would help small businesses continue to hire and continue to build and grow our economy.

Also of significance are the provisions that would eliminate the mandatory retirement age for federally-regulated employees in order to give older workers who wish to work the option of remaining in the workforce.

I come from Alberta, and it is blessed in its ability to somewhat sustain economic downturns because of its resource-based economy. Notwithstanding current instability, some economists predict that there will be labour shortages in Alberta of up to 70,000 workers, mostly in construction but also in manufacturing and administration.

Reducing the mandatory retirement age for workers who reach the age of 65 would do two important things. First, it would give workers the option, if they so choose and their health is good, to stay in the workforce. Second, it would help employers who might otherwise be experiencing employee shortages to have some benefit in terms of maintaining their existing workforce and not retiring those people who have reached the age of 65. In many cases these long-tenured employees are the most valuable employees because they have been with their employer for a long time. If they are of value to the employer, the employer will want to keep the employees notwithstanding some arbitrary number of 65 years of age.

●(1250)

The second major theme in Bill C-13 is with respect to the support of communities. Certainly, it is of benefit to all municipalities, legislation of a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund to provide predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities.

The municipalities in Edmonton—St. Albert have benefited from this gas tax fund. We have major infrastructure funding in Edmonton. Road construction seems to be an ongoing issue from the month of April to October. The city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta have nearly completed an aggressive ring road system, the Anthony Henday. The federal contribution with respect to that was from the gas tax fund.

Municipalities have been asking for stable funding, so to make this a permanent annual investment allows the municipalities to plan for their future capital infrastructure needs, and I credit the Minister of Finance with that provision in Bill C-13.

The other support for communities that I want to talk about is the tax credit for volunteer firefighters. This is an important provision, perhaps not that well understood. There are some 85,000 volunteer firefighters in Canada. These are individuals in small towns and counties who voluntarily fight fires to protect the property of their neighbours. Often fires occur in the middle of the night and individuals would be called from their sleep to fight a fire.

I am sure most members of the House know that there was a terrible fire northwest of Edmonton this year in Slave Lake. That required the resources of volunteer and professional firefighters. These individuals ought to be recognized for their contribution.

Third, with regard to helping families, we are introducing the new family caregiver tax credit to assist caregivers for all types of infirm dependent relatives. This is important to allow individuals to perhaps reduce their hours or, if they are self-employed, to reduce their revenue, to take care of elderly or infirm members of their family. Their business or employment opportunities will be compromised, but it allows the infirm or elderly member to be cared for in the home as opposed to putting that individual in some sort of group home, nursing home or retirement home. Ultimately, this is a great cost savings to taxpayers when these individuals can be looked after by their own families.

The new child tax credit would allow parents to deduct a tax credit for a portion of the fees for enrolling children in dance or music. We know these things can be expensive. There is value to both children and society and to families when children are involved in those types of activities. I credit the government for recognizing that and giving a tax credit to the parents.

We are forgiving loans to new doctors and nurses in underserved rural and remote areas. The last speaker talked about the doctor shortage and it is acute, but it is especially acute in rural and remote areas. This would help encourage doctors and nurses to relocate.

Government Orders

Finally, the fifth theme in this legislation is the respect for taxpayers. I am honoured and proud, and I wave this flag whenever I can, at the phasing out of the direct subsidy of political parties. I really believe, as do my constituents, that political parties ought to raise their own money and the taxpayer should not be compelled to pay for political causes that they do not support or believe in.

The economic action plan has been successful. The economy is on firm ground. We have one of the strongest, if not the strongest economy in the G7, and it is the result of this government's management.

Targeted investments are a reflection of the results we can achieve while working together toward the common goal of building strong and vibrant communities. The success of Canada's economic action plan is a tribute to the partnerships between local, provincial and federal governments.

We have risen to the challenge of the worst economic downturn in half a century, and with the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, Bill C-13, we will ensure a robust and durable economic recovery that will continue to keep Canadians employed and sustain Canada's economic advantage now and in the future.

● (1255)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that somebody from the Conservative side realizes it is small businesses that create jobs. They are the economic engine for our country.

What really puzzles me is, if the Conservatives are to tax small businesses in the new year, how does that help small businesses? They are saying that they want to create jobs and provide a small tax credit to small businesses, but yet they are taxing small businesses. How would that help create jobs for Canadians?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from British Columbia for his question and his concern for small business.

Certainly, this government, unlike the previous government, recognizes the vital role that small business plays in the economy and job creation. Tax rates have continued to be lowered by this government, both in terms of corporate tax rates for small businesses that are incorporated and also individual tax rates for the small businesses in more of self-employed situations.

I am not sure if he is talking about employment insurance premiums, but certainly that fund has had some problems given that there have been more claimants with respect to the economic downturn. The government recognizes this, hence the \$1,000 tax credit for new hires that would offset the costs of hiring new individuals.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill is entitled "Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act". However, to look at one of the underlying statistics that was brought to our attention earlier today by the finance critic of the Liberal Party, back in August 2008, there were 14,631,000 employed and today that has dropped significantly, virtually by half a million, to 14,106,000.

Does the member not recognize that the most important issue today is jobs and the need to create jobs? Does he believe that this

budget would create the hundreds of thousands of jobs necessary to really make the difference and make up for that gap in jobs that have been lost since the government has been in office?

● (1300)

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely disagree with the premise of that question. As I said in my remarks, the government has created 600,000 jobs since the recession of 2008. Most are full-time and almost all are in the private sector. It is the government's economic policies that nurture a business environment and allows small, medium and large businesses to make the new hires. I am reticent to believe that the opposition party can criticize the government with respect to job creation when the facts are that the government's job creation is the envy of any of its industrial partners.

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be asking my colleague from Edmonton—St. Albert a question. He talked about the political subsidy in his speech. In my riding I hear this all the time, "Get rid of that political subsidy, the \$1.95 per vote". I want to ask my colleague, has he heard the same kind of comment from his constituents?

Mr. Brent Rathgeber: Mr. Speaker, I heard it loud and clear. Certainly in Edmonton—St. Albert the constituents are adamant that the \$1.95, soon to be \$2.00, per vote subsidy which costs taxpayers \$30 million on an annual basis ought to be eliminated, and thankfully it would be eliminated with Bill C-13.

Political parties, and all other voluntary organizations, ought to be able to raise their own money. Of course, there is assistance that will continue, including a 75% tax credit for donations up to a specified amount. When we are dealing with a generous tax credit system, there is no reason for a political subsidy of \$2.00 per vote. Canadians should only have to pay for and support the political parties that they support.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many of those who spoke before me talked to the House about poverty and about Canadians who are living in very difficult situations. More and more people are relying on food banks. That is a telling indicator. From coast to coast, Canadian families are having a harder time taking care of themselves and feeding, housing or clothing themselves. The cost of living is rising higher and higher for these families, and they cannot manage to make ends meet. They are finding it even more difficult to meet these basic, fundamental needs because of the current crisis, which is rocking the foundations of the world economy.

In Canada, the gap between the rich and the less fortunate is growing. The current crisis has a particular impact on the most vulnerable people in our society, such as single-parent families, seniors, welfare recipients and the unemployed. Even people who are employed are making use of food banks.

Government Orders

Canada's economic and social situation is worrying. According to recent statistics, approximately 1.4 million Canadians are officially unemployed. That number is close to 2 million if we include those who have given up or are underemployed. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada's unemployment rate will rise this year to 7.6%. According to the projections of this financial institution, the unemployment rate will rise from 7.6% in 2011 to 7.7% in 2012 because our economy is growing more slowly than expected. This high unemployment rate is costing \$20 billion a year in lost income, not to mention the losses in terms of economic stimulus and tax revenue.

No segment of the population is immune. Youth employment is considered to be a disaster. The youth unemployment rate reached 17.3% last summer, which is an increase from the previous year and from the pre-recession unemployment rate, which was under 14%.

As we all know, Canada's current economic situation requires measures that will help reduce unemployment, create jobs and support the economy.

On September 29, 2011, in his fiscal sustainability report for 2011, the Parliamentary Budget Officer stated that Canada's fiscal structure is not sustainable over the long term. Economists and other financial experts are constantly pointing out how fragile the current economic situation is.

In order to reduce unemployment and stimulate the economy, considering how fragile the current economic situation is, we need measures that will support the economy and create jobs. Bill C-13 is completely out of touch with the problems facing Canadians. Accordingly, the measures it calls for do not address the current economic imperatives or the problems facing Canadian families, seniors and youth hit hard by unemployment.

The measures proposed in Bill C-13 are based on forecasts that no longer apply, as demonstrated by the International Monetary Fund, and on minimal-state theories that reject social programs. The measures are unrealistic and completely out of touch, not only with the real needs of Canadians, but also with the general economic situation that experts are describing as fragile and shifting. The budget proposed by the Conservatives does not even begin to respond to the needs of Canadian families, who want concrete measures to create jobs and promote economic growth. The measures proposed in Bill C-13 do nothing to address concerns about employment, improving health care for all Canadians, strengthening pensions and taking care of seniors in need. The measures set out in the bill do nothing to promote job creation.

Bill C-13 is sacrificing Canadian families while offering large corporations lavish and substantial tax reductions, which are not even conditional upon job creation. These tax credits are granted even if the corporations do not create any jobs to respond to the challenge of unemployment. In other words, the reductions serve only to reward companies that already have employees, whereas the economic recovery needs new jobs to put Canadians who are looking for employment to work.

• (1305)

Furthermore, since they are based on a certain income level, the tax credits in Bill C-13 actually benefit only a very few Canadians,

mainly wealthy individuals. They exclude many people who, because of their poverty, do not pay taxes and therefore cannot benefit from these tax credits. Seen from this perspective, it is clear the tax credit measures are just for show. For example, Bill C-13 talks about tax credits for family caregivers. Creating such a tax credit is not a sufficient response to the needs of people who take time off to take care of their loved ones who are ill, simply because they must have a sufficient level of income to be able to benefit from the tax credits set out in Bill C-13. A total of 65% of households with a caregiver declare a combined income of less than \$45,000 and 23% declare less than \$20,000. In short, most caregivers cannot benefit from the tax credits in question.

For this measure to provide direct support to caregivers, we, the NDP, are proposing that these tax credits be turned into tax credits for caregivers. That is a concrete measure that responds to genuine needs. And that is why a number of members who spoke before me have proposed that the child disability benefit be used as a model. Caregivers would receive a monthly non-taxable amount that would help them cover the costs associated with taking care of a sick family member. This type of credit would be of particular help to low- and middle-income caregivers.

Another example from Bill C-13 is the tax credit for medical expenses. This credit allows Canadians to claim medical expenses that are not covered by the public health system. But the problem is that this measure does not fix the underlying issue in its entirety—Canadians with excessive medical expenses that are not covered by our public health system cannot recover all the expenses they incur.

The NDP is calling upon the government to listen to the needs of Canadians by creating a national pharmacare program, which would reimburse Canadians for all their medical expenses.

This same inconsistency exists with the children's arts tax credit. Where will people who already have a hard time feeding themselves find \$500 to invest in arts activities to benefit from this credit? The measure proposed by Bill C-13 regarding the partial forgiveness of student loans for doctors and nurses raises the same questions.

Canadian families deserve better. They want concrete action to create jobs and fix the economy, not the Conservative government's half measures. Concrete measures need to be taken—ones that target the real job creators—instead of tax cuts being handed to big business.

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According to the IMF, long-term, stable economic growth depends on equitable revenue distribution. In light of the objections I have raised, we believe that Bill C-13 does not contain enough measures to support the economy and jobs in Canada. It should be rejected, pure and simple.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the speech of the member was very well-informed. We repeatedly hear about tax credits from the other side, but they are non-refundable tax credits. They are half measures.

Let me give an example of another half measure. Last year the Conservatives were pushing us to pass the \$50.00 a month they were going to give to seniors on GIS. When we consider that someone living on GIS and old age security gets \$15,200 a year and the poverty line is \$22,000 a year, what the Conservatives did last year was half of a half measure of what was needed. What is needed for a quarter million seniors in the country is at least a \$200 a month increase, not half of that half measure.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments. I back him completely with regard to the \$50 per year increase. I have spoken to seniors who have been truly shocked by that amount. They told me outright that it does not do much for them.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech on Bill C-13 was very thoughtful. We have talked about small businesses being the economic engine that drives our economy and creates jobs. We know for a fact that the Conservatives are going to tax small businesses through the payroll tax.

Would my colleague comment on how it will hurt small businesses in her constituency and whether taxing small businesses is a good idea?

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In fact, the hiring credit in Bill C-13 will not help at all to create jobs. Furthermore, the status quo for taxes on small business will have a serious impact on their budgeting and will not create new jobs. Small businesses in my riding are asking for assistance. Keeping these taxes will not help small and medium-sized businesses at all.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question. The government says it is open and wants to adapt its plans to reality, and is proposing this plan. What concrete results has she seen in her riding or on the economy?

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his question. Earlier he talked about something that I think is essential and that is to have a vision. That is what is missing from this budget: vision. Concretely, in my riding, there are families in need who are likely to turn to food banks for help. Last week I was in my riding all week and able to interact with agency representatives

and families. Unfortunately, even those who are currently employed have to get help from charitable organizations to feed their families. In that sense, I think this budget lacks a great deal of vision.

• (1315)

[English]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in favour of our government's keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act.

[Translation]

Our government has remained squarely focused on the economy during these turbulent economic times and we have been getting results for Canadians. For instance, approximately 650,000 more Canadians are working today than in July 2009.

[English]

In the IMF and OECD forecast our economy will continue to be among the strongest in the G7 this year and next. When we consider what is happening around the world, that is a positive accomplishment. What is more, only recently *Forbes* magazine ranked Canada as the best place in the world for businesses to grow and create jobs.

[Translation]

Canadians can be confident their country is better positioned to face global economic challenges than most and that our government will remain focused on what matters to Canadians: jobs and the economy.

[English]

Focusing on the economy and helping Canadian families is exactly what we are doing through the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. This key legislation would ensure we can keep moving forward in implementing Canada's economic action plan to grow the economy and create jobs.

[Translation]

The plan has been well received in my home province. For instance, the Conseil économique du Nouveau-Brunswick has called it, "far-sighted with provisions to help small and medium-size businesses increase and retain their workforce".

[English]

As well, Doug Northrup, H&R Block tax professional in New Brunswick and a Moncton *Times & Transcript* personal finance columnist, called it "a people budget with new credits that will help families and seniors get more money back".

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[Translation]

I would like to highlight a few of the important measures in the bill at this moment.

[English]

First, recognizing the need for new family physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses to practise or work in underserved rural or remote communities, we are introducing the medical graduates loan forgiveness initiative. This plan would forgive a portion of Canada student loans for new family physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses who worked in rural or remote communities.

Starting in 2012, new family physicians practising in such communities would be eligible for a federal Canada student loan forgiveness of up to \$8,000 per year to a maximum of \$40,000. New nurse practitioners and nurses practising in underserved rural or remote communities would be eligible for forgiveness of up to \$4,000 a year to a maximum of \$20,000.

[Translation]

Another measure I would like to highlight is the volunteer firefighters tax credit.

[English]

Another important measure I will highlight is the volunteer firefighters tax credit. This measure is long overdue and it recognizes the hard work of men and women in communities across the country. Volunteer firefighters play a critical role in serving communities across Canada, including in my riding of New Brunswick Southwest, often putting themselves at risk for the safety of their neighbours. Often, in rural and remote communities, these volunteer firefighters are the first responders at the site of home fires or accidents on roads. Across the country, nearly 85,000 volunteer firefighters provide their services to protect the lives of Canadians and they deserve our gratitude and support. That is why this act includes a volunteer firefighters tax credit in the amount of \$3,000. This is a positive measure that has been welcomed across the country, including in my home province, as a tool to ensure we retain our volunteer firefighters.

The New Brunswick Association of Fire Chiefs declared:

...the tax credit is also an important tool when it comes to recruitment and retention. We feel that retaining volunteers that are already in place is even more important almost...because you've already invested money into those volunteers. So you want to keep them on and keep them as long as you can. Retention with some of the smaller volunteer fire departments is a big deal.

In my riding there are a lot of these small fire departments and this support is welcome.

Another measure I will highlight is supporting infrastructure in Canada by legislating that the gas tax fund transfer be permanent.

• (1320)

[Translation]

As we know, Canada's economic action plan has helped accelerate and expand federal investments in infrastructure. The actions we took helped Canada deal with the global economic turbulence in the short term, with more modern infrastructure for the long term.

[English]

Canada's historic investment in infrastructure, like improving our roads, bridges or, in my riding, wharves, will continue to support jobs and growth beyond the economic downturn. Announced in budget 2007, the seven year building Canada plan consists of programs to meet varying infrastructure needs across the country, including the gas tax fund and a full rebate of the goods and services tax paid by municipalities. Through the gas tax fund, the Government of Canada provides \$2 billion annually to support municipal infrastructure. Today's act proposes to legislate a permanent annual transfer, through the gas tax fund, to provide predictable, long-term infrastructure funding to Canada's cities and towns. This means that this funding would be taken away from the hands of politicians, I suppose, to use it as a political football, thereby guaranteeing it to municipalities so that it would be there year in and year out.

We all know that state of the art infrastructure moves people, goods and services safely and reliably. It improves business competitiveness, allowing the economy to grow and prosper, and it also enhances the quality of life of Canadians.

[Translation]

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation—a group I am very familiar with—has applauded this move, noting, “making the Gas Tax Transfer permanent is a clear follow-through on a longstanding taxpayer priority. This will ensure that more gas tax revenues go back into roads”.

[English]

That is a good measure and one that is long overdue.

A final point that I will highlight is our Conservative government's commitment to return to balanced budgets through the responsible spending of taxpayer dollars. We are committed to principled, effective fiscal management through a detailed review of all government spending.

[Translation]

Nevertheless, prudent fiscal management also means leading by example and that includes political parties. That is why today's bill phases out the costly per-vote subsidy to political parties, which forced taxpayers to support political parties rather than political parties receiving donations voluntarily from Canadians.

[English]

We firmly believe that Canadians demand that their tax dollars be treated with great care and only used in the public interest, in good times as well as in turbulent economic times. As such, I believe this move to end the political party subsidies has been and will be applauded by Canadians from coast to coast.

Again, the Taxpayers Federation said:

Eliminating the per-vote subsidy is a major victory in the fight against political welfare. ...this is major win for taxpayers and for democratic reform.

Government Orders

Another plug is from the *Calgary Herald* editorial. It remarked:

Phasing out the subsidy also forces political parties to do their own fundraising, while asking Canadians to back up their beliefs by putting their hard-earned dollars behind the parties they support.

Here in Ontario, a *Kingston Whig Standard* editorial heralded it as well when it stated:

If people want to advance a political agenda, let them work to finance the means to get elected. If it appeals to people, they will support it.

It's time politicians and their skills learned how to earn our support, not merely expect it.

[*Translation*]

While I only highlighted a few measures of today's act, there are many more.

[*English*]

The keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act recognizes the need to focus on the economy for the short and long term. I would therefore encourage all members of the House to support this key legislation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his speech.

The hon. member talked about investing in infrastructure. We know that there is a \$130 billion deficit in infrastructure. The Minister of Finance says investing in infrastructure is five times more effective than cutting the corporate tax rate. Could the hon. member explain why the government is making more cuts to the corporate tax rate instead of investing in infrastructure?

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, like any good economic policy, a government needs to look at different levers when it sets the fiscal plan every year. We can point to countries throughout Europe, some of which are in big trouble today. They have wonderful infrastructure but lousy tax structures. As a result, they do not receive the investment, jobs or growth that is important to ensuring a high standard of living.

If the member is suggesting that we put all our eggs into building only infrastructure and we do not deal with reducing the tax burden on businesses to create jobs, he has a thing or two to learn. Bringing down taxes will ensure job creation going forward and ensure we have good roads so that our goods can get to and from market.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is always encouraging when we hear a moment of truth from the Conservative government.

I will quote something from October 12, which I am sure my colleagues on the other side will appreciate. It is from the President of the Treasury Board. The article reads:

...is crediting much of Canada's current economic success to actions taken long before his government came to power, telling a Washington business crowd Wednesday that Canada made the right moves when faced with serious debt troubles of its own in 1995.

I applaud the President of the Treasury Board for acknowledging the role that the Liberal Party played in terms of protecting Canada's economy today.

Would the member not acknowledge that there is so much more good advice coming from the Liberal Party that, if acted upon by the government, it would create a lot more jobs in Canada?

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent point. No political party and no government has a monopoly on good ideas. If opposition parties want to propose them, we will certainly listen to them.

I wrote a piece in the past that credited both Preston Manning and Jean Chrétien for the good state the country's finances were in. I credited Preston Manning in opposition for putting the heat on the government of the day under Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Chrétien for enacting the ideas.

Why the opposition today would want to raise taxes and spend wildly, I do not know. I think that explains in part why the third party today is no longer the government.

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I compliment my very learned friend across the aisle. I know that his background prior to coming here was a tax fighter and he deserves to be congratulated for bringing that skill and knowledge to the House of Commons.

Perhaps he could detail, in a little more specific way, why targeted tax cuts and tax credit initiatives that are in this legislation are important in affecting general behaviour in different sectors that actually help build and grow the economy and for employers to retain and hire new people. Why are targeted tax credits like this so important?

Mr. John Williamson: Mr. Speaker, over the last five years, our government, particularly on the personal income tax side, has used a number of tax credits and incentives to encourage certain activities. The example of our volunteer firefighters tax credit is a perfect one, whereby we are trying to ensure that these organizations continue to exist throughout the country, thereby saving government money from having to fill in were these volunteers to suddenly disappear.

Similarly, we have seen other measures on trades people, for example, to lower their taxes in their day-to-day pursuit of jobs and opportunities.

We must not forget that when it comes to business taxes, we have actually picked up on reforms that were begun by the Liberal government, which is to keep putting the business tax down to 15%, a broad tax that favours all businesses in this country and encourages them to come here and create jobs.

• (1330)

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-13, an act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget.

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As we navigate through these troubled economic waters, this is a sound budget to maintain our fiscal advantage while offering Canadians the support to enhance their quality of life. I fully support this budget for its measures to create jobs and economic growth to support hard-working Canadians while maintaining Canada's fiscal advantage.

Throughout this period of economic instability, Canada has received many international accolades for its relatively sound fiscal position. I would like to mention a few of these accolades to show that our economic plan is working and should be continued.

First, for the third straight year, the World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the strongest in the world. Second, Canada made headlines recently as *Forbes* magazine ranked Canada number one as the best place to do business worldwide. Third, the International Monetary Fund recently declared that Canada's overall fiscal outlook is the best in the G20. What is more, Canada has had seven straight quarters of economic growth, which is quite remarkable considering the economic instability worldwide.

I congratulate the finance minister for the leadership role he has played in the excellent financial management of Canada. "Canada's low tax plan has created a healthy economic environment for business investment and we applaud the government for staying the course," said the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, which represents business across the country.

Our government is fully aware that to employ people we need to create a favourable climate for business, and we are doing our best to create favourable climates throughout the country. Measures include tax credits to hire new staff and a reduction in red tape. Support for the hiring credit comes from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture which stated that it will help farm operators that are looking to expand. Speaking of creating favourable climates for business, our government is reducing the red tape that impedes economic growth.

Businesses like Yanke, a Saskatchewan based trucking company, will benefit from reduced bureaucratic hurdles. Recently, Yanke announced that it will be building a transportation and logistics centre, a hub which will bring between 400 and 500 truckloads per week and 40 new jobs to the Regina area. A couple of weeks ago, Alliance Grain Traders announced it will build a pasta processing plant that will employ 60 full-time employees upon completion.

Companies like Yanke and Alliance Grain Traders are able to expand operations which require additional staff because the conditions in Canada are favourable for expansion.

I am proud to say, as my colleagues have said, that 600,000 net new jobs have been created since July 2009. I am especially proud to say that Saskatchewan boasts full employment. It has the lowest unemployment rate in the country at 4%, with 5% being considered full employment. Our low tax plan for jobs and growth is working.

I would like to speak for a moment about how the bill will help communities. Having previously been involved with the municipal government, I realize the challenges involved in funding infrastructure. For this reason, I am pleased our government is investing \$2 billion in the gas tax fund. This will provide predictable long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. Regina, Moose Jaw, and

the 11 rural municipalities in my riding will be able to develop long-term plans to fix roads, build power plants, repair bridges and water treatment facilities, and do many other projects. This funding will replace aging infrastructure for the health and safety of Canadians while reducing the municipal tax load that families carry. I call that a good plan.

● (1335)

Let me take a moment to talk about benefits for the agriculture industry. A significant portion of my riding revolves around the agriculture sector. Whether directly or indirectly, Bill C-13 contains measures that will promote sustainable agriculture through targeted assistance to support innovation and long-term profitability. This includes an investment of \$50 million over two years to support innovations. Farmers from Caronport to Rouleau to Mossbank and across western Canada will benefit from innovations created through this funding in the years to come.

Let me talk about seniors. Seniors have shaped a generation. They fought for our freedom and built the foundation of our country. We introduced pension splitting a couple of years ago which helped Canadian seniors better manage their finances. Additionally, we have removed over 85,000 seniors from the tax rolls and increased the age credit amount by \$2,000. Now, to further support seniors, we are enhancing the guaranteed income supplement for low income seniors to the tune of about \$600 for seniors who are single and \$840 for couples. The Canadian Labour Congress encouraged this measure and our government listened. It stated that enhancing the guaranteed income supplement is a win for every senior living in Canada.

To further improve the quality of life for seniors, we are expanding the new horizons for seniors program. The extra funding for this program will help ensure that seniors benefit from activities to maintain active and social lives.

Canadians are living longer and much healthier lives than a generation ago, and as a result, remain capable past 65 years of age. I perhaps more than anyone else in the House believe that individuals should not be required to retire at age 65 if they can still do the job competently. Since being elected in 2008, I have taken great pride in being able to help businesses, seniors, youth and hard-working people in my riding with their issues and concerns. Our seniors are a valuable commodity and deserve to be treated as such. I very much support the elimination of this outdated age requirement.

We are continuing to increase support for seniors as shown through these measures.

Government Orders

Let me take a minute to talk about how Bill C-13 would have a positive impact on education.

Our government recognizes the economic benefits that come with investing in education and training. Having been involved in the education system for many years, I am pleased that our government is taking real steps to improve the financial stability of Canadian students as they pursue post-secondary studies. Through Bill C-13, our government is enhancing and expanding access and eligibility for student loans and grants for full-time and part-time secondary students.

Our government realizes there is a shortage of skilled labour and we are offering tax relief with respect to occupational, trade and professional examination fees.

Our government realizes that today's students are tomorrow's leaders and need support to realize their potential.

We are committed to a responsible, credible approach to balancing the budget by 2014-15 in a manner that will create greater efficiency and effectiveness within the operation of government and the many services it provides. We will do this without raising taxes, and without slashing transfer payments to health, education and support for seniors.

Measures included in the bill would help ensure the Canadian government is supporting Canadians as we work our way out of the economic crisis and into a period of sustained economic growth while maintaining a relatively strong fiscal advantage.

I hope all members of the House will join me in supporting this important budget which provides help to Canadians. I look forward to a continuing discussion of this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for his speech.

I have some questions for him about the current state of affairs. The government says we are staying on course and that everything is just fine. However, 1.4 million Canadians are still out of work. If we count those who have given up and are no longer looking for work, there are 1.7 million Canadians without work. The government says it is addressing the matter, but why is it not using our proposals to resolve this problem and investing more in infrastructure and helping small businesses?

• (1340)

[*English*]

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, we need to support our industrial base and we need to increase employment. We understand that.

We will hear many speakers from this side of the House talk about how the economy is very fragile, and it is. Employment is also fragile but we are working hard to change that. Let me mention a new program starting at the SIAST Wascana campus. This program teaches young people to be plumbers. It has just seen the light of day in the last couple of months. It is an attempt to promote training and education for people so that they can find employment in today's economy.

We are aware of what the member has said and we are working hard to alleviate that particular need.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives and Liberals agree on one aspect of this bill, which is the volunteer firefighters tax credit. We recognize the valuable contributions our volunteer firefighters make. Where we tend to disagree is that the Liberal Party believes that volunteer firefighters at a low-income threshold should also get a tax benefit. According to the bill, the government would penalize low-income volunteer firefighters.

Does the member see the value in recognizing all volunteer firefighters, including those with a low income?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, we are certainly aware that the bill needs some work in terms of some things that may not be totally covered. We are aware there is some discrepancy with respect to that part of the bill. We will certainly look at that and cover the bases so that all will be treated fairly.

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the first phase of Canada's economic action plan was a huge success for Canada. Almost 600,000 jobs have been created since July 2009 and in the category of economic growth, Canada is the best of all the G7 countries.

My hon. colleague from Palliser knows his community well. Could he tell us how the next phase of Canada's economic action plan would impact his community and how the good things in that plan would help the people in his community and all of Canada?

Mr. Ray Boughen: Mr. Speaker, we realize there are many needs to deal with, particularly in infrastructure. Canada's economic action plan has supplied funding for a number of projects. One that comes to mind and which is just being completed is the overpass on Highway 1 which ties into Lewvan Drive in Regina. This overpass is necessary because of increased traffic, particularly freight traffic that will find its way to the international terminal west of the city.

Projects that received funding in phase one of the economic action plan are now coming to completion. Those projects will alleviate a lot of problems for people and will increase productivity for our province.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to debate Bill C-13. This bill implements certain provisions of the 2011 budget.

I am sad to see that the Conservatives are once again showing their lack of respect for our democratic institutions and for Canadians by imposing strict time limits on the debate. The Conservatives' arrogance is an insult to Canadians, more than 60% of whom did not vote for their narrow ideology that defies reason and facts.

Government Orders

The Liberal Party cannot support this bill because it contains a significant number of inadequacies in its current form. With this bill the Conservatives are deliberately excluding low-income Canadians from measures such as the family caregiver tax credit, the volunteer firefighters tax credit and the children's arts tax credit.

How can low-income families and individuals benefit from a non-refundable tax credit when quite often, they do not have enough income to be taxed? Why are the Conservatives choosing to exclude the most vulnerable among us at a time when the economy is so precarious?

For example, if people quit their jobs to take care of loved ones at home, how will they take advantage of a tax credit when they have no income? There are many more examples of how these proposed measures will not benefit those who need them most.

The main problem with this bill has to do with the fact that to be eligible for most of the measures, there is a minimum income threshold. The Conservatives decided to play petty politics with tax credits instead of making them refundable so that low-income Canadians could also benefit, as we proposed. That shows once again that this Conservative government is ignoring Canadians in need.

The Liberal Party wants to work with the government to improve this bill, but it also understands that the Conservatives never listen to the advice of the House or the Canadian public. This government must start working on the problems facing Canadians instead of creating conflicts. A responsible government would not choose winners and losers. It would not choose to ignore a large segment of the population. It would not choose to ignore facts and reason for ideological purposes.

A number of other measures in this bill do not serve Canadian interests and demonstrate that this government has mishandled many issues. Take, for example, the higher charges being imposed on Ontario and Quebec softwood lumber exporters. A few years ago, the Conservative government tried to buy peace with our American forestry competitors, at a cost of \$1 billion. Here we are today, forced to comply with the London Court of International Arbitration ruling of January 21, 2011, and increase taxes on this sector of our economy, which continues to be targeted by U.S. trade claims despite the \$1 billion already wasted.

The higher charges that Ontario and Quebec exporters will have to face is another demonstration of poor Conservative management. Why does this government prefer to placate Washington instead of standing up for the Canadian workers it is supposed to represent? More than \$1 billion has been wasted already, yet the Conservatives have decided to kowtow to the United States once again.

In addition, certain credits set out in this bill are completely ineffective. For example, the small business hiring credit aims to compensate for an increase in employment insurance premiums for some small and medium-size businesses. The problem is that this credit is taxable and is capped at \$1,000. To obtain this credit, the business must have paid higher employment insurance premiums in 2011 than in 2010, as long as the 2010 amount was \$10,000 or less. Because of these restrictions, the credit targets very small businesses as opposed to all small and medium-size businesses.

● (1345)

For instance, a small business that employs 11 people, each earning \$38,000, would be too large to qualify. Based on our calculations, approximately 600,000 small and medium-sized businesses could not take advantage of the credit, which is just another example of this government's petty politics that do nothing to help Canadians.

On top of all that, let us not forget that the Conservatives also announced they want to increase EI premiums by 5.6% in January 2012. Because of that increase, a business with 10 employees, each earning an annual salary of \$40,000, would have to pay \$800 more in EI premiums next year. In short, any amount left over from the credit will all be clawed back in taxes and increased EI premiums.

The Conservative government seems to be trying to fool Canadians by offering just a few small and medium-sized businesses a hiring credit, when it knows very well that that amount will be taken back in full. This is so typical of the Conservatives: lots of hoopla, with no real results—except for their friends. Instead of giving tax breaks to wealthy corporations that are eliminating jobs in Canada, why not give real tax credits to our small and medium-sized businesses that are creating jobs in Canada?

Another weak point in this bill relates to the gas tax fund. The provisions of that section place a \$2 billion limit on annual transfers to municipalities for infrastructure projects. That very fund was created in 2004 by the previous Liberal government, which had, at the time, made provisions for that \$2 billion limit to be increased in order to account for inflation and population growth, things that this Conservative government is choosing to ignore. The amount set out in this bill does not correspond to today's reality and does not provide all the help the municipalities need to address the infrastructure deficit, which the Federation of Canadian Municipalities now estimates at \$123 billion.

Municipalities—perhaps with the exception of Muskoka—are suffering, and the government is not taking their needs into account. If we consider the facts that municipalities have been growing since 2004, that costs are increasing as a result of inflation, and that our infrastructure is crumbling, as we have unfortunately seen with the Champlain Bridge in Montreal, setting a \$2 billion limit now is illogical.

The transfer to municipalities should have been increased in order to take demographic growth and inflation into account; instead, the government preferred to load an additional burden on the backs of municipalities in a typically Conservative manner, namely, without consultation, without debate and without a logical rationale.

Government Orders

Another problematic section is that pertaining to the Canadian securities regulator. The Canadian Securities Transition Office was supposed to be a temporary body set up to establish the permanent organization; however, under Bill C-13, Parliament will have to allocate additional funds to maintain this transition office. By so doing, the Conservatives are trying to force the provinces to accept what they want rather than working with the provinces to implement a functional regulatory system from coast to coast.

If the government wants to show good faith, it will take into account the proposals of the Liberal Party and Canadians. These simple and realistic proposals could easily be implemented. However, by limiting the debate on this 642-page bill to 15 seconds per page, the government is showing that it does not care about debate or about the reasonable proposals that Canadians and the opposition are making. This is an insult to Canadians who do not support the Conservative agenda. Given the current economic situation, we cannot abandon those in need.

● (1350)

The Liberal Party thus commits to defending those whom this government neglects. We cannot support Bill C-13 until the many deficiencies we have pointed out have been fixed.

[*English*]

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot these days about taxing the rich and making the rich pay, and the member touched on that in his speech. I would like to point out that there is a lot talk about tax credits that are offered to people who actually do not pay tax.

In light of the fact that the top 10% of income earners in our country, which begins at \$80,000, pays 57% of all income taxes, the top 25% of income earners, which begins at \$50,000, pays 82% of all federal income receipts, does the member believe that when tax cuts or tax relief is offered, it should go primarily to people who actually pay taxes, as opposed to being handed out to people who do not pay taxes in the form of spending?

● (1355)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I did not have a chance in my speech to discuss taxes and the amount of taxes being paid by individuals. The only remark I made in my speech was that the large corporations were getting the tax breaks in this budget instead of all Canadians getting a tax break.

The challenge of any government, and it does not have to be a right-wing ideology-driven government like the Conservative government, is that it does not have to just give tax breaks to the people who voted for them. The challenge is to help everybody, the most in need.

In times like these, when people are having a hard time making ends meet, those are the people who should be helped. There are proposals for non-refundable tax credits. The tax credits have to be refundable or they are not effective.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that everyone on both sides of the House understands that small businesses drive the economy and create over 50% of the jobs. Yet we have the Conservative government proposing to tax small

businesses in the new year with the payroll tax. How would this affect small businesses in his riding?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my speech that the number of companies that would be eligible for the new hires program would be very minimal. It is supposed to be geared toward small business enterprises, but it will actually only help a few very small businesses with less than 10 employees.

What will be the repercussion? Even if they were eligible to get the \$1,000 maximum eligible tax credit, it would be taxable and then it would be offset by an increase in employment premiums.

The small businesses in my riding will not be any further ahead.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke very convincingly about municipalities and the need for more infrastructure support. That ties really strongly into small business needs.

In rural Canada, in particular, municipal governments, small business and tourism work very closely together. What would my colleague recommend in terms of small business requirements when he thinks about municipal infrastructure investments?

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, why do I always get the toughest questions from the Liberals?

We have been saying that basically we do not need to reduce the taxes on large corporations to keep the incentives.

A tourism tax credit was eliminated by the government, and it has been proven that tourism has gone down because of that. Small businesses are suffering because they are normally open longer than the big corporations.

There is general discontent among small businesses in our country because the government is not doing enough for them.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague. It was evident that he was very negative about the great measures in the bill.

He forgot to mention the 650,000 new jobs that have been created. He tried to take credit for the \$2 billion tax incentive for municipalities. That was \$1 billion. We have doubled it and made it permanent.

Most of all, I cannot understand why he would avoid mentioning the tax credit to assist caregivers. He is trying to make it look like we are not compassionate for people who are caregivers. That is clearly a part of Bill C-13. I would like him to comment on that.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, my speech was given in French, but members will be able to read it in English tomorrow.

There is no problem with the caregivers tax credit. It just does not help the people who actually need it. It does not go far enough. That is what we are saying.

The Conservatives did not create the 600,000 jobs the member is saying they created. Those are part-time jobs. We were in Europe and spoke to the OECD. It is worried about the number of unemployed people in Canada. This is a big worry.

My Conservative colleague should get his head out of the sand and do something for the economy.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

NATIONAL ALL BUFFLEHEADS DAY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to share good news with the House that members of my community, over 100 strong, gathered on Saturday, October 15, to celebrate two important milestones, the 80th anniversary of the creation of the Shoal Harbour protected area and the re-emergence and punctual arrival of the little Bufflehead duck.

We have now created in local Saanich—Gulf Islands, through the Sidney town proclamation and the North Saanich town proclamation, an All Buffleheads Day for October 15. This is our “Hinterland's Who's Who” moment since I share with my colleagues that this little duck is a rapid diver, a tree nester and punctual, returning from its migrations all across Canada within a day or two of October 15.

I urge colleagues to join me when I put forward a private member's bill that October 15 should henceforth be National All Buffleheads Day.

* * *

PEACE COUNTRY HARVEST

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to pay tribute to the countless farm families in the Peace Country who are diligently working to complete this autumn's harvest.

This past week I travelled the Peace Country and met with many producers who are significantly behind in bringing in their crops as they have been hampered by wet weather conditions and in some cases by the sheer volume of the crops that need to be brought in.

In an effort to complete this year's harvest, I know that every member of every farm family will be working to get the job done. I want to wish every Peace Country family safety as they work around the clock. I hope and pray alongside each of them for good weather to enable the completion of this year's harvest.

* * *

[Translation]

BERTRAND LAFONTAINE

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank community workers, who are very important to our society at this time.

Statements by Members

We live in a world that seems to be increasingly unjust. Wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few while more and more people are being left behind. Fortunately, there are generous people who put aside their own comfort and interest to help the disadvantaged.

Today, I would like to recognize in particular a resident of Saint-Sauveur, Mr. Bertrand Lafontaine. Since 2006, after a brilliant career in business, Mr. Lafontaine has devoted all his time to the Soupe populaire de la vallée de Saint-Sauveur, an organization that provides meals for the lonely and the needy. After five years, Mr. Lafontaine is retiring for the second time in order to enjoy life a bit. I hope his example will inspire those who follow in his footsteps.

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[English]

FOOD FOR FAMINE SOCIETY

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the House and all Canadians that in my riding of Langley, British Columbia, there is an exciting event happening as a result of yesterday's United Nations World Food Day.

At Langley Secondary School students are hearing about the plight of children in many parts of the world, such as the Horn of Africa. Tragically, children are dying every day due to extreme malnutrition.

A Langley organization, the Food for Famine Society, in partnership with World Vision Canada, is challenging secondary students and the community to raise awareness and to raise funds so that the Food for Famine Society can produce and provide ready-to-use therapeutic food free of charge to the starving children.

This is a great example of how Canadians of all walks of life are making a wonderful difference in our world. Way to go, Langley.

* * *

NATIONAL SCHOOL MEALS PROGRAM

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Food Day, a time to reflect on the needs of Canadians. One in five children lives below the poverty line, which may lead to poor nutritional status and poor child health outcomes.

Fortunately, school nutrition programs are highly effective in providing children with nutritious diets, better cognitive abilities and health. Unfortunately, Canada is one of the few developed countries without a national nutrition program.

Outside North America school meals are viewed as an investment, rather than a cost, improving student nutrition, health and social development, and feeding regional economic development.

In Brazil, food is a constitutional right. A massive program feeds 47 million students at 190,000 schools each day.

If a national school meals program could be implemented in Canada's high schools at a cost of \$1.25 per meal, with a goal of increasing graduation rates by 3%, the payback would be more than \$500 million.

Statements by Members

●(1405)

WAR OF 1812

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 14, along with my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, I attended an important announcement highlighting the investment made by our government to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812.

The important Battle of Thames took place in my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex. British and aboriginal forces fought to repel the American invasion. We remember the brave Shawnee Chief Tecumseh who died there.

Our government has received a strong mandate from Canadians to remember these important historical events. It has earmarked \$28 million to help us celebrate the 200th anniversary by designating October 2012 as a month of commemoration, sponsoring hundreds of events across the country, honouring current Canadian regiments and War of 1812 militia units, restoring important historical sites, and creating a permanent monument in the capital region.

I am proud that my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex is an important part of the celebrations to be held across Canada commemorating the War of 1812.

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[Translation]

VIATEUR BEAUDRY

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the incredible performance of Viateur Beaudry from Baie-Saint-Paul, who earned two medals at the 2011 Special Olympics in Athens. With determination, perseverance and skill, Mr. Beaudry won the gold medal in doubles bowling, with his partner Dwight Safroniuk of Saskatoon, and the silver medal in singles bowling at the most prestigious international competition in the world.

Mr. Beaudry was one of 109 Canadian athletes who qualified for this year's games, which welcomed 7,500 athletes representing 185 countries.

On behalf of the people of Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, I congratulate Mr. Beaudry on this outstanding achievement. His success is both a source of pride and an example of how individuals can overcome challenges.

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[English]

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow an important segment of our economy is meeting here in Ottawa for the first ever restaurant industry summit.

As a restaurant owner myself and having been involved in the industry for over 40 years, I am proud of the contribution that restaurants make to help strengthen the Canadian economy. The numbers are impressive: \$61 billion in annual sales, one million employees, 80,000 locations.

The restaurant industry is the fourth-largest private sector employer in Canada. What is even more exciting about this industry is that it is the number one source of first-time jobs for young Canadians.

I applaud our nation's hard-working restaurateurs for creating jobs, driving demand in agriculture products and for attracting tourists to our country.

I look forward to our government continuing to work together with this valuable industry as we look to strengthen our economy. We thank all restaurateurs for the jobs they create and the vital role they play in our communities.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a thrill for western Canadians to hear that our government is finally moving toward giving them the same rights and opportunities as other Canadian farmers; the right to grow, the right to market and the right to sell their own crops. We have waited decades for this day.

Farmers have finally received the good news that our government will keep its promise to give them marketing freedom. The future is bright. We already know that entrepreneurs are ready to invest, farmers are ready to market and value-added jobs are just around the corner.

Farmers paid the price when the board was forced on them, and they have been paying for it ever since. That has gone on far too long. It is time to give real choice and freedom to western Canadian farmers.

The western provinces have been held back by the Wheat Board. We invite the members across the way to join with us in bringing freedom to western Canada.

Make no mistake that the government's actions will result in more investment and innovation in western Canada. It will result in value-added jobs and a stronger economy.

I ask the opposition to join with us in bringing western Canadian farmers the same freedom the rest of Canada already has.

* * *

●(1410)

L.V. ROGERS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give special recognition to the students at L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, B.C. for doing their part to improve our country and secure our future.

These creative students have partnered with the community and film industry professionals to produce a feature film about climate change called *Project Turquoise Snowflake*. I urge my hon. colleagues to contact me for more information about this film.

Throughout this experience the message has been clear to those involved in the film and to all Canadians: all is possible when the energy and enthusiasm of youth is mixed with the experience and guidance of supportive mentors.

Climate change is an opportunity for all Canadians to work together to effect positive change.

Margaret Mead commended small groups of thoughtful, committed citizens who can change the world.

Indeed, we can find one such group at L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, British Columbia, one of the many bright spots in my riding.

Well done, LVR.

* * *

CLAY CARD, RENZO DAINARD, JORDEN MILLER AND DANAE GOUGH

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to offer my sincere condolences to the friends and families of four southern Alberta teenagers who lost their lives in a car accident on Saturday night.

Clay Card was on my son's hockey team, and after the game on Saturday night, he and his friend Renzo Dainard went out with two young women, Jordan Miller and Danae Gough. Tragically, they never came home. It is a testament to their character to know that alcohol was not a factor in this accident.

The four friends all came from Magrath, a small town of about 2,300 people where everyone knows everybody. While the entire community mourns and struggles to come to grips with this tragic loss, it is comforting to know that the community will be there to support and comfort the families who lost their sons and daughters.

I call upon the members of the House to join with me in expressing our deep regrets and to offer sincere condolences to the town of Magrath and especially the parents and siblings of Clay Card, Renzo Dainard, Jordan Miller and Danae Gough.

May God grant their families peace and comfort at this difficult time.

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[*Translation*]

HOMELESSNESS AWARENESS NIGHT

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 21, in more than 20 cities across Quebec, organizations that help the homeless will be holding activities as part of the 22nd Nuit des sans-abri.

The public is invited to spend a night filled with warmth and emotion under the stars, in the company of street people. Every night, people live, sleep and die on Canadian streets. The Nuit des sans-abri is a special opportunity to break through indifference and diminish the stigma of homelessness by showing our support for the homeless.

The Conservative government brags that our economy is the best in the G8. Unfortunately, persistent poverty is on the rise in this

Statements by Members

country and the number of homeless people and people using food banks is growing.

I invite the Conservative government members to come down from their ivory tower and join the homeless on the street on October 21. Perhaps some contact with reality will make them less arrogant and more open to the needs of the less fortunate.

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[*English*]

FAUJA SINGH

Mr. Parm Gill (Brampton—Springdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an incredible athlete of Sikh origin, Fauja Singh. Fauja Singh broke nine—yes, nine—world age group records this past week in Toronto. He broke the 100 metre, 200 metre, 400 metre, 800 metre, 1,500 metre, 3,000 metre and 5,000 metre world age group records.

As if these records were not enough, Fauja Singh went on to become the oldest person to ever complete a marathon. At over 100 years of age, Fauja Singh ran the Toronto waterfront marathon, 42 kilometres, in 8 hours, 11 minutes and 6 seconds. Aside from his remarkable physical abilities, Mr. Singh selflessly gives back to local communities through charities such as Guru Gobind Singh Children's Foundation, which has a mission to help children meet basic needs.

On behalf of all Canadians, especially those from my riding of Brampton—Springdale, I want to congratulate Fauja Singh on his remarkable achievements.

* * *

DR. RICHARD TAOR

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to honour the distinguished 44-year career service of Dr. Richard Taor. For 34 of those years, Dr. Taor served the people of Channel-Port aux Basques and surrounding communities in my riding of Random—Burin—St. George's. He cared for his patients with immense compassion and devotion.

As a rural doctor in Newfoundland and Labrador, he overcame challenges to ensure that those in his care received the treatment they needed. His tireless service and staunch work ethic meant his patients received the best medical care possible. Dr. Taor is known for never rushing his patients and always taking time to listen.

Dr. Taor came to Channel-Port aux Basques in 1977 from England. He was welcomed with open arms to an area that he admits he knew almost nothing about. Although his services were pursued by larger communities, he remained loyal to the people who needed his help most. He will be missed as a doctor in the area, but will remain a friend and neighbour.

I ask all members to join me in thanking Dr. Richard Taor for his years of service and in congratulating him on a well-deserved retirement.

Oral Questions

●(1415)

RILEY SENFT

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more powerful than a Canadian family dedicated to an important cause, such as fighting cancer.

Thirty years ago we were inspired by Terry Fox. In the House we saw first-hand the struggle of Jack Layton, supported by family members like the member for Trinity—Spadina. More recently Canadians celebrated with Riley Senft, a 32-year-old whose West Vancouver family together confronted the challenge of prostate cancer. Riley's grandfather died of prostate cancer in the fall of 2010, and his father Rod, a leading Canadian businessman, is undergoing second-time treatment for this disease.

Bruised but unbowed by cancer in the family, Riley ran over 6,600 kilometres from coast to coast, speaking in communities as he went. Buoyed by his father, his mother Jeannie and his siblings Derek and Lauren, Riley has raised over \$500,000 in the battle against prostate cancer. Over 1,000 people greeted Riley in West Vancouver this month to celebrate the completion of his astonishing run.

May we now rise as well to acknowledge this outstanding Canadian.

* * *

ALEXANDRA DODGER

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a heavy heart to remember the life of a friend whose journey was tragically cut short this past Saturday at the age of 27. Alexandra Dodger was killed after being struck by a car near her home in Ottawa.

Alex was an extraordinary woman who was passionate about life and was determined to improve the lives of those around her. She cared deeply about giving a voice to the voiceless. Alex had just graduated from law school at McGill earlier this year and started a promising career with Amnesty International. Alex dedicated so much of her time to many causes, one of which was the Ontario New Democratic Youth, where I had the pleasure of working with her and where we became friends. There is no doubt in my mind that Alex was destined to do great things and was going to bring forth positive change.

I will cherish our time spent together and miss all the times that we will never have. On behalf of myself, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition and all our staff, many of whom knew Alex well, I would like to extend our deep and sincere condolences to Alex's family, friends and colleagues, but especially to her mother and grandmother, who must now endure what no parent or grandparent should have to.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, negotiations towards a comprehensive economic and trade agreement between Canada and the European Union are

the most open, collaborative and transparent negotiations this country has ever seen. Two weeks ago, the Minister of International Trade even appeared before the committee, at his own request, to give an update on the negotiations.

Today's demonstrations once again reveal the sad reality: these special interest groups are simply opposed to free trade. The benefits of a Canada-European Union free trade agreement are considerable: a 20% increase in bilateral trade and a \$12 billion annual boost to Canada's economy, not to mention the 80,000 new jobs that would be created in Canada.

By supporting these special interest groups, the NDP is going against the interests of workers and doing precisely what it has unfortunately always done in the past: opposing free trade. As history has shown, protectionist measures only impede growth and kill jobs.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AIR CANADA

Mrs. Nicole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of Labour gets upgrades from Air Canada managers to fly first class, she sides once again with management, picking winners and losers in the labour dispute.

The Conservatives claim that they believe in the free market, but they are happy to take away the rights of workers to market their value freely.

Could the government explain why it is choosing sides and interfering in the bargaining process?

●(1420)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I will address the fact that the preface of the hon. leader of the opposition's words was incorrect and that the accusation is false. She should know better and so should the NDP. I expect an apology on the matter.

With respect to the Air Canada dispute, the government has reviewed all of the options that were available to it. Because the two parties have failed at the table and because the economy is still fragile, we have referred the matter to the Canada Industrial Relations Board for its considered opinion.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Nicole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that kind of answer is making people mad. The Occupy Wall Street movement is spreading throughout the world and to Canada because people are tired of seeing their leaders give billions of dollars in tax cuts to big business. Even the Governor of the Bank of Canada says that these frustrations are legitimate.

Is the message getting through to the Prime Minister?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is fortunate that all Canadians have the right to peacefully express their views.

Canada does not, by the way, have the degree of economic inequality that we are seeing in other countries that have perhaps started this movement. We have a very progressive tax system that favours the vulnerable in this country. We have a social system that supports the unemployed. We have universal health care.

There is a great deal of difference in what we put in front of Canadians and offer to Canadians that they should be thankful for.

Mrs. Nycole Turmel (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, inequality is growing in Canada. The middle class is paying more while the top 1% is earning more. People are fed up. They are occupying Wall Street, they are occupying Bay Street, they are occupying Ottawa, yet the Minister of Finance is dismissing them. "All is good, all is well; move along", he says.

Why will the Prime Minister not listen to them and cancel his corporate tax cuts?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our economic action plan we put in place reductions in taxes for all Canadians. We have taken almost one million low-income Canadians completely off the tax roll. We have 650,000 more Canadians working than at the end of the recession. That economic action plan is working for Canadians.

I would remind everyone in the House and all Canadians that the NDP voted against every aspect of that.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the IMF, an ultra-conservative institution, published a study indicating that in countries with more income equality, periods of economic growth are more stable and last longer. The Conservatives are doing the opposite: they continue to give gifts to the wealthiest, making the middle class fall further behind.

Instead of throwing money at big business, why not invest in our communities? Why not?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only gift that this government has given to Canadians is an opportunity that has provided 650,000 more jobs. That is more jobs than were lost. We have recovered all of the output that was lost.

The hon. member raised the IMF. Let me quote the IMF, other than just her selective quotes. It says that relatively, Canada's healthy economic fundamentals create a sounder fiscal financial position than in many other countries in the world. That is what we should be listening to.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are just not listening. Canadians are sending a message.

The growing inequality between the top 1% and everyone else has to stop. Jobless rates are critically high, especially for young people and new Canadians. Every day life gets more expensive, and

Conservatives stand by while retirement savings tumble with the stock markets.

When will the Conservatives stop padding the pockets of the top 1% and take real action for the 99%? When will they cancel their multi-billion-dollar corporate tax giveaways and invest that money to reduce inequality? When will they do that?

● (1425)

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, if there is one Canadian still looking for a job, that is too many. That is why we will be voting tonight on our economic action plan part two. We hope that hon. members on the other side will support it.

There are credits in there for small businesses for new hires to get more people back to work. There is a lot more continuation of what we have been doing that is actually working to help create jobs for Canadians.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to the same minister, he is talking about tax credits to small business of roughly \$165 million, which sounds terrific, including all of his talk about how the government has never increased any taxes. However, could the minister please explain why his government is persisting on the truly retrograde path of taxing small business an additional \$2 billion and employees \$2 billion at the same time the economy is so fragile?

Why is the government giving people \$165 million and taking \$2 billion out of their pockets? Where is the logic in that?

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to answer that. I think most Canadians know that the Liberals, I believe, were the ones who suggested putting in place the 45-day work year. We heard from businesses that it would not be a good idea and so we made sure that did not happen.

However, we needed to ensure that the EI fund became actuarially sound. We are going to do that. We are not going to do what the previous Liberal government did, which was to borrow that money and not give it back.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem remains. There is noise and wind coming from the other side, but that is all right. The government cannot deny that it is problematic to impose a new \$2 billion tax when the economy is extremely fragile.

How can the minister explain this complete contradiction in the Conservative Party's policy?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the contradiction comes from the questioner because he was part of a party that wanted to create a 45-day work year. That would not have been good for employees. That would not have been good for companies in this country.

Oral Questions

The last thing we want to do is raise costs to businesses. They are employers, and that is why we continue to reduce their costs. That is what will get more people back to work and that is the main focus of this government: jobs and improving the economy.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister can fantasize however much he wants after being prompted by some of his colleagues to come up with these fantastic theories.

I just want him to focus for a moment. I know he can do it—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The member has the right to pose the question.

The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

Hon. Bob Rae: Mr. Speaker, the question is very simple. Why would you persist in a payroll tax, which everyone in the country knows is a killer of jobs? Why would you persist with a payroll tax just at the moment when unemployment is a big issue?

The Speaker: I would remind the hon. member to address his questions to the chair and not directly at his colleagues.

The hon. minister of state.

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, and so is Christmas coming too, I understand.

I do not like to point out what a former government did, but it is pretty hypocritical to ask a question like that when the Liberals raided the EI fund. There is no polite way to put it; \$57 billion was missing. That is money from employees and employers. We would not have had to make any changes to EI if it had not been for their actions.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has a track record as a bad negotiator on softwood lumber, on buy America, and I am afraid it is at it again. With respect to the Canada-EU trade negotiation, European officials are saying that Canada would come out a loser. Canadian trade experts are saying that there is not enough in the deal to make it worthwhile.

Why do the Conservatives continue to negotiate bad trade deals that put Canadian jobs at risk?

• (1430)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our trade negotiation with the European Union is Canada's most important trade initiative since the signing of the historic North American free trade agreement. A trade agreement with the EU will increase Canada's economy by \$12 billion and increase two-way trade by 20%. This is an ambitious free trade agreement. It will create jobs and economic growth for Canadians in all regions of the country.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, that is a wish list. We have to see the government start to stand up for ordinary Canadians. By caving to

European pharmaceutical companies, the Conservatives are driving up health care costs by up to \$2.8 billion. Many seniors in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, and across the country, are already having trouble making ends meet. This trade deal would mean that seniors will have an even harder time paying for the drugs that they need.

My question is, why is this out-of-touch government negotiating deals that put the health care of Canadians at risk?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that the benefits to Canadians are clear. A trade agreement with the European Union is expected to boost Canada's economy by \$12 billion and increase two-way trade by 20%. I would remind the member opposite that this government always protects and advances Canada's interests during international negotiations and will only enter into an agreement that is in the best interests of Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. This government is still helping its buddies and is forgetting Canadians. It is completely irresponsible.

The government is getting ready to sign a trade agreement with the European Union that could have serious consequences for Canadians. According to an expert study, if Canada waives patent protection for generic drugs, as the European Union wants, there could be nearly \$3 billion in added costs for our health care system.

Why is this government determined to negotiate an agreement that jeopardizes the health of Canadians?

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has his facts wrong. Like all of Canada's trade agreements, a free trade agreement with the European Union would exclude public services such as public health, public education, and social services. Canada's trade obligations do not require us to privatize any part of our health care system. The claims to this are simply hogwash.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the facts. Canadians are worried that the Conservatives are giving their friends at the major pharmaceutical companies exclusive rights to data. Those are the facts. Manufacturers of generic drugs face long delays and added costs to get their products on the market. Is that not a double standard?

How will families, who are already struggling to pay for medications, be able to afford them under such conditions?

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member opposite that the government always protects and advances Canada's interests during international negotiations. We will only enter into an agreement that is in Canada's best interests. The benefits to Canada are clear. As I said earlier, a trade agreement with the European Union is expected to boost Canada's economy by \$12 billion and increase two-way trade by 20%. Our ambitious pro-trade plan will create jobs and economic growth for Canadians in all regions of the country.

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PENSIONS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new report by TD Bank shows that seniors in Canada are accumulating debt at a rate faster than other Canadians. With the rising cost of food, home heating, and day-to-day expenses, seniors are struggling to make ends meet. Seniors built this country and deserve to retire with dignity. We need pension reform, long-term care, and affordable home care.

When will the government finally take action and ensure a secure retirement for all seniors?

• (1435)

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's seniors have worked hard to build a better country, and our government believes they deserve a secure and dignified retirement. That is why we are providing the largest GIS increase in a quarter century to the lowest-income seniors who need it the most. Also, since 2006, the government has provided over \$2.3 billion in annual tax relief for seniors and pensioners, removed 380,000 seniors from the tax rolls completely, and introduced pension income splitting.

We have also made significant advances in affordable housing—

The Speaker: Order, please. I will have to stop the minister there.

The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[Translation]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly that is not enough. Canadians over the age of 65 are piling up debt three times faster than the average rate. Unfortunately, their savings are dwindling. While the stock market is free-falling and private pension plans are disappearing like snow on a summer's day, our seniors are on the ropes.

When will this government take concrete measures to ensure that our seniors can live in dignity?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a relevant question. I am glad that the NDP has recognized that there is more we can do to help seniors save for their retirement. That is why we have been working with our partners, the provinces, in developing a new form of a pooled registered pension plan that would provide an opportunity for almost 60% of Canadians, who now do not have a workplace pension plan, to help them save for their retirement.

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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's own report shows that it will breach the legal limit for student loans by 2013. On average, Canadians are graduating with a debt of over \$25,000, and tuition fees are still rising at four times the rate of inflation.

If the government is as serious as it says it is about securing Canada's economic future, why will it not commit to a plan to reduce tuition fees and take real action to reduce the debt that is burdening students and their families?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about ensuring students have access to post-secondary education, whether it is colleges or universities. That is why we introduced the apprentice incentive grant and the completion grant. That is why we introduced the Canada student grants program, which is helping 190,000 more students than the previous Liberal plan. That is also why we have made scholarships and bursaries tax free, and made improvements in the registered education savings plan.

Sadly, the NDP has voted against every single one of those efforts to help students.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously, the minister needs to do her homework. The reality is that tuition fees have never been higher, and by 2013, student debt will be more than \$15 billion. The government is pushing an entire generation to the brink of bankruptcy.

Will the government finally take measures to reduce the burden of student debt by developing an education transfer for the provinces?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are doing right now to help them. We have given universities and colleges billions of dollars for infrastructure so that students have a place to study and acquire the skills they will need in the labour market.

Oral Questions

We have made many efforts to help students through bursaries and tax measures. Unfortunately, the NDP has voted against every single one of these initiatives.

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AIR CANADA

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, by threatening Air Canada's flight attendants with back-to-work legislation, the government interfered in the legitimate bargaining process between employees and employer. It made the situation even worse by using an unfair practice. Instead of promoting negotiations in good faith, the Minister of Labour intervened personally. That is a dangerous precedent.

Is making threats this Conservative government's new negotiation technique?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we are very disappointed that the two parties have not been able to attain their own collective agreement. Indeed, two times the parties at the table reached a tentative agreement and twice their membership rejected it in ratification.

I approached the member opposite on the concerns I had leading up to the second ratification vote and I asked that he work with me on this, and work with the union, because it is a serious matter which can be solved if the two parties come together and come to their own collective agreement.

• (1440)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week a reprehensible crime took place here in Ottawa, but we will not have to bring in CSI Ottawa to find the guilty party. Organized labour in this country was bludgeoned by the Conservative government and the Minister of Labour's fingerprints are all over the weapon.

However, the real crime here is that, for the past six days, rather than bringing the groups together, she has driven them apart. What really needs an upgrade here is her mediation skills. What is she doing to try to bring these groups back together again?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since June 3 of this year, our government has been trying to give every facilitation available to the two parties.

I wish the member for Cape Breton—Canso would be quiet. Although he is way the heck down at the other end of the House, I can hear him interrupting me and I know that the good people of Cape Breton would not appreciate that either.

That being said, we are doing everything we possibly can to get the two parties together. They have reached an impasse and, as such, we will protect the economy and act in the best interests of Canadians.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an internal memo to DFO employees has laid out the government's plans to wind down large ocean management projects, slash funding

for science, services, aquaculture and other crucial departmental responsibilities. It seems that fishing communities are caught in the middle of the Conservative attack on facts and evidence.

Will the government stop its plan to destroy DFO and destroy Canada's fisheries and coastal communities?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course nothing could be further from the truth. Science is an important part of fisheries management, and we honour that principle and will continue in the future gaining information from science to better manage our fisheries.

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VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is about to defend the gutting of \$200 million from Veterans Affairs. I can see that he has his PMO script all ready to go. Why did Veterans Affairs spend \$3 million on backdrops—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Charlottetown.

Mr. Sean Casey: Why did Veterans Affairs spend almost \$3 million on photo ops while gutting the department by \$200 million? Why are there millions for PR stunts but nothing but cutbacks for the people who really matter, our veterans?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the member, this government and this side of the House are investing in veterans. In the last six years we have invested \$3 billion more than the current budget. This is \$500 million more for our veterans and their families. We will stay the course because the veterans are a priority for this government.

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[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, RCEN is a network of 640 environmental organizations in Canada. For the past 30 years, the network has been facilitating and supporting the work of Environment Canada. Last May, Environment Canada confirmed that funding for the network's operations would be maintained. Confirmation of the funds was to follow. After months of waiting, the network learned on Friday that its funding would be cut.

Why did the minister withdraw RCEN's funding?

[English]

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has decided not to enter into a contribution agreement with the Canadian Environmental Network this year. Responsible spending and sound management of tax dollars are important at all times. The department is moving toward a more direct use of web-based consultation, and we already have a number of web pages dedicated to public participation.

• (1445)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): What the Conservatives are doing, Mr. Speaker, is stifling dissent. They are muzzling or firing scientists and now they are eviscerating the communications network of environmental groups across Canada.

The minister claims that it is a rigorous process to manage spending, but while he was cutting half a million dollars from Canadian environmental groups, the government announced \$28 million to celebrate the War of 1812.

Well, this just in, the real war is the war the government is waging on the environment. When will the minister do the right thing and restore this funding?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our government has announced several important climate change and environmental protection initiatives. In the past year, we have announced several transportation regulations that are involved with our U.S. counterparts. I am happy to compare our record any day against the previous government, which did nothing but announce intentions.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fisheries minister is lost at sea. He has yet to say where the \$57 million in cuts will come from. Now we learn that the government is cutting the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council on both coasts. These groups work closely with fishing communities, providing much needed advice to the minister.

Why is the government gutting this department? Why is it turning its back on Canadian fishing families and our coastal communities?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we must ensure that the government spends money efficiently and effectively in achieving the expected results for all Canadians.

While the FRCC has historically served an important role, activities have been replaced by other approaches, such as the industry's participation in stock assessments and the development of integrated fisheries management plans, and through various advisory committees.

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the resource conservation councils are not the only things being cut by DFO. News has broken in recent days that further cuts to the science branch of Fisheries and Oceans are coming. The branch has already been gutted.

Oral Questions

Do the Conservatives really expect to manage our future fishery without any science based planning and with no input from the fishermen who work our seas?

John Crosbie once asked, "Who hears the fishes when they cry?". Well, who hears our fishermen when they speak?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has made tremendous investments in science since 2006, including \$30 million to upgrade 16 laboratories and sites across the country, and \$36 million to construct 3 new science vessels.

The government has focused on marine science. We have invested \$14 million to complete mapping and data collecting in the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans for Canada's submission to the United Nations convention.

We have done a lot for science—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brant.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is small business week, a great opportunity and time to highlight the fact that our small business owners are the economic motors and backbone of our economy. Small businesses create jobs and economic growth right across this country.

Would the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism tell the House what our government is doing to help them continue to invest, innovate and grow?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is the best country in the world in which to do business. Do members know why? It is because we lowered taxes for all businesses. We will continue to do that because we know that when they have money in their pockets they can create jobs and wealth in this country.

As the chair of the red tape reduction commission, I am pleased to say that we will work on ensuring that we have less red tape for Canadian entrepreneurs.

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G8 SUMMIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is now 130 days since the Muskoka minister took a dive on accountability of the G8 slush fund.

We now know that Huntsville was green-lighted to blow \$30 million in federal money without tenders. We now know that the Muskoka minister got a job for his buddy. We now know that his campaign manager-turned-lobbyist hit up the federal government for millions in grants.

The Auditor General said that the rules were broken and that it was Parliament's job to investigate.

Oral Questions

Will the government commit to a full parliamentary investigation to find out how \$50 million was diverted into a personal slush fund for the rogue Muskoka minister?

• (1450)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will not come as any surprise to that member or to the House that I categorically reject the premise of the member's question.

What we do know is that I approved 32 public infrastructure projects to support municipal, provincial and airport authority infrastructure in that region.

As the Auditor General has reported, every dollar was accounted for in terms of the municipalities that incurred these infrastructure expenses. The Auditor General has come forward and made reports on how we can be even more accountable and more transparent to Parliament. We have completely accepted her good recommendations.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board used a \$50 million slush fund to award untendered contracts, give jobs to his friends and build an Olympic-sized arena, gazebos, a media centre that was never used and a campus that students do not go to. Last week, he described himself as the government's chief operating officer. First, that is very telling. Second, now we know why the President of the Treasury Board is not rising: his title has changed.

Now, can the government's chief operating officer stand up and explain himself?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all 32 of these projects had an individual contribution agreement with the municipalities or independent orders of government for which this government has always shown considerable respect. Each contribution agreement requires and sets out expectations and these expectations are expected to be followed.

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[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we suspect that the government's chief operating officer likely followed the lead of the Associate Minister of National Defence. His department just spent—or wasted—\$375,000 setting up new offices for assistant deputy ministers. That is the price of a new house for a Canadian family.

While so many people are having trouble making ends meet, how can the minister explain excesses such as planned helicopter rides, the use of the Challenger and renovations that are costing taxpayers an arm and a leg?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable that any spending not be monitored, well coordinated and justified. In this particular case, the work that has been done was to relocate a number of new employees

within the ministry. That coordination needed to be done to facilitate new members to the Department of National Defence, a new work area and new facilities.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the government's recent track record on defence procurement.

Costs for Chinook helicopters have gone up by 70%, wasting billions. Untendered contracts for the F-35, costing Canadians untold billions, carry no guarantee of Canadian jobs. Instead of dealing with these issues, the defence department decided to blow \$375,000 on office renovations.

Does the Associate Minister of National Defence really think that these problems will be solved by sprucing up the department's offices?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Associate Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about all spending of tax dollars, the expenditure of this particular office renovation no less. We treat every dollar entrusted to us by taxpayers with the utmost care and respect.

The Department of National Defence recently refitted the offices of the deputy minister and associate deputy minister and their staff to include them in a single office work area.

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is railroading wheat and barley farmers who support maintaining their own single desk marketing and sales arm under the Canadian Wheat Board.

The government is tying farmers to the track by removing their clout and ability to stand up to grain companies and unfair rail prices and transportation costs. It is removing their ability to be price setters and leaving them forced to accept the lowest price possible.

Why will the so-called law and order government, intent on breaking the law, not follow the law set out in the Canadian Wheat Board Act and hold its own plebiscite before it introduces legislation to kill the single desk system?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an exciting day for western Canadian farmers to finally hear that legislation will be presented that will give them freedom. I will read what one of the farmers had to say about that. He said, "I have never been more optimistic than I am now to be a grain farmer in western Canada. These are exciting times. I am looking forward to the future and this legislation is well timed. We have been waiting a long time for it, so thank you".

That is from a western Canadian farmer.

Oral Questions

•(1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government wants to do away with the Canadian Wheat Board. Will its next victim be supply management? We all know that the government's chief negotiator for the free trade agreement with Europe said in committee that everything is on the table during the negotiations.

How can we be assured that this government will not yield to pressure from the Europeans on the issue of supply management?

[English]

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the minister appeared before the trade committee, he reassured the committee once again that supply management was protected by this government and would continue to be protected by this government.

* * *

*[Translation]***RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the expert panel's report on research and development confirms that the government's innovation strategy is a failure. This government's lack of long-term vision is costing us jobs and reducing our ability to compete internationally. This government must do more to be a leader in innovation, because Canada is only marking time.

When will this government finally help the businesses and researchers that innovate and move Canada forward?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out that we did receive a panel report today. I want to thank the panel for its hard work and assure the House that I will be considering all the recommendations in that report.

We do want to celebrate with our businesses this week. We want our businesses to do research, develop new products and new markets. What that would mean for Canadians is jobs, better jobs, higher-paying jobs and a higher standard of living, and that is what we want.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is nice to know that the minister knows there is a report, but it would help for him to read it because it would show him that the government's strategy has failed. As countries around the world move forward with new innovations, Canada keeps falling behind.

When will the government stop subsidizing corporate research and start promoting direct investment in R and D like leading countries do? When will it start listening to New Democrats and begin moving Canada forward by adequately funding basic scientific research so our scientists can get results for Canadians?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I assure the member that if he

looks at the record of this government, he will see broad and extensive research funding for basic research all the way through to applied research. Indeed, this government has some of the most generous programs to encourage businesses to do their own research. We are expecting businesses to do a little more. We want to ensure they have the tools.

I will read the report and get back to the House very shortly.

* * *

NATIONAL PARKS

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past six years, our government has taken action that will result in an increase of Parks Canada's network of national parks and national marine conservation areas by 50%. This morning the Minister of the Environment was in Nova Scotia to expand on this commitment to create new protected areas.

Could the parliamentary secretary update Canadians on what took place in Halifax today?

Ms. Michelle Rempel (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this morning in Halifax, the Minister of the Environment, along with the Minister of National Defence, signed an agreement to make Sable Island a national park reserve.

Today's memorable agreement will ensure that this iconic and valued Canadian landscape, famed for its wild horses, shipwrecks and one of the largest dune systems in eastern Canada, will be protected as a national park reserve for the benefit of Canadians now and in the future. This is yet another example of how our government is taking concrete action to protect our country's natural heritage.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans cannot continue to speak out of both sides of his mouth and expect to retain his credibility. The government cannot on one hand shut down the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council and at the same time say it supports science.

First it puts the lives of fishers at risk by recklessly closing the Maritime Rescue Sub-Centre in St. John's and now it wants to take the fishers out of the industry altogether by cutting the guts out of the department.

When will the government live up to its responsibility and support the fishing industry instead of trying to destroy it?

Oral Questions

● (1500)

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, the FRCC has historically served an important role, but activities have been replaced by other approaches. Fisheries and Oceans Canada has built into its operations other ways to gather input from fish harvesters, including industry participation, stock assessments, development of an integrated fisheries management plan and through advisory committees.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are at it again. The agriculture minister has talked about blowing the candles out on the Wheat Board. The Prime Minister has talked about a train barreling down on the Wheat Board. We have not seen this kind of arrogance since the Mulroney Tories, whose legacy was to be left with two seats, neither of them in western Canada.

When will the Prime Minister cut the arrogance, stop taking western Canadians for granted and save the Canadian Wheat Board?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is proud to represent western Canadian farmers. We remain committed to providing them with the same opportunities and the same freedoms that other farmers have across the country. We know full well that this is going to increase investment. We have already heard that. We heard an announcement last week in Regina that someone was going to spend \$50 million on a pasta plant. It will be the first pasta plant in western Canada in decades. However, people need a free market in order to do that. We know that it will encourage innovation. We know that it is going to create value-added jobs and it is going to create a stronger economy in western Canada.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today kicks off the ninth round of negotiations toward an ambitious Canada-EU free trade agreement. We are trying to work with all parties in the House to create jobs and grow our economy. However, the NDP support for special interest groups that oppose free and open trade shows that the NDP does not represent ordinary Canadians who stand to benefit immensely from a free trade agreement with the European Union.

I ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade to explain how this agreement would benefit Canadian workers and their families.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kelowna—Lake Country for his support for our job-creating, pro-trade plan.

Today's events prove once again that the NDP and its special interest groups are ideologically opposed to free trade and will continue to invent any reason to oppose free and open trade.

We welcome the ninth round of negotiations as the benefits for Canadian workers and businesses through a free trade agreement with the EU are expected to be enormous: a 20% boost in bilateral trade, a \$12 billion annual boost to Canada's economy and almost 80,000 new jobs created.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, now we know that the environment minister is in Halifax, could the government tell us if he is having discussions with the environment minister of Nova Scotia regarding the 233-metre vessel which is stuck off Scatarie Island? It will cost anywhere from \$20 million to \$24 million, and the federal government has told the province that it will not be responsible for, or even assist in, the removal of that vessel.

Could the environment minister or the parliamentary secretary please tell the House what the government will do to assist the province of Nova Scotia in removing the MV *Miner* from Scatarie Island?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Transport Canada's role is to ensure that Canada's waterways provide safe navigation and are free of ship-source pollution. We know that is a provincial jurisdiction, but we will continue to work with the province to determine that there is no polluting of the marine environment and that it is not a hazard to navigation for the moment.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today the Prime Minister announced the appointment of two new justices to the Supreme Court. And what do we know about them? One of the two judges does not understand French even though he will have to rule on disputes involving laws written in French.

Can the government confirm that the selection committee set up in August has unanimously chosen a judge who does not understand French and that the government approves this choice?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[English]

The Supreme Court of Canada is the pinnacle of our judicial system and we will continue to make appointments to that body on the basis of legal excellence and merit.

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a group of boys and girls, the Children's Miracle Network 2011 Champions from across the country.

These youngsters have overcome life-threatening illnesses or injuries and have been chosen to represent the millions of children who are treated annually by the Children's Miracle Network hospitals and foundations across North America.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During the course of question period, while I sat here quietly waiting for a response to a question that I posed for the Minister of Labour, for which obviously I did not get an answer, she made reference to being heckled from this corner of the chamber and in particular from this member. I can assure you, and you have access to the transcript in the *Hansard*, that there was no such noise that came out of this corner or this member. I think the minister would want to stand and correct that.

On another aspect, she did reference the fact that the constituents of Cape Breton expected a great deal from their members. I would agree with her, and that is why there are two Liberals back in the chamber.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on a related point of order, I am glad my colleague for Cape Breton—Canso stood and made reference to his question. In his question to the Minister of Labour earlier today, the preamble seemed to suggest that the minister was guilty of criminal conduct.

I know the member for Cape Breton—Canso and I know him to be a person of good character. I am sure he would want to do the right thing, the parliamentary thing, and stand up, withdraw his remarks unreservedly and apologize to the minister. Failing that, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to review the comments made earlier in his preamble, judge accordingly and rule accordingly.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with you. This is not a proper point of order. However, I have something in common with the Minister of Labour and the member for Cape Breton—Canso. We all share Cape Breton roots.

As neither of them is a member of my party, and as both of them are people I hold in high regard, I would like the Minister of Labour to know that the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, unless this jokester has learned how to project his voice as a ventriloquist, was as quiet as the grave as he awaited the minister's answer.

The Speaker: I appreciate the interventions from the Cape Breton caucus, but I think we will move on.

Routine Proceedings

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. Comartin, member of the electoral district of Windsor—Tecumseh, has been appointed a member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of Mr. Mulcair, member for the electoral district of Outremont, for the purposes and under the provisions of section 50 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

* * *

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to subsection 26(2) of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Act I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the annual report of the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety for 2010-11.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA AND ITS ASSOCIATES ACT

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act.

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

* * *

• (1510)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of committees of this House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the fifth report later this day.

* * *

UKRAINE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe you will find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion.

I move:

That a take-note debate on the subject of concerns regarding the ongoing erosion of democracy in Ukraine, including most recently the politically motivated and arbitrary prosecution and conviction of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko by Ukrainian authorities, take place, pursuant to Standing Order 53.1, on Tuesday, October 18, 2011.

Routine Proceedings

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

EGYPTIAN COPTIC CHRISTIANS

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Coptic Christians in Egypt face persecution and discrimination. As the Arab spring unfolded in Egypt with people from all religious faiths joining together to overthrow the tyranny of Hosni Mubarak, the future looked brighter for Christians in Egypt. Unfortunately, under the new military government in Egypt, religious extremists seem to be able to carry out attacks on Christians and their churches with impunity. In the most recent attack, a Coptic church in upper Egypt was burned by religious extremists. When there was no reaction from the authorities, frustrated Copts gathered in Cairo's Maspero neighbourhood to protest the partial demolition of the church in Aswan province and call for the removal of the province's governor for failing to protect the church.

Army units fired on demonstrators with a resulting death toll of 25, most of whom were Copts, and scores were injured. Videos showed an armoured personnel carrier running people down. There could not have been a more callous expression of disregard by the Egyptian armed forces for the lives of Egyptian Christians.

Therefore, I am seeking unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That this House condemn the attacks on Egyptian Coptic Christians and their institutions; call on the Egyptian Government to ensure that the perpetrators of the attacks be brought to justice and bear the full weight of the law; and, ask the United Nations Human Rights Commission to investigate the plight of Egyptian Coptic Christians and issue a report on its findings.

The Speaker: I will recognize the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs before I see if there is consent for this.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's concern for this. Those of us in the government, joined by the New Democratic Party, are concerned that the resolution the member presented is not strong enough and would like to strengthen it. My colleague's motion should be amended to read as follows:

That this House stand in solidarity with those religious minorities around the world and strongly condemn the vicious attacks on Egyptian Coptic Christians and their institutions; call on the Egyptian Government to ensure that the perpetrators of the attacks be brought to justice and bear the full weight of the law; and, ask the United Nations Human Rights Commission to conduct an open and transparent investigation into the plight of Egyptian Coptic Christians and issue a public report on its findings.

The Speaker: Would the member for Scarborough—Agincourt like me to seek the consent of the House for his motion or will he withdraw his request in lieu of what the minister has just proposed?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is amending my motion and the amendment is fully acceptable. I

would like to point out that this motion is seconded by my colleague from York West.

The Speaker: I am going to take it that the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is withdrawing his motion.

An hon. member: No.

The Speaker: Given that there seems to be agreement for this, does the House give its unanimous consent for the motion by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt as amended by the Minister of Foreign Affairs? Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

● (1515)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier today be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: 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)

* * *

PETITIONS

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by literally thousands of Canadians from all across Canada. They call upon Parliament to take note that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer the world has ever known. They further point out that Canada continues to be one of the largest producers and exporters of asbestos in the world. The petitioners also want Parliament to take note that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial causes combined and yet Canada spends millions of dollars subsidizing the asbestos industry and blocking international efforts to curb its use.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to ban asbestos in all its forms and institute a just transition program for asbestos workers and the communities in which they live. They also call upon government to end all subsidies of asbestos, both in Canada and abroad, and finally, to stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in light of today's question period, this petition is germane to the debate concerning fisheries and oceans.

The petitioners are asking for the dismantling of a large part of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. More important, the petitioners are calling for an inquiry into how the department goes about its business on the east, west and north coasts and inland waters.

The petitioners request a public inquiry into all aspects of DFO. They request that the current structure be dismantled and to put in place a model that takes into account fisheries science, with an emphasis on serving the fishermen who make a living from the industry.

In light of that situation, we recently heard that the government is coming forth with a model that does fisheries science management in a three-to five-year period, which the petitioners believe will be detrimental to science information as presented to the fishing industry in this country.

I hope the House will look upon this petition favourably.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday over 20,000 people were in attendance in Melancthon Township in my riding to oppose a mega-quarry in Melancthon Township in Dufferin County. I received this petition from many of those people who are concerned that this mega-quarry will put at risk the drinking water of over one million Canadians.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to conduct an environmental assessment under the authority of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act on the proposed Highland Companies' mega-quarry development.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands responded to my question by citing one person who favoured the end of the Canadian Wheat Board, I rise to submit a petition signed by countless western Canadian grain and barley farmers who are concerned with the government's ideological plan to kill the Canadian Wheat Board without first holding a plebiscite of the board's membership as it is required to do by section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

Western Canadian farmers' livelihoods are at risk should they lose the clout of the Canadian Wheat Board to set the best price for their grain, negotiate fair treatment from the railways, and lower transportation costs among the many services it provides.

Routine Proceedings

The petitioners demand that the Minister of Agriculture honour their wishes as expressed democratically through a plebiscite they held this past summer.

• (1520)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition regarding the atmospheric ozone layer, which is critical to life on earth through its regulation of ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and therefore has a treaty obligation to monitor changes in climate, including atmospheric ozone. Models predict that climate change will alter the ozone layer over Canada, possibly aggravating health issues associated with vitamin D deficiency. Sustained measurements are needed to test model predictions and provide information about problems.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of the Environment to develop a plan to ensure the integrity of the ozone monitoring program and commission a report to assess the adequacy of Canadian contributions to the global observing system for climate in support of the United Nations framework convention.

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition with regard to the Canadian Wheat Board. The petition is signed by a number of prairie farmers who believe it is absolutely critical that the government reverse its decision in regard to getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Earlier today we heard the government refer to one letter saying that individual wants to get rid of the Wheat Board. We all know there are tens of thousands of prairie wheat farmers and barley farmers who want the government to retain the Wheat Board. It is with pleasure that I present this petition today.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 124, 128 and 130.

[Text]

Question No. 124—**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:**

With regard to designating Rouge Park as an urban national park: (a) what is a timeline of actions that will be taken; (b) when is the deadline to designate Rouge Park as an urban national park; (c) how much money will be spent on designating Rouge Park as an urban national park; (d) how much money will be allocated for maintenance and restoration of the ecological integrity of the park; (e) who are the regional, federal, municipal, Aboriginal and community stakeholders involved; and (f) will designating Rouge Park an urban national park create any new jobs and, if so, how many jobs will be created?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), consistent with the recent Speech from the Throne, Parks Canada will work with provincial, regional, municipal, aboriginal and community stakeholders toward the establishment of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley. As there are no conservation models in Canada that respond to the Rouge Valley's unique requirements, a new park establishment strategy and process is currently being developed by Parks Canada.

Parks Canada intends to pursue an aggressive park establishment schedule. However, it would be premature and inappropriate for Parks Canada to unilaterally determine the timeline of actions to be taken. At present, there is a high priority on building relationships and providing meaningful opportunities for public consultation. This will be a vital and integral part of the negotiations and establishment process for Rouge Valley national urban park.

Parks Canada has initiated a dialogue with the Province of Ontario and other key stakeholders to reach a shared understanding for a collaborative process to create Rouge Valley national urban park. Public consultations will be undertaken to determine priorities and objectives, and ensure broad-based public support. Lands to be included within the park boundary will have to be confirmed in collaboration with the Province of Ontario, Transport Canada and other interested parties. Only then will negotiations take place towards an agreement that will identify the key park management concepts. These park management concepts will, in turn, become part of the legislation to formally create the park.

Although there is a sequence for establishing new protected areas, each situation is different and must reflect the area's unique circumstances. A detailed work plan is being developed in collaboration with the interested parties.

With regard to (b), as with all park establishment processes, Parks Canada does not set a deadline for designation. As stated previously, timelines and circumstances vary, and provisions must be made for the meaningful and respectful involvement of all interested parties.

With regard to (c), Parks Canada will allocate the necessary funding to undertake this initiative. Consistent with other national park establishment processes across the country, Parks Canada will fund required activities such as studies, surveying and public consultation processes. However, there are no conservation models in Canada that respond to the Rouge Valley's unique requirements; consequently, there are no comparable projects that can serve as benchmarks to assess funding requirements. At this time, it is premature to estimate a park establishment budget.

With regard to (d), as no comparable project exists, Rouge Valley national urban park will require a new heritage conservation instrument and an innovative management approach to respond to its unique urban context and requirements. Financial needs and allocations will be identified as this new concept becomes more fully developed. Priorities, objectives and performance indicators will be developed, guided by consultations with a broad range of stakeholders. Resources will be allocated to ensure the integrated delivery of Parks Canada's mandate. This includes the conservation of the park's rich natural and cultural heritage resources, opportunities for outreach and a range of visitor experience opportunities.

The specific attributes of this urban context will also require consideration of mixed land uses, including the promotion of sustainable agriculture.

With regard to (e), stakeholders that have an interest in this initiative will be consulted. Many stakeholders are already involved or well aware of this initiative, but it is expected that more will wish to participate as the project unfolds. Stakeholders already involved or that will become involved include the Province of Ontario; aboriginal communities; Rouge Park Alliance; Toronto Region Conservation Authority, TRCA; City of Toronto; Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville; Town of Richmond Hill; City of Pickering; Town of Markham; Region of York; Region of Durham; Toronto Zoo; University of Toronto—Scarborough; Waterfront Regeneration Trust Corporation; Ontario Nature; Friends of the Rouge Watershed; Save the Rouge Valley System and the farming community.

With regard to (f), the creation of a national urban park in the Rouge Valley will create new jobs. However, it is impossible at this point in time to specify how many. The specific number of jobs will be reflective of the park management concepts, and the priorities and objectives determined through public consultations. As is the case with other heritage places administered by Parks Canada, resources will be allocated to heritage resource protection, learning programs and visitor experience opportunities.

Question No. 128—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to the Gander Weather Office: (a) what, if any, changes in staffing and mandate or responsibilities have been made within the Gander Weather Office since 2006; and (b) how many employees currently work at the Gander Weather Office and are they responsible for public, marine or aviation forecasting?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), there have been no changes to staffing levels, mandate or responsibilities of the Newfoundland and Labrador weather office since being opened in January 2007 following the spring 2006 Prime Minister's announcement.

With regard to (b), there are 16 meteorologists in Gander working in the weather office along, with two computer science staff supporting their information technology required for the centre. The mandate and responsibilities have remained focused on the public and marine forecast and warning programs along with the provision of 1-900 consultation services for the province.

Question No. 130—Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:

With regard to applications under the Investment Canada Act, for the period January 1, 2006 to May 31, 2011: (a) how many applications were approved by the government; (b) how many applications were rejected; (c) what measures are in place to ensure that investors live up to undertakings they made to gain approval under the Act; and (d) how many times has the government withdrawn approval as a result of an investor's failure to live up to those undertakings?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), over the period from January 1, 2006, to May 31, 2011, 170 applications were approved by the Minister of Industry.

With regard to (b), over the period from January 1, 2006, to May 31, 2011, one application was disallowed by the Minister of Industry: Alliant Techsystems, Inc.'s proposed acquisition of MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates Ltd.

With regard to (c), under section 25 of the Investment Canada Act investors are required to submit information to the Director of Investments in order to permit the director to determine whether the investment has been implemented in accordance with the plans and undertakings provided in relation to the investment. An evaluation of an investor's performance in implementing its plans and undertakings is ordinarily performed at about 18 months, and more frequently as required, after the implementation of the investment.

The Guidelines—Administrative Procedures, issued by the Minister of Industry under the act, outline the policies that apply to the monitoring of investments that have been reviewed and implemented. If the minister believes that a non-Canadian investor has failed to comply with a written undertaking, the minister may seek replacement undertakings under section 39.1 or pursue enforcement measures under sections 39 and 40.

The act provides enforcement measures which the minister may initiate where he/she believes that an investor has not complied with its obligations under the act. Under section 39, the minister may send a demand letter to the investor requiring it to cease any contravention, remedy a default, show cause why there is no contravention of the act or, in the case of undertakings, justify non-compliance. If an investor fails to comply with a demand letter under section 39, an application may be made on behalf of the minister for an order from a superior court under section 40 of the act. The court may order any measure, including: divestiture, compliance with undertakings, a penalty of \$10,000 for each day of contravention, revocation of voting rights and disposition of voting interests.

With regard to (d), the act does not provide for the withdrawal of approval. The enforcement provisions in the act are described in the response to question (c) above.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 114, 116, 117, 118, 125, and 131 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 114—**Ms. Françoise Boivin:**

With regard to grants and contributions under \$25,000 granted by Status of Women Canada since January 1, 2008, what are: (a) the names of the recipients; (b)

the amounts of the grant or contribution; (c) the dates of the grant or contribution; (d) the dates of length of funding; and (e) the descriptions of the purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 116—**Ms. Françoise Boivin:**

With regard to Status of Women Canada: (a) what have been the departmental budgets annually for the fiscal years 2004 to 2011, separated by program and full-time equivalents; (b) what is the planned spending for the current fiscal year through 2015-2016; (c) how many full-time and part-time employees were lost to attrition from 2004 to 2011; (d) how many full-time or part-time employees were laid-off from 2004 to 2011; (e) how many full-time or part-time employees have been transferred from the organisation from 2004 to 2011; (f) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired from 2004 to 2011; and (g) what is the department's projected attrition rate over the next five years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 117—**Mr. Robert Chisholm:**

With regard to the implementation of the Community Development program at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency: (a) when does the agency plan to introduce the performance-based funding model to support Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs); (b) what consultations have already taken place concerning the launch of the performance-based funding model and how much money will be allocated to launch the performance-based funding model to support REDOs; (c) how much money has been allocated to provide core funding for REDOs since 2006 to date, (i) by province, (ii) by county; and (d) how much money has been allocated to provide project funding for each REDO in Atlantic Canada since 2006 to date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 118—**Mr. Robert Chisholm :**

With regard to the implementation of the Community Development program at the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency: (a) how much funding was allocated to support 41 Community Business Development Corporations (CBDCs), from 2006 to date; (b) what changes will take place in the funding of CBDCs, effective April 1, 2011; and (c) how many projects were supported by each of 41 CBDCs, from 2006 to date?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 125—**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:**

With regard to Canada Student Loans and Grants: (a) how many Grants for Students from Low Income Families were awarded in each fiscal year, from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011; (b) how many Grants for Students from Middle Income Families were awarded in each fiscal year, from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011; (c) what measurement does HRSDC use to determine low income threshold; (d) what measurement does HRSDC use to determine middle income threshold; (e) what are the ethnoracial demographics of recipients of Grants for Students from Low Income Families; (f) what are the ethnoracial demographics of recipients of Grants for Students from Middle Income Families; (g) of the students who apply for Canada Student Loans and Grants, how many do not qualify for Grants for Students from Low Income Families; (h) of the students who apply for Canada Student Loans and Grants, how many do not qualify for Grants for Students from Middle Income Families; (i) what are the ethnoracial demographics of applicants who do not qualify for Grants for Students from Low Income Families; and (j) what are the ethnoracial demographics of applicants who do not qualify for Grants for Students from Middle Income Families?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 131—**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:**

With regard to information supplied in 2009 by the Government of France to the Government of Canada regarding secret bank accounts in Switzerland: (a) how many Canadians have been identified as having undeclared bank accounts outside of Canada; (b) what action, if any, has been taken by Canadian officials to recover unpaid taxes associated with Canadians' undeclared bank accounts outside of Canada; (c) how many identified Canadians have availed themselves of the Voluntary Disclosure Program (VDP) with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); (d) how many identified Canadian accounts have settled with the CRA; (e) how much money has the CRA assessed as a result of investigating these secret banks accounts outside of Canada (i) in unpaid taxes, (ii) in interest, (iii) in fines, (iv) in penalties; (f) how much of the money in (e) has been collected; (g) how many of the cases are under appeal; (h) how many cases remain open; (i) how many more cases does the CRA anticipate will be opened; (j) how many cases have been closed (i.e. the full amount of taxes, interest, fines and penalties have been collected); (k) how much money was collected from the cases in (j) (i) in unpaid taxes, (ii) in interest, (iii) in fines, (iv) in penalties; (l) how many account holders in the cases have made partial payment; (m) of the partial payments made (i) what was the largest amount, (ii) what was the smallest amount, (iii) what was the average amount; (n) of the amounts of money contained in the secret accounts declared or discovered by CRA (i) what was the largest amount, (ii) what was the smallest amount, (iii) what was the average amount; (o) on what date did the CRA become aware of the names of Canadians with accounts outside of Canada that were obtained by the Government of France; (p) on what dates did CRA begin its investigations; (q) on what date did the first audit of an individual account holder begin; (r) how many of the identified Canadians with bank accounts outside of Canada (i) have had their account(s) audited, (ii) have had their account(s) reassessed, (iii) have been the subject of a compliance action; (s) how many of the identified Canadians with bank accounts outside of Canada (i) have not had their account(s) audited, (ii) have not had their account(s) reassessed, (iii) have not been the subject of a compliance action; (t) how many tax evasion charges were laid; and (u) has the Government of Canada made any changes to the VDP in the past 24 months?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, finally, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House to request an emergency debate on the government's refusal to hold a plebiscite pursuant to section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act before introducing legislation to kill the single desk marketing system.

Section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act clearly states:

The Minister shall not cause to be introduced in Parliament a bill that would exclude any kind, type, class or grade of wheat or barley, or wheat or barley produced in any area in Canada...unless...(a) the Minister has consulted with the board about the exclusion or extension; and, (b) the producers of the grain have voted in favour of the exclusion or extension, the voting process having been determined by the Minister.

Despite his ideological wanderings or rhetorical dissensions, the minister must let Wheat Board members decide if their sales and marketing arm should be allowed to continue to operate in its current form and protect farmers by selling the grains the board currently sells, namely wheat and barley, at the best price possible for its membership, or if it should be torn away from them without any thought to what will fill the void the government intends to create.

Rather than giving Canadian farmers the right to choose, he is telling them that while this may affect their livelihoods and small-town economies, their voice does not matter. He is telling them that he will not follow the act he is responsible for governing and that he will not protect western Canadian farmers or their rights under the act.

The institution of the Canadian Wheat Board is considered so sacrosanct as to have legislation created, such as that which exists in section 47.1 of the act, to prevent the very abuse that is being perpetrated by the minister.

Should you not allow the debate to go ahead, Mr. Speaker, any opportunity for western Canadian grain farmers to determine their own future with the single desk system will be foreclosed. You and you alone now stand between the law being followed and the law being violated.

Farmers feed Canadian families. They have earned the right to choose, and the government has not earned any sort of mandate to disenfranchise a single western Canadian grain producer by circumventing the Canada Wheat Board Act.

Given the reluctance of the minister to honour this particular provision of the act, the Canadian Wheat Board mailed 68,000 ballots to wheat and barley farmers across the prairies this summer. With a 56% participation rate, a majority of both wheat and barley farmers voted to maintain the single desk under the Canadian Wheat Board.

In 2005, an economic impact analysis conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers revealed the positive economic impact for Winnipeg, for western Canadian farmers and for Canadians as a whole from the continued existence of the single desk marketing system.

It is not up to me, to any member of Parliament or to the minister to decide if the board should maintain its mandate or if it should be dissolved. It is up to farmers. I understand why western Canadian farmers would want it to continue to exist. What I do not understand is why the minister would want to dismantle an organization that is of major economic benefit to western Canada without asking them their opinion, as the law requires him to do.

The notion of self-determination has been codified in other pieces of legislation in this country, whether it is aboriginal rights or the rights of employees to negotiate unfettered. When these rights are codified, it is done for very particular reasons. When granted, these rights are a clear statement by a government that these rights—the rights of farmers, of workers or of aboriginal Canadians—cannot be trodden upon without the whole engagement or consent of everyone involved.

This does not just protect the single desk system, but the right of Canadian farmers to determine their own destiny and their own livelihood.

The Prime Minister made it clear in his speech after the May 2 election that his government would be governing for all Canadians, not just Conservatives. Even Conservative farmers have approached me, concerned with the minister's Ahab-like pursuit of the destruction of the single desk.

Government Orders

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, for the reasons set out to you in my letter this morning, I request that you find that this issue meets the requirements for an emergency debate set out in subsections 52(5) and 52(6) of the Standing Orders, and that this House do now adjourn to address the requirement under section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act for the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board to hold a plebiscite before taking any action to change the current formation of the single desk marketing and sales system.

• (1525)

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for his intervention.

I do not think that this meets the test of the Standing Orders, especially given the fact that there will be ample opportunity to raise issues that he has.

If and when there is a bill presented to the House, there will be ample opportunity to discuss these issues then, so therefore I do not think it meets the requirements to have an emergency debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

KEEPING CANADA'S ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWING ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the 2011 budget as updated on June 6, 2011 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Canada's labour minister, I am very pleased today to take part in this important debate on keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. This act focuses on strengthening Canada's economic recovery by improving the ability of businesses and entrepreneurs to respond to emerging growth opportunities and to create jobs.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I served your office with a request for an emergency debate on the Coptic situation and I am sure you will acknowledge that.

I want to thank everybody today on both sides of the House for agreeing on a motion. I hope it is okay that I withdraw that request and want to thank everybody in the House who co-operated. We reached consensus on a motion that is affecting the plight of the Coptics and other ethnic minorities in Egypt and religious minorities around the world, and I want to thank everyone for that.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt for indicating that to the House.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: As always, this government is concerned about and is focused on what matters the most to hard-working Canadians: jobs and economic growth. The bill we are debating today includes key elements of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that worked to protect Canada from the worst of the global recession.

We have had seven straight quarters of economic growth, and since July 2009 nearly 650,000 net new jobs have been created. More importantly, over 80% of them have been full-time positions. This is great news for Canadians. We are definitely on the right track.

Canada's fiscal position is among the strongest in the world's top-performing advanced economies. However, we must be mindful that the global recovery remains fragile and that there are still too many Canadians looking for work. Too many hard-working Canadians have been affected by the economic downturn, and that is why the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act proposes such a large number of strong initiatives to promote job creation, to provide support for communities, to help families invest in education and training and to respect the taxpayer.

As the Minister of Labour, I would like to turn my attention to one of the aspects of this legislation that provides support particularly to workers who have been affected by an employer bankruptcy or receivership. In our economic action plan, we established the wage earner protection program, or WEPP, to help workers manage one of the toughest challenges that they ever face: going without hard-earned pay because an employer has gone bankrupt. As a direct result of this very important program, eligible workers who lose their jobs and who were owed money in the six months prior to their employer going bankrupt or being subject to receivership can now be compensated for unpaid wages and for vacation pay. This compensation also includes severance and termination pay, with workers receiving up to a maximum of \$3,400.

The WEPP has proven itself as an important program and has provided assistance to a great many people who have been hard hit through losing their jobs out of no fault of their own. Since July 2008, over 40,000 WEPP claimants have received \$89.5 million in payments.

The keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act would provide additional good news workers caught in a bankruptcy or a receivership situation. We are proposing an expansion of the WEPP to cover employees who lose their jobs when their employer's attempt at restructuring takes longer than six months but is subsequently unsuccessful. This enhanced protection would provide an estimated \$4.5 million annually to support workers affected by the bankruptcy of their employer. It would ensure that employees are not unfairly penalized if their employer tries to restructure in the face of financial difficulties, but fails.

Government Orders

The keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act also announces the government's proposal to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canada Labour Code to eliminate mandatory retirement in the federal jurisdiction. We are taking this step because we believe that forcing an employee to retire by reason of age is a form of discrimination and a form of unequal treatment. Canadians are living longer and are more active than ever before, so people should be able to choose when they retire, unless there are compelling reasons, such as health or safety reasons, that prohibit them from choosing themselves.

This piece of legislation strikes the right balance between fiscal prudence and targeted investment, and it is no surprise that there have been very many favourable reactions to proposals from the next phase of Canada's economic action plan. As a few examples, Gary Corbett, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada welcomed this elimination of a mandatory retirement age and the role it will play in mitigating the brain drain of experienced workers.

• (1530)

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation's national research director, Derek Fildebrandt, also commended the elimination of mandatory retirement and said:

People have a right to determine how long they work, and this is a major step towards eliminating poverty for seniors...

These are only a few among so many favourable statements that have been made in support of the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

I will take a moment to describe the labour program's role in supporting economic recovery and of course in building a fair and prosperous society.

I am a big proponent that safe and productive workplaces contribute to our economic prosperity. One of the key roles of the labour program is to support occupational health and safety by carrying out workplace investigations of work-related injuries and occupational diseases. We determine causes as well as strategies for prevention and resolution because Canadians should be able to return home safe and secure after a day or night at work.

I have held national round tables across Canada to examine occupational health and safety in the workplace, some of which focused on mental health issues. Our goal was to learn from the range of stakeholders, including employers, employees, other levels of government and academics about current and emerging occupational health and safety issues and how well these are being addressed by the federal government.

Mental health in the workplace, violence prevention, and in Iqaluit northern issues on health and safety, were discussed at the round tables.

Stakeholders across the board believe that respectful workplaces and emotional intelligence need to be promoted as core values for a productive and sustainable society and economy. The National Round Tables on Occupational Health and Safety underscored the importance of our program's focus on healthy and safe workplaces.

I have also met with stakeholders to discuss important issues, such as fair wages, hours of work and women in the workforce. These discussions provided valuable knowledge and insight on issues affecting today's workplaces. They also gave me a better understanding of the challenges that employers and employees sometimes have to face.

The labour program works to ensure that employment standards are respected as well, especially regarding pay, dismissal, leave and hours of work, because employment standards set the foundation for creating productive workplaces.

These standards help protect the rights of workers. They help foster cooperative relationships between employers and workers and provide the necessary conditions for a productive economy.

I am pleased that we have successfully conciliated about 1,000 unjust dismissal complaints, partly through the use of alternative dispute resolution techniques, and have recovered \$4.6 million in unpaid wages for workers in the federal sector.

As well, we continue to promote employment equity and related initiatives. Our goal is to foster inclusive and fair workplaces that take advantage of the skills and talents of all Canadians.

Finally, we continue to work in collaboration with both provincial and territorial governments, as well as our international partners, to identify and craft policies that can best support the development of enterprises and workforces, leading to strong and sustained growth.

I will also take time to talk about my constituents in Halton and how the initiatives proposed in this bill benefit them in their everyday lives.

There are a number of small businesses in the riding of Halton and a number of small business owners. Just as the CFIB has applauded the government's position and provision of a temporary hiring credit for small businesses, I know that businesses in my riding will be enthusiastic about this initiative as well.

This bill encourages additional hiring for small businesses through this temporary hiring credit and this is good news for job creation in my riding.

Also contained in the bill is a permanent annual investment of \$2 billion in the gas tax fund which provides that predictable, long-term infrastructure funding for municipalities. As well, specific beneficial initiatives are: the volunteer firefighters tax credit; the new family caregiver tax credit; and, the new children's arts tax credit. There are many in here for the good people of Halton.

In conclusion, this act builds on our work to protect Canadian workers and employers and on strengthening labour management relations while playing a leadership role in intergovernmental and international labour affairs.

Government Orders

• (1535)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Labour regarding the workplace and in particular the current workplace in my area. She is familiar with Cape Breton. I am from central and northeastern Newfoundland.

One of the biggest elements of the workforce is the existence of seasonal labour. Earlier today I believe the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance talked about the 45-day work week.

I will provide the minister with an example that I would like her to comment on. In a place like Port Union, which earlier lost its plant for only one season, it is harder for that particular plant to maintain a workforce in the foreseeable future if a 45-day work week does not exist.

Therefore, we must look for ways to promote EI reform in areas of high unemployment. Could the minister comment on that?

I apologize if that is not particularly germane to her speech.

• (1540)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, tangentially on the topic that the hon. member brought up, in the first round of Canada's economic action plan the biggest challenge was dealing with single industry towns. We approached it from a number of different areas. One way was to help the community diversify and that is by putting in infrastructure. I know we did an awful lot of work on the forestry file to ensure that those communities wanting to diversify their base could do so by having new industries and creating new jobs so that people could stay in those communities. There are many benefits to having people stay in those communities, especially for those who live there.

As well, we introduced temporary measures with respect to employment insurance to ensure that older workers were able to obtain the retraining they needed.

Finally, not necessarily for the area from which the member comes but in my area in Halton we found that work sharing specifically was a very important program, one which I have been told the United States thinks was the key initiative that allowed us to recover from the recession as well as we did.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, as someone who enjoyed attending law school and practised law, I always felt that a bill's title should reflect its content. In this bill on jobs and economic growth I do not see a connection to clause 181 which removes campaign financing in public form, which is not any part of economic growth, and which does not even begin to touch the largest of taxpayer support to political parties. Would the Minister of Labour comment on that?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for pointing out that the Cape Breton caucus does indeed get along outside the House, though not necessarily always inside the House. I also appreciate that she stood in defence of another member from Cape Breton at the other end of the House today.

Our government is committed to strengthening integrity and accountability both in government and political activity. We have always opposed direct taxpayer subsidies to political parties. We

believe that political parties should rely primarily on their supporters for financing. That is why we are introducing legislation to gradually reduce the pay-per-vote subsidy starting April 1, 2012 until it is completely eliminated in 2015. That is also why the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is following through on the specific campaign commitment we made to defend the public interest.

We indicated that we have a duty to use taxpayer dollars wisely, especially in a time of fiscal constraint and when families are struggling to make ends meet. That is the underpinning as to why we are doing it, how we are doing it and when we are doing it.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while listening to the debate today I heard many opposition members talk about there being no plan or that it is not working. One need only look at the results of seven periods of economic growth and an employment rate that while still not as good as we would like it to be is certainly better.

Could the member speak to the fact that we indeed have a plan and share it again with opposition members? Perhaps they have not heard but phase two of the economic action plan is working.

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the government is indeed focused on what the next phase of the economic action plan is about. It is about supporting job creation, families and communities. It is about investing in innovation, education and training. It is about preserving Canada's fiscal advantage. The most telling part of it coming from my department is the quote from the Canadian Labour Congress wherein it stated:

—the CLC has pushed hard for an increase in the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) paid to 1.6 million low income seniors. “Minister Flaherty has made a modest improvement to the GIS in this budget. This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada...”

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to participate in this debate on the budget implementation bill. It goes without saying that we support some measures in this second budget bill, but unfortunately, some measures are unacceptable. That is why we will vote against it today.

The first problem we have is with the federal government's proposal to centralize securities in Toronto. There has been opposition to this not only in Quebec, but also in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Opposition was particularly strong in Quebec, since it would mean moving all economic life to Toronto. The government's desire to do this is nothing new. Members will recall that on May 26, 2010, it introduced a draft bill for this purpose. Then, in July 2010, despite opposition from four provinces, the Conservative government started implementing the transition plan for the Canadian Securities Regulatory Authority.

Government Orders

The government seems to forget that securities regulation falls under the exclusive constitutional authority of Quebec and the provinces. Let us not forget that the government's proposed Canada-wide securities commission does not respect Quebec's responsibility for property and civil rights. Authority over securities is given to the provinces by virtue of their jurisdiction over property and civil rights under subsection 92(3) of the Constitution Act, 1867. It is plain and simple. Nevertheless, the government wants to move forward.

The current passport system, as we call it in finance terms, works very well. With this system, a company that registers in one participating province can do business with people in all the other participating provinces. Every province, except Ontario, is part of the rules harmonization project. This Canada-wide commission will strip Quebec of a very important economic tool. Major decisions will be made outside Quebec. The Autorité des marchés financiers has an awareness of Quebec's distinct nature and needs that a single commission will not have.

For example, jobs in the financial sector are threatened. This is a key sector of Quebec's economy that accounts for 155,000 direct jobs. In all, 300,000 jobs in Quebec are connected with the financial sector. With their proposed Canada-wide commission, the Conservatives are trying to do Montreal out of what it has for Toronto's benefit and are encroaching on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. For these reasons, the National Assembly and the business community in Quebec reject the proposal.

The voluntary membership that has been spoken of is a ploy. By destroying the passport system and counting on conflicts among the regulatory bodies, the Conservative government is creating a reason for stock-issuing companies to turn to the national commission.

Contrary to what the Conservative government is saying, the existence of such a commission would not have prevented investors from being fleeced by white-collar criminals such as Earl Jones. He was a criminal who was not registered anywhere. In Montreal or in Toronto, he would have committed his crimes the same way. It is up to the RCMP to hunt down criminals. This should not be part of the debate.

Similarly, the existence of a single commission in the United States did not prevent Bernard Madoff from defrauding investors of over \$50 billion. In addition, during the merging of the Toronto and Montreal stock exchanges into the well-known TMX Group, the AMF came up with a series of conditions that had to be met in order for it to accept the transaction, including, in particular, maintaining a certain number of jobs in Montreal in the derivatives sector. Since TMX Group is regulated by the Ontario Securities Commission, which would be part of the new Canada-wide commission, there is a real concern that the conditions set out by the AMF will no longer be respected.

● (1545)

In that case, what would stop TMX Group from moving all of its activities from Montreal to Toronto? That is a real danger. This commission will also be detrimental to the use of French in business, let us not forget. It is unlikely that companies registered with the single national commission, whether or not they are from Quebec, will be required to publish in English and French. The Bloc Québécois reiterates its opposition to the creation of a national

securities commission. The Bloc Québécois supports the current harmonization of the rules governing the financial system. The passport mechanism maintains the autonomy and jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. This mechanism has existed since 2008 and is also used in the European Union. Thus, it is not something that is unique to Canada and Quebec. It is an international way of seeing things that respects all jurisdictions, including the provinces.

Canada's securities regulatory system works very well. A coalition of business people representing Quebecor, Jean Coutu, Cascades, the Association de femmes en finances and its 350 members, the bar, notaries, Power Corporation and Mouvement Desjardins all confirmed it in 2010. Many experts also oppose the plan for a single securities commission. Among them we have Pierre Lortie, the former President and CEO of the Montreal Stock Exchange, the constitutional expert Henri Brun, Yvon Allaire and Michel Nadeau from the Institute for Governance of Private and Public Organizations, and Jeffrey MacIntosh from the Toronto Stock Exchange Chair in Capital Markets Law at the University of Toronto. He shares our opinion even though he is from Toronto. All the political parties in Quebec are against this initiative. There have even been some unanimous motions from the National Assembly.

Let us take a brief look back to see how we got here. From 1970 to 2005, the idea of a single securities commission surfaced and resurfaced sporadically. The idea of giving Canada a single regulatory body for securities has been resurfacing for more than 40 years. Since 2003, the subject has been at the forefront of the federal political scene. The Liberals, who were in power at the time, had formed a committee of experts to study the possibility of setting up a single regulatory agency in Canada. The surprising thing is that the committee was far from being definitive. But today the Liberals and the Conservatives agree on centralizing everything in Toronto.

We should remember that, since coming to power, the Conservatives have attempted to force the issue. The 2006 budget revisited the idea. It announced that the government was going to work with the provinces. But if you work with the provinces and they say no, that they do not want change, the matter should go no further. The federal government often forgets that it was created by the will of the provinces. It is a creation of the provinces. It is not up to the federal government to tell the provinces what to do. It is up to the provinces to tell the federal government its expectations about how things will work. The provinces have delegated the powers to the federal government. This is often forgotten.

Government Orders

The Minister of Finance reiterated in 2007 that a panel of experts would be set up to study the creation of a single regulator. The 2008 budget again confirmed the government's intention despite the opposition from the provinces. In 2009, the expert panel on securities established by the Minister of Finance tabled its report, which was not unanimous. Action has also been taken recently, as we can see today in the government's statement on finances. It is still determined to move forward without waiting for the Supreme Court's ruling because the government is in a difficult position due to the provinces' opposition. Alberta and Quebec are mounting a legal challenge.

• (1550)

I hope that the Conservative government will revise its position to satisfy the demands of the provinces. For the time being, if Quebec is opposed, we will vote against the bill

• (1555)

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. Once again, he clearly stated the Bloc's understanding of this bill. Why does he feel that the Conservative government is stubbornly moving ahead with the securities commission initiative in Toronto, despite the fact that it goes against the unanimous will of the National Assembly in Quebec City, which wants to retain full authority in this area? I would like to hear from the member.

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. It seems that this desire to centralize exists not only in the finance department, but also in the justice department. An omnibus bill that affects a number of areas has recently been tabled. It also infringes upon provincial jurisdictions. For example, Quebec has developed a vision for young offenders that has been cited as an example around the world. In fact, 85% of youth who offend are rehabilitated through this system, without jail time. The Conservatives' centralist vision focuses on repression instead of prevention, which centralizes power in the field of justice.

And exactly the same thing is happening in the arts and in finance. This securities commission is very symptomatic of the Conservative government's desire to centralize. Thousands of Quebec jobs would be transferred. There is opposition in Quebec and in the National Assembly, of course, but Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are also opposed to this. Conservative talk about decentralization and understanding the regions and the provinces is completely at odds with the proposal of a single securities commission in Toronto.

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand today in support of Bill C-13, Keeping Canada's Economy and Jobs Growing Act. The passage of this bill is very important to my riding of Newmarket—Aurora, as it is to all Canadians.

Bill C-13 would complete the passage of budget 2011. It contains measures that are critically important for Canada's long-term prosperity by boosting research and development, innovation and productivity. It speaks to what Canadians elected us to do, focusing on economic growth, job creation and stability.

I will direct most of my comments today on how Bill C-13 supports job creation in my riding. Over the past months, I have met with thousands of residents in my community, whether at the door, on the street, or in my office, and, by far, the top of mind priorities above all others were jobs and the economy. They made it very clear to me that they wanted their government to focus squarely on these priorities, jobs and economic growth. Why is this? It is because a stable, growing economy creates job opportunities. It supports families and it creates confidence. It is the fundamental backbone of what vibrant communities and a prosperous nation are all about.

Newmarket—Aurora is comprised of thousands of entrepreneurs, most of them small and medium sized businesses. They will all benefit from the one time hiring credit for small business of up to \$1,000 contained in budget 2011 and formalized in Bill C-13. Through this measure, over 525,000 employers across Canada will be helped with the costs of additional hiring. This is an average of almost 1,400 businesses in each of the 308 ridings across the country. With this initiative, a small business can hire one additional worker at a salary of up to \$40,000 or two part-time workers at a salary of up to \$20,000 each without having to pay additional EI premiums.

Entrepreneurs in my riding would benefit from budget 2011 measures to support the development of clean energy technologies through a \$97 million investment over two years to renew funding for technology and innovation in the areas of clean energy and energy efficiency. Measures, such as the new children's arts tax credit and the extension of the eco-energy retrofit homes program, are boosting economic activity in hardware shops, contracting companies, music and art stores across my riding, just as they are throughout the country.

Manufacturing and processing businesses would benefit from the extension of the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance rate that encourages investments in machinery and equipment. This measure builds squarely upon our previous support for the manufacturing sector.

Government Orders

Last week, Statistics Canada released a report showing that manufacturing sales rose 1.4% to \$47.6 billion in August, the highest level since October 2008. In fact, last Friday, a news release from AirBoss of America crossed my desk. AirBoss has its head office in my hometown of Newmarket with manufacturing plants in Kitchener, Ontario; Acton-Vale, Quebec; and North Carolina. The news release announced the securing of two contracts worth \$20 million with the U.S. department of defense in supplying that company's rubber based products. So we know that strategic investments, like the accelerated capital cost allowance rate, the hiring tax credit for small business and the expansion of tax support for clean energy generation, are working to create jobs for Canadians.

Indeed, earlier this month, *Forbes* magazine rated Canada as the best place in the world for businesses to grow and create jobs.

I am very excited that budget 2011 provides \$20 million to support young entrepreneurs by providing mentorship, resources and start-up financing through the Canadian Youth Business Foundation. Many business icons today began their careers as budding entrepreneurs and this investment would help create the business leaders of tomorrow.

I would like to share a few examples from my riding of Newmarket—Aurora of how these initiatives create jobs.

● (1600)

Earlier this year, I announced a contribution of \$115,000 for the National Research Council of Canada industrial research assistance program, or IRAP, to Treefrog Interactive Inc.

Treefrog is an award-winning Newmarket graphic design and web development agency and a shining example of a leading-edge small business. The IRAP funds, made possible through Canada's economic action plan, allowed Treefrog to fund an innovative research and development project and create new products for local and international markets. Sean Stephens, the CEO of Treefrog Interactive, said in February of this year:

These last few years, help from the federal government stimulus has been a clear and inspiring drive for us at Treefrog. Where many talk about a period of "recession", we at Treefrog talk about a period of "innovation". Thanks to IRAP, we have greatly increased our staff, doubled our revenue, significantly matured our products and helped many other businesses grow through web initiatives in the region—mostly through innovations in our products. This period of incredible growth has been through that extra little "shot in the arm" from IRAP—and we have Canada, through IRAP and the federal government, to thank for it.

Here is another success story in my riding.

Last year, a collaborative project led by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce involving the Newmarket Public Library, South Lake Regional Health Centre, town of Newmarket and Newmarket-Tay Power Distribution received \$2.1 million from Canada's action plan for a shared digital infrastructure project. The project created new community partnerships and received national recognition.

The Newmarket Chamber of Commerce was able to parlay this investment into an asset now benefiting hundreds of entrepreneurs, businesses, community organizations and residents through this information-sharing infrastructure. The past president of the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, Jim Gragtmans, regarding the success of this project said last year, "Dozens of jobs have been

created. New creative and effective partnerships have been established and we are only beginning".

Canada's economic action plan has assisted many businesses in my riding to expand, innovate and create jobs. In the town of Aurora, for example, Axiom Group Inc. was able to extend its product line and open new markets through support from the southern Ontario development fund and industrial research assistance program.

In fact, last year I was honoured to present, on behalf of the minister of state, a Canadian innovation leader certificate to Axiom President, Perry Rizzo, in recognition of that company's success. On the assistance that Mr. Rizzo received from Canada's action plan, he said:

We appreciate the SODP and its contribution to helping small to medium sized businesses like Axiom create jobs and stimulate economic growth in the local community of Aurora and abroad.

We know that small business owners and entrepreneurs create jobs and generate wealth in communities across Canada. Our government declared 2011 the official year of the entrepreneur to help increase public awareness of the important role played by small businesses.

It is most fitting that we are debating Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, during small business week. By supporting our small and medium-sized businesses we support all Canadians by facilitating the conditions for investment and job creation.

It is important to note that Bill C-13 supports the creation of jobs and economic growth by allowing the continuation of work done by the red tape reduction commission to root out and cut business red tape. We know that red tape ties up Canadian businesses and entrepreneurs, reduces their competitiveness, and forces them to spend time and money that could be better spent strengthening Canada's economic recovery.

In January 2011, our government fulfilled its budget 2010 commitment by establishing the red tape reduction commission, to which I am honoured to have been appointed. Bill C-13 allows the means to continue this important work and the commission will present its final recommendations for lasting reforms in the coming months based on the "What Was Heard" report released last month.

● (1605)

I also want to note that among the many significant measures contained in Bill C-13, of great importance to my riding and all municipalities across the country is the legislation to make permanent gas tax funding for municipalities. It is why Bill C-13 and its key job creating measures, like the hiring credit for small businesses, are critically important as we continue to solidify our recovery and position Canada for a prosperous future. That is what Canadians want.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my esteemed colleague talking about the reduction in the number of public servants, especially at Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Is my colleague aware of what is happening right now in the City of Montreal? It has adopted exactly the same approach to public service reductions, especially in any area related to engineering.

The city is left with a public service that is incapable of judging the nature and value of the work it is responsible for. Is this a good way to go, from a public administration perspective? Does anyone really think this will save any money?

[*English*]

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, no, I did not actually address that in my speech, but I am very pleased to speak to it. Our government was given a very strong mandate to take care of taxpayers' dollars and to be responsible to taxpayers for what we spend. We have asked every department to go through its own strategic review and to find savings within their department. As we find those, we will pass those savings on to taxpayers.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in her speech she talked a lot about these places that have created jobs over the past little while.

I read headlines from her riding with regard to 2008-09 and about all the job losses that were at the Newmarket—Aurora plants, concerning Magna. I wonder at what level the economic action plan has actually worked for these people because I am still hearing quite a bit of noise from that area about all the job losses that took place. I wonder if she would like to comment on that.

• (1610)

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague is correct. We did go through a drastic job loss. In fact, overnight, we lost 800 jobs when two of the Magna plants were closed very suddenly.

However, through the work of the economic action plan, many of the plants that I talked about in my speech have created jobs that have created opportunities for those people to be hired into new positions. For people who were in need of retraining, we put in place the measures through employment insurance that gave them the opportunity for retraining. We also put in place the work share program which preserved a number of jobs that could have otherwise been lost, and those jobs are still ongoing.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the speaker did not mention it, but her colleague, the Minister of Labour, talked about what she referred to as the per vote subsidy and how this is an unfair subsidy of political parties by the taxpayer.

However, I wonder if she would care to comment on the distinction between what this particular method of financing political parties, which is pretty democratic in nature, each voter, regardless of his or financial ability, can trigger a contribution to the public purse to a political party by his or her vote; for example, over a four year cycle, \$8.00. Whereas what is left in place is a system whereby if an individual gives \$100, for example, to the Conservative Party that triggers a taxpayer contribution of \$75 back to the taxpayer, effectively subsidizing the contribution.

So, we really have a system that is being left in place that actually can only be accessed by people who have money; whereas the individual \$2.00 per vote payment is a more democratic one available to every single person.

Does she not think that it is much fairer to say that each voter can trigger a public contribution by his or her vote rather than by someone who can afford to contribute \$100 to a political party?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to that because it really was a campaign promise that we made, that we would reduce these subsidies.

We believe that a political party ought to be able to persuade citizens of Canada to support it through their own contributions by the programs that it is putting forward or the philosophy that it represents and every Canadian, regardless of the money that he or she has is able to contribute any amount he or she wants. Five dollars is a contribution that we have seen in the past and I believe that every Canadian has the opportunity to donate that from his or her own pocket. It is a very fair system. It is a very generous system that we have. I believe that Canadians will choose to support the political party that best represents them.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to give the perspective of the constituents of Vancouver Kingsway to Bill C-13. I have read the bill and given a great deal of thought and analysis to it. I would like to point out a few things that come to my mind as some preliminary observations about the bill.

First of all, the bill provides some positive measures. The bill also contains some negative measures and most notably from my analysis, the predominant feature of the bill is that it is marked by what it does not deal with, what it is silent on.

In terms of some of the positive measures that are contained in the bill, I would like to point out some of them and congratulate the government on picking up what are some policies that most Canadians would support. First, the bill offers partial loan forgiveness for family physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners who begin practising in underserved rural or remote areas. This is a provision that I personally must stand in support of in the House because it mirrors in part a private member's bill that I drafted a year and half ago and introduced in the House.

I proposed a bill that would reward doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners who serve in underserved areas with a freeze on their Canadian student loans for the first five years of practice and then for each year from year 6 through 10, they would have their loan erased at the rate of 20% per year meaning that rural and underserved areas in our health care system in terms of family doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners would get that very important service. People who practised in those areas would have their federal loans forgiven as a result of that commitment.

Government Orders

The bill also introduces a family caregiver tax credit for caregivers of infirm dependants. Once again, that is a positive measure although, as has been pointed out by many experts in the tax field, the government is moving toward increasing reliance on the use of tax credits and that reflects a certain philosophy of delivering government programs that is not without its problems. Most notably, it requires Canadian families to lay out the money first and then claim the tax credit much later. For millions of Canadians that is simply not a reality. For millions of Canadian families they simply do not have that money to lay out at first and so tax credits are of limited utility.

The bill also provides a temporary measure to refund a portion of employer premiums for small business. This is truly a case of giving with one hand and taking away with the other, although one must support a measure that would refund a portion of EI premiums for employers and workers in this challenged economic time. On the other hand, we must also remember that it was the government that is raising EI premiums starting in January to the tune of \$2 billion per year.

Taking back money or giving businesses the ability to save some money after having their overall premiums raised is a cynical approach to politics that Canadians should be aware of. Also, Canadians must always remember when we talk about EI that the EI surplus of over \$50 billion, premiums paid by the businesses and the workers of this country to create an insurance fund for them to draw in times of high unemployment, which as I will talk about in a few minutes we are experiencing right now in Canada, and taking that money and putting it into general revenue is still an unredressed problem that cries out for redress.

The bill also expands the eligibility for accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation and conservation equipment. Again, that is a positive measure; however, in the grand scheme of things and I see my colleague from Halifax is here who has done wonderful work on the environment file, I am sure she would point out to the House, as has been done day after day, that this measure is really a drop in the ocean in terms of what Canada must do in terms of clean energy creation and environmental protection.

● (1615)

In terms of some of the negative things in this bill, as we have heard, the bill proposes to end the per vote subsidy for political parties that receive more than a certain percentage of the vote. If I am not mistaken, I think it is more than 5% of the vote. In my view this is a regressive policy and it amounts to poor public policy at the same time. Canada has created what can be fairly regarded as one of the finest and fairest election finance systems in the world. Canadians want an electoral system that is fair and is controlled by the citizens of our country.

The features of our federal campaign and electoral finance system are as follows. We have put in measures that limit the contributions of any one person to \$1,100, so that takes big money out of politics. It has eliminated donations entirely from corporations and trade unions. That has taken the influence of non-individuals out of politics. It has set spending limits in what we can spend in a particular riding in an election and what we can spend nationally in a campaign. It evens the playing field and again it takes big money out

of our political system. In short, it is a system that enshrines the concept of democracy run by people, paid for by people and to serve the people.

Canadians have a great interest democracy. Democracy is not free. A democratic system must be paid for. However, a democracy that is paid for by the public means that we do not have a democracy that is bought and paid for by private interests. I think that is what Canadians want. They want a publicly financed democracy, not a privately financed democracy.

Interestingly, in Afghanistan right now our troops are fighting ostensibly for the establishment of democracy in there. The public financing of the electoral system here in Canada helps maintain a democracy in our country.

As has been pointed out by my colleague from Newfoundland just a few moments ago, providing public money based on the number of votes that a party gets at the rate of \$2 per vote is the fairest way of all to finance political parties in our country. The government has said that it does not want that. It wants parties to go out and raise money from private sector citizens, that this does not represent a subsidy, but we know that is not true.

People who contribute to a party get back, at taxpayer funded expense, 75% of the first \$400 they donate and that declines to 66% for the next \$350 and then 50% for the remainder of the \$1,100. Therefore, we do have public subsidies of donations to political parties. The only question is one of philosophy, whether, as the Conservatives want, we do that through private interest as opposed to public funds, which the New Democrats support.

I want to talk briefly about the economy in our country. Millions of Canadians across the country know they are having a difficult time right now. They know this economy is not working for them. Statistic after statistic shows that over the last 25 years there is a growing gap between the wealthy and the poor in our country.

We also know, with statistical certainty, that the middle class is shrinking. That is because of policies pursued by the Conservatives and the Liberals before them for the past 25 years, policies of incessant corporate tax cuts, of shrinking government, of reducing public services, of pursuing free trade agreements and lowering tariffs and of attacking workers and the trade unions, which is one of the only forces that is serving to create and fight for good, family-sustaining, middle-class jobs with benefits.

Government Orders

The government stands in the House every day and brags that it has created 600,000 jobs since the recession began, but what kind of jobs are those? We do not hear it talk about the quality of those jobs. Those jobs are temporary, in large part, they are part-time, they are low-paying, they do not have benefits and they are primarily in the service sector. Hundreds of thousands of those jobs are those types. The government cannot take the good, middle-class, family-sustaining jobs with benefits, erase them and then replace them with \$10 an hour mc jobs and call that an economic success. The government is doing exactly that.

•(1620)

Millions of people around the world are talking about the 99% of us who are no longer going to tolerate 1% owning 40% of the wealth in our country. The government should pay attention to that sentiment and start pursuing policies that reflect equitably a better share of the wealth of the country so we have an economy that works for everyone.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite closely to my hon. colleague's comments and I could not help but think that the NDP had finally reverted to what that party really was, spokespeople for a few special interest groups, the big unions in our country. It is not about jobs, or opportunity, or trying to find a free trade agreement with likeminded countries around the world or fairness. It is about special interests.

If *Forbes* magazine can say that Canada is the best country in the world in which to invest, if we have created 680,000 jobs and other countries around the world have been unable to, when an economic crisis is ready to swallow up Greece and perhaps Spain and Portugal as well and when we look around by every parameter and see we have done better than other countries, how can the hon. member say what he has said?

•(1625)

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that simply is not true and the premise that New Democrats are a party of special interests is thoroughly flawed. We are a party that represents the vast majority of Canadians, the millions of hard-working middle-class and working-class families that go to work every day to try to put a paycheque on the table.

The median total family income in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway is \$51,000 a year and 40% of the families in my riding live on total family income of less than \$40,000 a year. This is a place where the average house costs \$800,000 and the average two bedroom apartment rents for \$1,200 a month.

I would ask my friend what special interests his government represents when it tables a budget that does nothing to address the housing problems faced by these people in our country? The budget does nothing to create affordable housing, child care or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat enjoying the member's speech until he hit the one part where he mentioned the Conservatives and the Liberals and their corporate tax cut agenda. There is no doubt that the Liberal Party has

recognized the value of corporate tax cuts in certain situations, economic times and so forth. The Liberal Party is opposed to the tax breaks that have been given by the Conservative government in both the last budget and this budget. We have called for those tax cuts to be put on hold.

Just over a year ago I stood inside the Manitoba legislature when the NDP government gave corporate tax breaks. Would he suggest that the NDP government in Manitoba was wrong, as I would suggest, which I suggested back then? Giving corporate tax breaks to those companies in the province of Manitoba was not appropriate when the food banks were continuing to grow in the city of Winnipeg because of neglect by the NDP.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that is the problem with trying to understand Liberal policy on anything. The Liberals are for corporate tax cuts except when they are not and it is almost impossible to determine when that is.

The Liberal government in the 1990s went through a massive slashing of federal government departments, cutting whole departments 30%, downloading costs on to the provinces, reducing health care and education transfers to the provinces and then bragging it had a balanced budget.

Many of the worst economic measures in our country were put in place by the Liberal government in the 1990s when it started a massive corporate tax cut program, which the Conservative government has continued.

The NDP in the last election promised to reduce the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% and proposed the smartest corporate tax cut policy as well, which was to give corporate tax cuts to corporations that agreed to create jobs. These two things have to be linked.

What the Liberals fail to understand is that broad-based corporate tax cuts to banks and oil companies that the Conservatives have carried on, without the creation of any jobs, is very tax inefficient and it creates tax leakage. It does not create jobs.

The NDP would give tax cuts to corporations provided they worked with us and created jobs in our country for the people who need them to raise their families.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on October 4, the Minister of Finance tabled the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, which is integral to maintaining our country's economic strength and resilience. I am privileged to speak about this important legislation.

On May 2, Canadians gave this government a mandate to stay focused on what matters: jobs and the economy. Canadians recognized our government's strong track record with managing the country's finances in a fair and effective manner.

Government Orders

The budget is part of a process of government. Since 2006, each Conservative budget has built upon the success of previous budgets, with the purpose of ensuring Canada's economy is the strongest in the world. This legislation represents a continuation of previous budgets, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan.

The opposition would have Canadians believe that our government has mismanaged the global economic downturn, but the facts show the opposite is the truth. I can personally assert that the \$60 billion in targeted stimulus did indeed work by setting examples within my own riding of Oakville. Federal contributions to a waste water treatment plant, a new Oakville transit facility and a new training facility for the Operating Engineers Institute of Ontario demonstrate the effectiveness of Canada's economic action plan. These improvements have yielded hundreds of local jobs, opportunities for upward job mobility and a general improvement in the economic outlook of many of my constituents. This is just one way in which the stimulus package is working for Canadians.

Other encouraging developments have lately materialized. On October 7, Statistics Canada announced that 60,000 net new jobs were created in September across Canada, while the unemployment rate fell to 7.1%, the lowest rate of unemployment since before the recession. Canada has now created nearly 650,000 net new jobs in total since July 2009, most of which are well-paying full-time jobs. This is a remarkable feat considering the current global economic climate.

Canada's economic strength and resilience has not gone unnoticed. Allow me to highlight just some of the recognition and praise Canada has received internationally.

The International Monetary Fund has forecasted Canada will have the strongest economic growth among the G7 countries over the next two years and praised Canada's "healthy economic fundamentals".

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report determined Canada's financial system to be the soundest in the world.

Forbes magazine has determined that Canada is the best place to do business, period.

Moody's has renewed Canada's triple A credit rating "due to our economic resiliency, very high government financial strength, and a low susceptibility to event risk".

Even private sector economists are singing the praises of our government's achievements. BMO Chief Economist Doug Porter stated before the House finance committee on September 27, "Canada's economic policy-making has been exemplary", while Scotiabank's Chief Economist Warren Jestin stated in the *Journal of Commerce*, "Canada is the best place to be and almost everything I look at screams that out to me".

The recognition of Canada's economic performance has a lot to do with our goal of returning to balanced budgets. I believe if families and households have to control spending in difficult times, then so should governments.

Before the global recession, our government reduced the national debt by almost \$40 billion to the lowest level in 25 years. Therefore,

while other countries face serious debt challenges, our country is in a strong fiscal position with the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the entire G7.

In 2010 we developed a three-point plan to return to balanced budgets by slowing down temporary stimulus spending in conjunction with targeted spending restraints, as well as strategically reviewing the cost to operate government. By implementing specific spending restrictions, we have identified approximately \$1.6 billion in ongoing savings already. Moreover, our government's commitment to returning to balanced budgets includes closing unfair tax loopholes.

By improving the fairness of our tax system, the government has identified \$1 billion in potential savings by 2013-14 on that part alone. More important, the government's strategic and operating review has targeted at least \$4 billion in potential savings by 2014-15. In fact, on October 13, the Canadian Press reported that our government had reduced the deficit by \$2.8 billion before the original forecast for this year, which is a 40% decline in the deficit from the \$55.6 billion deficit from the year before. Not only does this leave us in a strong fiscal position, but it gives our government leeway in determining economic policy should the global economy dip back into recession.

• (1630)

Although the forecasts and praise surrounding Canada's economy are encouraging, the global economy remains fragile. Severe economic challenges in the United States and a sovereign debt crisis in Europe could signal the onset of another global recession. It is very important that our government remain on the right path and complete the next phase of the recovery by implementing this bill.

This legislation contains important measures that will benefit families and businesses throughout the country. I would like to speak for a minute on what it means to my riding of Oakville.

Our government believes in supporting families, which is why we have included several tax credits specific to families. This includes the children's art tax credit which is a 15% non-refundable tax credit on up to \$500 in eligible fees for artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental programs for children. It is an important element in keeping children involved in the arts and will help ease some of the financial strain that is caused when parents have to pay for the various activities in which their children are involved.

Government Orders

We are also helping families take care of their loved ones. The family caregiver tax credit represents a 15% non-refundable tax credit on an amount of \$2,000 for caregivers of all types of infirm dependent relatives including spouses, common-law partners and minor children. Moreover, we have included the enhanced medical expenses tax credit which eliminates the \$10,000 limit on the amount of eligible medical expenses that can be claimed on behalf of a financially dependent relative. This aims to make it easier for family members to continue to care for their loved ones, something that has been called for for decades.

Helping families is what this government has been doing since 2006. Allow me to remind the House of some of the things we have done to support Canadian families since then. We have made tax cuts over 120 times since 2006. We have cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. We have reduced the GST from 7% to 5%, putting nearly \$1,000 in the pockets of the average Canadian family. We have introduced the tax-free savings account, the single most important personal savings vehicle since RRSPs. Because of our government's commitment to relieving the tax burden on Canadian families we have helped a typical Canadian family save over \$3,000 a year in taxes.

Support for Canadian families does not end with tax credits. Many families in Oakville earn their livelihood by operating small businesses, which can be challenging. I know of one family in my riding where both parents own and operate small businesses: a restaurant and an interior design company. The targeted measures our government is implementing will help small businesses like theirs hire employees, avoid red tape, and purchase equipment necessary to improve productivity. One of them recently expanded the business and hired 10 new employees.

The new hiring credit for small businesses is a one-time credit of up to \$1,000 against a small firm's increase in its 2011 employment insurance premiums over those paid in 2010. This new credit will assist 525,000 employers in hiring people for their businesses. This hiring credit will help them expand their business while trying to keep their costs down.

In my many conversations with small business owners, several of them have voiced their concerns on the difficulties they have faced when dealing with government departments. The red tape reduction commission will help reduce the burden of navigating government departments. Any small business owner knows that red tape can slow down the growth of his or her business and create unnecessary stress. We are removing many of those road blocks. But it is not just red tape that is slowing down expanding businesses, it is also the costs of purchasing and upgrading machinery and equipment.

Oakville is home to a number of manufacturers, and like manufacturing companies throughout Canada, they are key engines of economic growth and jobs. Small- and medium-size manufacturers will receive help from the federal government through the extended accelerated capital cost allowance. This will help manufacturers allocate resources toward investing in manufacturing and processing equipment. Manufacturers also want to be able to sell their products abroad, and for this reason the government is simplifying customs tariffs to speed up cross-border trade with the United States.

Our government's recognition of the enormous contribution small businesses make to our economy has been consistent since we formed government in 2006. Allow me to take a moment to remind members on the opposite side of the House what we have done for small- and medium-size businesses.

We have increased the limit on the amount of income earned by small businesses in order to be eligible for the reduced federal tax rate, otherwise known as the small business limit, to \$500,000. We have reduced the small business tax rate from 12% to 11%, not to mention the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% by 2012.

All of our government's support for small- and medium-size businesses cannot be viewed independently from our commitment to finding new markets for products and services they produce. Forty per cent of Canadian companies export their goods compared to only 1% of U.S. companies that export their goods. Simply put, we need trade to continue to grow our economy. In conjunction with this budget bill, we are pursuing mutually beneficial free trade agreements with 50 countries on top of the eight agreements we have already signed.

● (1635)

I have highlighted many ways in which the decision making of this government is helping put Canadians first, at both the national and local levels. It is clear we are leading the world by example. We will maintain our economic strength and resilience regardless of the direction the global economy may take.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague across the floor.

I cannot quote *Forbes* or banks to which this government has given tax breaks, but I can quote myself. I met with forestry workers, manufacturers and mayors in the northern part of my riding, in the Mont-Laurier area. The five biggest employers were sawmills that are now closed. The local economy has been very hard hit by the forestry crisis. In the bill that has been before us for days now and is again here today, I wonder if there is anything to help the forestry industry to restructure. Is there really any plan for that? The people I met with do not see anything like that in this bill. They are trying to find ways to finance themselves and restructure their economy and they have not heard anything from this government.

● (1640)

[*English*]

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, when we first became the government there had been a softwood lumber trade dispute that had dragged on for many years. It was finally settled by this government in a favourable position for the forestry industry. There have been many things the government has done to support the forestry industry over time.

Government Orders

Recent developments in our economy are also important. This government is presenting a budget that has carefully considered the past, the present and the future conditions resulting from the recession. Previous budgets committed \$60 billion in stimulus spending to produce jobs and improve infrastructure. The plan worked. I believe the forestry industry was a beneficiary of that.

As new developments arise, we continue to stay focused on returning to balanced budgets. We are certainly not going to spend wildly. We have to be more responsible than that. We have seen the result of that in Europe. We have seen it in Greece. We are seeing it in Spain, in Ireland, in Portugal, and possibly even in Italy. For decades the people have been electing governments that have been giving them more than they can afford and the chickens have finally come home to roost. They are going through terrible restructuring in Europe and they are going to be going through very difficult times.

A similar situation is happening in the U.S. It is actually in the worst fiscal position—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. I am sorry, but other hon. members may have questions.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every member from the Conservative Party talks about the thousands of jobs that have been created. Every Conservative member has talked about that, yet the reality is that in August 2008, there were 14,631,300 Canadian full-time jobs. Today, that number is down by over 500,000 to 14,106,100.

How would the member reconcile that we are out a half million full-time jobs since the government has been in office?

Mr. Terence Young: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the source is as the member did not quote the source for his numbers.

The numbers are clear that the growth that has happened since toward the end of the recession in 2008 has been 650,000 new jobs in Canada. We saw another 65,000 jobs created in September. The economy continues to grow.

Is anyone happy that they are not the best paid full-time jobs with great benefits? Of course not. We are doing everything as a government to develop all kinds of jobs, particularly those jobs. One particular way we are doing it is by growing our economy. When our largest trading partner is in economic dire straits we have to expand to other countries so we are not dependent. The Americans have been good trading partners for many years, but we are expanding trade. We are pursuing free trade agreements with 50 countries, including the European Union and India and some of the fastest growing economies in the world as well. That is how we are going to expand growth and create more jobs, even more than we have to date.

[*Translation*]

Mr. José Nunez-Melo (Laval, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to oppose Bill C-13, introduced by the Minister of Finance.

This bill—a second version—is entitled the keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act. It contains a number of amendments by replacing certain measures and is broken into 22 parts that affect

that many laws, from part 1 and the Income Tax Act, to the Customs Tariff Act, the Canada Education Savings Act, the Children's Special Allowances Act, the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act, the Employment Insurance Act, the Canadian Securities Regulation Regime Transition Office Act, the Wage Earner Protection Program Act, the Canadian Human Rights Act, the Canada Labour Code, the Conflict of Interest Act, the Canada Pension Plan, the Jobs and Economic Growth Act, the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, the Department of Veterans Affairs Act, the Canada Elections Act, the Special Retirement Arrangements Act and more.

To give hon. members an idea of why this bill does not make any sense, part 1 implements measures that pertain to the Income Tax Act but actually do very little. For example, part 1 forgives a portion of a guaranteed loan to doctors who work in the regions, introduces a family caregiver tax credit to assist informal caregivers, refunds employer premiums for SMEs, and extends to 2013 the temporary accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investment.

Indeed, these are small things that will not really help to stimulate the economy and create employment. These measures are also completely insufficient. It would be better to give refundable tax credits to taxpayers or to provide direct payments to finance investments in SMEs and foster true economic growth.

Moreover, despite the Conservatives' repeated claims that 600,000 jobs have been created, we hear all sorts of news about the unemployment rate, which is currently the same as it was in 2008. In absolute terms, 1.4 million Canadians are unemployed; however, if we take into account those who have already withdrawn from the labour market because they cannot find work and those who are not considered to be looking for work because they are not receiving employment insurance benefits, there are actually 2 million unemployed Canadians.

No real stimulus plan has been proposed, save for a few small credits. Some measures are truly praiseworthy and satisfactory, as was so wonderfully stated by the member for Vancouver Kingsway. Other rather interesting measures were also mentioned by the member for Halifax.

Government Orders

•(1645)

Despite all the glowing references made to *Forbes* magazine by the members from other cities, economic growth is still fragile. And the International Monetary Fund, the Bank of Montreal, the TD Bank Financial Group, Scotiabank, the Conference Board of Canada, the Bank of Canada, the Toronto Board of Trade, and the Canadian Medical Association have confirmed this. Even the Minister of Finance recognizes that infrastructure investment has five times the economic impact of corporate tax cuts.

I am opposed to the bill being passed as is. I recommend that the Conservatives take another look at all of these proposals and make the necessary amendments.

•(1650)

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his presentation and his vision. He is quite right. He said that cutting the corporate tax rate instead of investing in infrastructure was very ineffective. Even the Department of Finance says so.

Can my colleague explain whether the government should be investing in infrastructure or in helping small businesses?

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie very much. Indeed, that information comes from the Department of Finance, which says that investing in infrastructure creates jobs. Many Canadians get work and then a lot of investment follows. That is what wealth and economic growth are all about.

I could name some other departments and other sources such as the TD Bank Financial Group, which published a rather clear document suggesting ways the finance minister's advisors could improve the bill.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a very good argument for the need to invest in infrastructure. In Canada, there is a \$130 billion deficit with regard to infrastructure. The Champlain Bridge is an example. We must invest in that bridge, but there is nothing to that effect in the budget.

I would like my colleague to explain the importance of investing in infrastructure and how this can improve productivity and enhance the economy.

Mr. José Nunez-Melo: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Brossard—La Prairie. First of all, I would like to mention the announcement that was made recently by the Conservative government's Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities confirming its commitment to rebuild the Champlain Bridge. It should have been announced long before we spent so long discussing such a project.

Taking all the economic parameters into account, it has been decided that this is a viable project and that building this new infrastructure would help create jobs. These investments will benefit not only those travelling between Montreal and the south shore, but also anyone who takes this bridge to return from the U.S. and other Canadian provinces.

There are also other projects, like ports. There are many projects—whether in Halifax or Newfoundland and Labrador—in fisheries.

Our hon. colleague from New Brunswick once proposed such a project. On the west coast of the country, Vancouver, among other large ports, also needs new port infrastructure. Almost all of this infrastructure is aging and, as we know, maintenance alone will not suffice. We really need to create effective growth.

•(1655)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-13, keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act, as introduced by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Since the last federal election, I have heard a common message from constituents, business owners and community leaders alike. They have said again and again that they want our government to continue to focus on strengthening the economy and creating jobs for Canadians.

Through the economic action plan, our Conservative government delivered a record \$60 billion in investments across Canada to aid Canadians and businesses during the worst global recession since the Great Depression. Through these investments and the leadership shown by our Prime Minister, Canada has seen seven straight quarters of economic growth, one of the strongest fiscal positions among the world's top performing and advanced economies.

However, more important, Canada has seen a record of 600,000-plus jobs created since July 2009, with over 80% of them being full-time jobs. Clearly, our economic action plan is working and it is putting Canadians back into the jobs they want and need.

The good news does not stop there. On October 7, Statistics Canada further reinforced that our action plan was working. In September of this year, Canada saw employment rise by 61,000 new jobs, almost all of which were full-time jobs. This increase pushed our national unemployment rate to the lowest it has been since December 2008, down to 7.1%. These jobs were spread across a number of industries, such as education services, accommodation services, natural resources and public administration, all of which provide meaningful employment opportunities to Canadians.

The good news does not stop there. Last Friday, our good friends at Statistics Canada further reinforced that the action plan was delivering to Canadians the way our Prime Minister and ministers had envisioned. In August of this year, manufacturing sales rose by 1.4%, to \$47.6 billion, which is the highest level we have seen since October 2008.

Despite this good news, I find it ironic that the “new voice of Quebec”, as they call themselves, the official opposition, has and continues to vote against every economic measure the government makes. After all, it was Quebec that saw one of the highest increases in manufacturing sales of 3.5% to be exact, to \$11.8 billion.

Government Orders

For every realist in the House, we know that magnificent increase is due to the stimulus this government made in industries, such as manufacturing, as well as industries in our markets and our economy, and yet the opposition members continues to vote against our economic plan. When good news like this is released they are the first to claim how they did this or they attempt to take credit for it.

We must not be fooled. The facts are there. The economic action plan is working and we need to stay the course to ensure that we continue to lead our G7 and G20 colleagues in coming out of this economic recession. Why will the opposition not see that and join us in building a more vibrant, stronger and better economy by supporting this bill?

Our government tabled the economic action plan which has seen enhancements in a vast array of sectors: the economy, the programs and services that the Government of Canada delivers to its citizens, and the leadership our country has taken on the global financial stage. Whether it is extending programs to help businesses keep workers on the job and gainfully employed or enhancing benefits to seniors in our country, Canadians know they can count on this Conservative government to deliver for Canadians.

Supporting job creation, families, communities and investing in innovation and education will continue to be important pillars of our government's economic plan. Even with all these continued investments to help Canadians most in need, the Minister of Finance is still on track to balance Canada's budget. Is it a miracle? I think not.

• (1700)

It is clearly the result of sound fiscal management, expenditure review and proper economic management by the government, our ministers and the Prime Minister.

As stated a few moments ago, supporting job creation has been and will continue to be the top priority of our government.

From providing a one-time credit of up to \$1,000 to small businesses to encourage additional hiring to enhancing and extending successful programs such as the work-sharing program and the wage earner protection program, our Conservative government is focusing on sustaining and creating jobs across this nation while improving government services and programs so that they are delivered efficiently, effectively and affordably to Canadians.

Our great initiatives do not stop there. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in economic sectors that are important to our country and our economic recovery. From innovation, agriculture, energy and manufacturing to forestry and tourism, Canadian businesses know that they can count on our government to deliver the best balance to keep their doors open and business flowing, and to aid them in hiring Canadians.

That is what it is all about: building our economy to create new jobs for Canadians, young and old alike.

However, our focus has not only been on business; we are focused on two other things that are also important to Canadians: their families and their communities. That is why the government has put into law the permanent investment, annually, of \$2 billion in gas tax

funding for cities to support the infrastructure programs and projects that matter most to them.

In my riding of Don Valley East, this has enabled the City of Toronto to plan and prioritize local projects because they know they will have stable funding to better our city and our local community's infrastructure.

Building strong and more vibrant communities has been a priority of our government. In Don Valley East, I am confident to say it is evident. In addition, it was our government that introduced a new children's arts tax credit that enables parents to claim up to \$500 for programs associated with arts, culture, recreation and development. We did this because we know that a child's education and intellectual growth happens not only inside the four walls of a classroom but also in the extracurricular activities that they do in the mornings, after school or on weekends.

Just as important is what we did for the most needy seniors—over 680,000 of them, to be exact. In the budget, we took action to enhance the guaranteed income supplement to enable seniors to receive additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and up to \$840 for couples.

Our parents and grandparents worked hard for many years to build Canada into the great nation it is today, and when it comes to keeping their money where it belongs, in their pocket, they know they can count on the Conservative government to deliver without the reckless spending that the opposition proposes.

I think one of the most important investments our government has made in Bill C-13 is the new family caregiver tax credit, which alleviates the financial burden on families who have loved ones who are not well. As someone with parents who are seniors, I find it reassuring to know that if a family member has to take care of them, the government will recognize their sacrifice by providing them with a tax credit when they have to file their returns with the government.

As we all know, families should always come first, and I believe the government and the ministers have made that clear in this budget and through all the programs and services we have created or enhanced. As a former professor at Centennial and Seneca Colleges in Toronto, I strongly support the investments in innovation, education and training that Bill C-13 makes.

After speaking with former colleagues of mine, I know they too applaud the government's investment and commitment to education, innovation and research. As we all know, education and training provide our young citizens with bright, vibrant and encompassing opportunities for their future.

Government Orders

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his presentation.

However, I do not share his enthusiasm regarding the fact that everything is fine. We hear that quite often: All is well. Things are very good.

[*English*]

However, we seem to forget that there is a slowdown, especially in Canada, in terms of growth. We especially seem to forget that there are 1.4 million people who are without jobs here in Canada, and if we look at people who are not looking for jobs and who are actually just out of it, we are talking about 1.7 million people. We are talking about 17.2% unemployment for youth.

Would the member explain how he can say things are going so well when right now there is a big difference between the rich and the poor, and the difference is getting bigger, as the IMF will state?

Mr. Joe Daniel: Mr. Speaker, if we had not taken any economic action, clearly this problem would be far bigger than it is. We have created over 650,000 new jobs, and the opportunities are growing month over month. Last month 61,000 new jobs were created, and we will be continuing to create jobs despite the slowdown that is going on.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I was over at Maples Community Centre with a group of seniors. One of the discussion items was with regard to pension incomes. The feeling shared among opposition members is that we are not providing enough for our seniors and that they need to have more financial support. Surely the member recognizes that we are not providing enough financial support to our seniors.

Would he give some sort of indication as to what he believes would be a move, going forward, in terms of how we could provide an additional supplement for our seniors so that it would be easier for them to live?

Mr. Joe Daniel: Mr. Speaker, clearly this government has already done many things for seniors. We have actually introduced higher GIS payments. We have introduced income-splitting and a number of other measures that are already in place and helping them.

There will never be enough money for everybody, but certainly this government has done more for our seniors than almost any other government.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I look at how things were in 2008 and I look at how things are in 2011. Certainly we do have some concerns as we look at the global economy. However, we take some great comfort in terms of where Canada is and our position in the world. I can look at the riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, where the headlines today were focused on the increased shipments to China of our forestry products, and we see the mills reopening.

Perhaps I could ask the member to reflect on how things have changed in his riding over the last couple of years through economic

action plan part one, and how phase two would actually help the constituents of his riding.

• (1710)

Mr. Joe Daniel: Mr. Speaker, in my riding it is clearly having a big impact. Just recently I spoke in the House about a new business that was opening up, and 40 new jobs have been created by that business in my riding. It is a great step forward. The assistance that we are giving to small businesses, which is where a lot of the jobs are being created, is having a big effect in my riding.

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member a final quick question regarding investment in infrastructure.

When the finance minister says that the benefit of investing in infrastructure is five times greater than through reducing corporate taxes, could the member explain why he still supports corporate tax cuts?

Mr. Joe Daniel: Mr. Speaker, regardless of the tax cuts, this government has made gas tax money to the tune of \$2 billion available to local cities and corporations to support that. That is a great investment in our infrastructure.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government keeps repeating that it has a stable majority, but it conveniently forgets that over 60% of Canadians did not vote for the Conservatives. In the Pontiac, 70% of voters did not vote for them. The government has a fundamental, even moral, responsibility to listen to the majority of Canadians and the majority of my constituents. The government must take time to listen to the Canadian public and to add some key elements to its budget.

This is even more surprising because today we need only look out the windows at the demonstrations as part of the Occupy Ottawa, Occupy Montreal and Occupy Toronto movements to see that things are not going as well as the government claims.

These demonstrations are justified because the government is doing nothing—absolutely nothing—to correct the increasingly glaring inequality in Canada. Just because Canada's economy is doing better than that of the United States or Europe, that does not mean that we are doing well, especially if we look at the facts. For example, the youth unemployment rate is increasing, not decreasing, and every time the stock market plunges, families lose an even larger chunk of their retirement savings. Furthermore, the cost of living is going up steadily, and families are struggling more and more to make ends meet. Yes, only the privileged seem to benefit from Conservative economics.

The growing gap between rich and poor in Canada is reaching crisis proportions. Between 1999 and 2007, one-third of income growth was among the richest Canadians, those with average incomes of \$400,000 or more, who represent just 1% of the population. At the same time, the IMF published a study concluding that more equitable distribution of income equates to longer and more stable periods of economic growth. This government continues to maintain its out-of-touch approach, and Canadian families must work even harder. It is time to take action to ensure that the interests of families come first.

Government Orders

The entire NDP team and I are listening to Canadians and continue to work in Parliament to address the priorities of all Canadians. However, I also agree that opposing without proposing is not particularly useful. For that reason, the NDP has come up with concrete measures to address inequality in this country. Take, for example, the proposal to implement a family caregiver tax credit for those caring for an infirm dependent family member.

The family caregiver tax credit is not enough to support those who take leave to look after a sick relative. The problem with the tax credits proposed by the government is that the caregiver must have sufficient income to claim the credit. Since 65% of households with a caregiver have a combined income of less than \$45,000 and 23% have less than \$20,000, most caregivers cannot benefit from the credits proposed by the government. Changing these tax credits to a family caregiver tax credit would provide direct support that is sorely needed by most family caregivers, who cannot claim the tax credit. Many stakeholders are proposing that the government use the child disability benefit as a model. Family caregivers would receive a monthly non-taxable amount to pay for expenses incurred while caring for someone. The advantage of the credit is that it would primarily help low- and middle-income caregivers. That is a tangible solution for Canadians.

With the Conservatives in power, less than 5% of the annual budget of \$190 million for sickness and compassionate care benefits has been disbursed since 2004, helping just 6,000 Canadians.

The New Democrats also want to make the compassionate care benefits portion of the employment insurance program more flexible and generous to enable claimants to take up to six months of leave to care for dying parents, as opposed to the six weeks that are currently allowed. These are our parents. This is another concrete proposal that targets most Canadians in this situation.

If I could, I would like to continue speaking about health, since this is a very important issue in my region.

● (1715)

I would like to quote from the report of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de l'Outaouais:

However, it has become more difficult for the Outaouais region to maintain these hard-won gains given factors such as demographic growth and availability of workers. Current coverage of obstetric services is a striking example. Nevertheless, these issues, which affect basic services, must be analyzed as temporary situations, and the agency must provide sustainable solutions for the region.

The reality that this government does not seem to want to address or even recognize—as though hiding its head in the sand were a viable option—is that 5 million Canadians do not even have access to a family doctor and 73% of Canadians without a family doctor rely on emergency rooms or walk-in clinics for front-line medical care. In a country where universal health care is recognized as a fundamental principle, this is shameful.

Now, because of this situation, Canada ranks 26th out of 30 industrialized countries. The Conservatives like to say that Canada is in first place but, when it comes to health care, Canada is in 26th place because of this government.

Let us now turn to jobs. The Conservatives claim that the measures in their budget will stimulate the economy and create jobs,

but we know that the same measures were used in the United States without success. In Texas, where the right reigns, the Republican government is doing the opposite of this government.

It is true that job creation is fundamental. The Outaouais, my region, lost 6,200 jobs in 2009, making it the region the second-most affected by job loss in Quebec. In the forestry sector, in October 2008, the Smurfit-Stone company lost nearly 600 jobs, as well as indirect jobs involving transporting wood and all the rest. That same year, Maibec, White Birch Paper and AbitibiBowater had to cut jobs. Again, there is nothing in this budget to help this industry in crisis in Quebec and its workers.

On the contrary, the government is investing even more in the major oil companies and giving tax cuts to the wealthiest. What is the government doing to help Quebec's forestry workers? The answer is simple: not enough.

The Outaouais region has a split personality. In Gatineau and the Collines-de-l'Outaouais, the labour force participation rate is on the rise and is one of the best in Quebec. In the City of Gatineau, the average income is \$52,000, which is not bad. However, when you leave the city, in the Vallée-de-la-Gatineau regional municipality, the average income is only \$32,395. In the Pontiac, it is only \$33,859. This difference is attributed to the proximity of the public service to the first two municipalities. According to Service Canada, no growth in the forestry sector is expected between 2010 and 2012.

Add all that to the significant cuts planned for the public service, and one has to wonder if the two municipalities that have been spared thus far will experience the same kind of job losses. Government cuts and investments do not take urban or rural factors into consideration, nor do they take into account this country's industries in crisis. Basically, this plan is not in tune with the daily reality Canadians are facing. If that were the case, it would take a more serious stance on this country's growing unemployment rate. Today, approximately 1.4 million Canadians are officially unemployed. If we include discouraged and underemployed workers, that number rises to nearly 2 million. The unemployment rate has risen to 7.3%, and the proportion of part-time workers and those looking for full-time work has increased very rapidly.

High-quality, full-time jobs that can support families—not just the insecure jobs that the government constantly brags about having created—are very difficult to find in many regions of the country, particularly my region.

● (1720)

My party's position is clear. The NDP is determined to put the priorities of Canadian families first. This involves immediately passing measures to improve health care, stimulate job creation and guarantee stable retirement.

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[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member made reference on two occasions to health care. I agree in terms of the importance of that universal health care to which he makes reference. I would go further in just how important it is that we start to talk more about the health care accord that we hope will be put into place by 2014.

What is his party's position in regard to the ability to use the Canada Health Act to ensure we have basic standards of health care delivery that are relatively equal from coast to coast, as opposed to just giving tax points or money for health care transfers? Would he support the important role that we, as a legislature, have to ensure that there is good quality health care and that there is accountability for those dollars that are spent?

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I am happy that my colleague is interested in this issue that is important to me and my riding.

My answer is yes. Essentially, the NDP believes that the principle of universality is fundamental. However, we must also respect provincial jurisdictions. The reality is that larger investments, especially for hiring doctors and nurses, are essential to help this country move forward.

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Madam Speaker, my ears perked up at the conversation around health care.

We were all back in our ridings this last week. As I travelled into my rural communities, my constituents were looking at the movement we made in terms of forgiving loans for students as being very positive and they were starting to see very positive results.

They talked about the 6% that we would maintain on transfers. There are many positive things happening in health care.

Would the member perhaps like to reflect on really provincial jurisdiction as being very important to respect, but also how important these movements are to ensure physicians are available and health transfers continue to be protected?

[Translation]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Like her, I represent a rural riding. The comments I have heard from my constituents are that the government's measures make certain things possible. She spoke in English, so my thoughts are in English.

• (1725)

[English]

Loan forgiveness is not enough to create incentives for doctors and nurses to stay in rural areas. It is not as easy as saying that we will forgive a loan.

There are a lot of reasons why people leave rural areas and why young people in particular leave rural areas. The member should know it as well as I do. It has to do with devitalization of the area or crisis in certain industries.

There is a need for greater incentives to keep trained doctors and nurses in rural areas. One solution is to actually train them in the area they were born.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech.

He spoke about what is going on with Occupy Wall Street and the movement that is now sweeping across Canada: Occupy Halifax, Occupy Montreal and Occupy Toronto, for example. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening.

I would like my colleague to tell me what the current budget proposes or what the government is doing to close the gap between the rich and the poor.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Pontiac has 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

The answer is very simple: very little. Furthermore, it will basically only create further inequality. This budget does not present any solutions.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it really is an honour for me to rise here today to speak to the budget implementation act.

[English]

We have heard some excellent speeches today about the government's commitment to the well-being of Canadians in the context of the bill.

Three themes come through loud and clear as we look at the bill. First, our government, especially the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister, have listened to Canadians. Second, hearing what Canadians want, our government has committed to put money back in their pockets, to promote jobs and economic growth. Third, our government proposes to lay the foundation for all Canadians to become stronger, healthier and better off.

We Canadians enjoy one of the most stable and strongest democracies in the world, a democracy where our people care and a democracy where our leaders listen. The government has consulted extensively across the country. In fact, on January 12, 2009, the Minister of Finance and I arranged for him to consult at our very own Park Royal consumer centre in West Vancouver, part of the riding I so proudly represent. Over 400 people came, some from great distances from across the Lower Mainland of Vancouver, to lend the minister their perspectives for our federal budget. The minister was welcomed with a standing ovation. Members of my community and local leaders have in recent months, and over the past three years, shared with me what they believe should be included in the government's low tax plan for jobs and growth.

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The Minister of Finance, my team and I have spoken to a large and diverse range of community groups, local municipalities, first nations, heads of cultural demographic and interest groups. Together we have identified for each group three priorities and three events that most matter to them. The Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and our government have listened.

The economic action plan, the low tax plan for jobs and growth, responds directly to what Canadians across the country want. A big part of that is putting money back into the pockets of Canadians. Our government proposes to put money back into their pockets by better supporting families, balancing tax measures and by improving infrastructure, the Canadian business environment and Canada's focus on clean energy.

As a government that stands up for families, I am pleased to see the introduction of the family caregiver tax credit for caregivers of infirm dependent relatives. This will enable other Canadian families to care for elderly mothers and fathers in the way our family did. I have seen the benefit to families first hand of enabling them to care for frail or sick dependents at home. In my own case, our family was able to work closely with hospital workers, especially palliative care nurses, occupational health nurses and others to enable us to care for my mother until she passed away in May, 2008. Her quality of life was the best it could be, surrounded by her son, her grandchildren and even the family dog for as long as possible.

Do not just take my word for it. The Canadian Caregiver Coalition has said:

The measures announced in the budget are an important acknowledgement of the vital role of family caregivers. The announcement of a Family Caregiver Tax Credit demonstrates the federal government's commitment to families and the caregiving responsibilities that they assume.

Another major way the government proposes to support families is in repealing mandatory retirement regulations. As the Canadian Taxpayers Federation notes, "People have a right to determine how long they work, and this is a major step towards eliminating poverty for seniors".

Charitable organizations in Canada are also world leaders. They encourage people to volunteer their time and money to help the needy in Canada and abroad. I have been warmed and inspired by the strength of the volunteer spirit I see demonstrated in Powell River, the Sunshine Coast, Bowen Island, West Vancouver and North Vancouver, Squamish and Whistler, where I met with constituents over recent weeks in my ride the riding bicycle tour of the majestic riding that I represent.

Many people in the North Shore support Food for the Hungry, for instance, an organization that delivers food and services to needy people overseas. It is an organization I had the honour to chair before becoming an MP. Another great organization in our riding is Linwood House, which assists marginalized women in the downtown east side. Organizations like these will also benefit from the bill, as it strengthens the tax base for charitable donations.

Finally, the government proposes to put money back into Canadian's pockets by investing in clean energy, infrastructure and business. One of the many areas in which people in my riding lead the world is in clean energy. We have seen jobs created and the economy stimulated through independent power projects in many

areas of the riding I represent, in Powell River, Squamish, and elsewhere. Steve Davis is one individual, a resident of West Vancouver, who has done much to promote clean energy generation.

● (1730)

A company in the same field, formerly known as Plutonic Power now Alterra Power Corp., has blazed environmentally friendly trails in the Powell River area, creating jobs for aboriginals and other people. So Canadians will be glad to hear that this budget implementation act extends eligibility for the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation and conservation equipment.

Our government also proposes to invest in infrastructure. While our government now strives for deficit and debt control, we are mindful of the need we are fulfilling with infrastructure improvements. Part 9 of the bill provides for payments to provinces, territories and municipalities, first nations and other entities for municipal infrastructure improvements. In late March of this year the Federation of Canadian Municipalities noted that budget 2011 delivered a vital commitment to cities and communities to develop a new long-term federal infrastructure plan. We will keep this momentum going.

Our government also proposes to invest in Canadian industry. Many captains of the mining industry reside in the riding I represent, like Ian Telfer and Robert Gallagher. Also in our riding is the B.C. Museum of Mining, an excellent institution that not only preserves the history of our province's pioneers but also helps people understand the importance of the mining industry to jobs and prosperity in B.C. today. I am therefore proud to say that this bill would extend eligibility for the mineral exploration tax credit by one year to flow-through share agreements entered into before March 31, 2012. This is an important way that our government proposes to invest in Canadian industry.

Our government has listened to Canadians, and in response proposes to put money back into their pockets by supporting families, by balancing tax measures, and by investing in clean energy, infrastructure and industry. I dare say our government has listened well and made some very fine proposals.

Finally, besides telling our government to put money back into their pockets, Canadians have told us to lay the foundations for our continued security, health and well-being.

That is why the bill introduces a volunteer firefighters tax credit to allow eligible volunteer firefighters to claim a 15% non-refundable tax credit up to \$3,000.

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One of the most valiant persons one will meet in Canadian communities is the volunteer firefighter. I have worked with career and volunteer firefighters in the riding I represent to ensure that, to the best of our ability, our government is supporting them.

In direct response to a meeting held in the Lions Bay part of my riding with volunteer firefighters led by Fire Chief Andrew Oliver, I wrote the Minister of Finance requesting that a volunteer firefighter's tax credit be created and along with many other Canadians calling for that tax credit. We found it in this budget and we are happy. The Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs has said that it strongly applauds the Conservative government's introduction of a \$3,000 credit. How happy Canadians are that our Minister of Finance, known as the greatest in the world, wisely recognized these heroes and provided for our continued security in this budget implementation bill.

Our government proposes to support our continued well-being by investing further in Canadians. In our ridings we have an enormous number of artists, musicians, sculptors and others who promote Canadian culture with their every word and deed. Names like Sarah McLachlan, Randy Bachman, Joni Mitchell, Shari Ulrich and Michael Tickner are just a handful of names of such groundbreaking cultural icons.

What a great breakthrough for our Conservative government to introduce the children's arts tax credit up to \$500 per child for eligible fees associated with children's artistic, cultural, recreational and developmental activities. We cannot wait to see the next generation of artists develop, partly in response to this initiative.

This bill would accomplish what Canadians asked us to do, to provide for their continued security, health and well-being. On behalf of the innovative, hard-working and entrepreneurial people of the riding I represent, and on behalf of all Canadians, I am proud to support this bill, our government and our great country.

● (1735)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I want to go back to the tax credit for caregivers and the tax credit for volunteer firefighters. This is an issue we have discussed quite a bit. By talking about the caregiver element of it, we can actually get to the nub of the issue by saying that if someone is providing a healthy amount of caregiving in his or her home, that is less time for the individual in the workplace.

My question surrounds this. There are two types of tax credits here to consider. There is one that is refundable and one that is non-refundable. An individual would get the non-refundable tax credit but that credit is income tested. A person must make above a certain amount of income to get the full realization of that benefit. If it is a refundable tax credit, an individual can receive the full amount. So if someone does not make any money, that person can still receive a cheque or refundable tax credit for the services provided. That goes just as well for volunteer firefighters but it is particularly acute for caregivers.

I am wondering why this is a particular non-refundable tax credit. Should it not be a refundable tax credit for the vulnerable?

Mr. John Weston: Madam Speaker, there is a saying that no good deed goes unpunished and I suppose that one could welcome great

compliments for a tax credit that would encourage people to be liberated from their work at home and that would help families take care of an infirm person. One might therefore expect that members across the House would not only support that measure but support the act as they vote this evening, and I hope they will. However, sometimes there is a tendency in public life for us to look at the glass as being half empty rather than half full and to say that it was a good thing but wonder why we did not do an even better thing.

As our government tries to control deficits and debts, we will be looking at these tax credits and other measures that would encourage Canadians to do the right thing to strengthen families, but we are also ensuring that what we can do is sustainable for the mid-term and the long-term.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Madam Speaker, as I was listening to the member, I had the opportunity to also look at the summary that is outlined in Bill C-13. I would like the member to respond a bit more about the tax credit advantages.

In the summary we talk about the tax credit for children in artistic, cultural and recreational programs. We talk about tax credits for students in post-secondary education. There are different tax credits or treatment for accelerated capital cost allowance, treatment for investments in machinery and equipment, and in the mining sector.

Could the member explain a bit more about the benefit of these tax advantages and how they empower Canadians and job creators in making our economy stronger?

● (1740)

Mr. John Weston: Madam Speaker, the tax credits would be a specific inducement to get people to do the right thing. We as a party and government consulted widely across the country. As the Minister of State knows, as he was directly involved in those consultations, Canadians asked us to do certain things. Canadians asked us to make it easier, for instance, for someone to stay at home and care for an infirm relative.

Canadians said that they liked what we had done with the sports tax credit in the previous budget. They asked that the Prime Minister or Minister of Finance provide a similar inducement on the arts side. What about volunteer firefighters, these incredibly gallant people, supported by everyone in this House? What could we do to make it easier for them to do what they do, which is get up in the middle of the night? They are not paid, but perhaps if they could receive a tax credit then that would at least acknowledge the enormous benefit they confer upon all Canadians.

Our government listened and it brought in these specific tax credits which would have great results.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the clock is ticking as the vote is quickly approaching. I have been a parliamentarian for about 20 years now and never before have I seen a government take such strong action to prevent members in a chamber from being able to participate fully in what is one of the most important bills that we will debate in the House. This is a bill that allows us to talk about our priorities, what it is we would like to see, and where we could make a difference. I look at this bill as one of the major pieces of legislation that needs to be debated.

We have to remember that this is a thick bill. I am not sure exactly how many pages are in the bill itself as I do not have it in front of me, but it is a thick bill. The government brought it forward for second reading and then a couple of hours later brought in time allocation. By bringing in time allocation, it has limited the ability of the chamber to have appropriate debate and discussion, questions and answers on one of the most important bills we will deal with in any given session.

This is a change in attitude by the government and it is because it has a majority now. It feels it can do whatever it wants. There is an issue that is very important to me, in fact I would suggest is important to all Canadians, but has a very significant impact in the Prairies, and that is the Canadian Wheat Board. The reason I bring it up at this point in my comments is because it is a reflection of the attitude of the government. As I say, we have a government that brought in time allocation within hours of bringing the bill forward. Then we have the Canadian Wheat Board issue.

The government is obligated in law to bring forward a plebiscite when it makes any sorts of changes to the degree it is proposing to make. It has an obligation to do that and it has chosen not to do it. The Canadian Wheat Board itself took on the responsibility that the government had and conducted a plebiscite. In that plebiscite there were tens of thousands of prairie grain and barley farmers who voted and sent a very clear message to the government. The message was very clear. It was to keep the Canadian Wheat Board. They do not want the government to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is about as clear as it can get.

I raised the issue in question period and questioned the Prime Minister and I heard the Prime Minister's response to the plebiscite and to the prairie farmers who took the time to vote, the prairie farmers he claims to represent. His response to the plebiscite is that it does not count, it does not mean anything. In fact, he went out of his way to discredit the way in which that plebiscite was conducted. He does not like the results.

The other day we heard the Prime Minister say that it does not really matter what prairie farmers want, that the government is getting rid of the Canadian Wheat Board whether they like it or not. I am going to suggest that attitude is going to hurt the government. It is going to hurt the government because a majority of prairie wheat farmers, and we are talking well over 20,000 farmers, did not want the government to get rid of the CWB. Its actions to date have been disgraceful. To completely ignore what it is that Canadians and prairie farmers—

• (1745)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I must admit that as my friend across the way was going on I

drifted in and out of attention to what he said. However, it seems to me that we are here today to debate the budget implementation act and what he is talking about is totally irrelevant to it. I would ask you, Madam Speaker, to ask the member across the way to maintain relevance to the debate at hand and stop his comments on irrelevant matters such as the Wheat Board.

The Deputy Speaker: I will give some latitude to the member to come back to the bill at hand.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I know the member opposite does not like what he is hearing but I can assure the member that it is completely relevant to the debate. Had he been listening in terms of the comments and looking at the book, and I can appreciate it is a fairly thick book, he would find that there are many expenditures that deal with our agricultural community. The actions of the government and the profound impact that it would have on the Prairie farmer is worthy of debating today. I suggest that in time the government will regret taking the actions that it has decided to take on the Prairie farmers.

The title of Bill C-13 is “keeping Canada's economy and jobs growing act”. I have had the opportunity to question members and one of the things I raise constantly is the fact that back in August 2008 there were actually 14,631,300 jobs. Today, there are 14,106,100 jobs. We all know that statistics can be used for all sorts of arguments but the point I am trying to get at is that over the years we have lost half a million full-time jobs.

Let there be no doubt that the biggest concerns Canadians have today is the economy and the need for jobs. I believe that this budget document could have done a lot more in terms of being able to create the jobs that Canadians want to see. With a little more imagination, we could have seen a budget that was fairer and that could have generated the type of jobs that Canadians believe government has a role to play in terms of providing the necessary incentives to have an impact on providing those jobs.

In fact, one of the questions I posed to one of my New Democrat colleagues was on the whole issue of housing. It is an area in which I believe the government could do so much more in terms of providing more incentives to improve our housing stock and so forth.

With so little time to speak, I want to pick up on a couple of other very important issues.

The health care accord is something that is of critical importance. Having been in a provincial legislature for a number of years, I can say that the greatest challenge a province has is that percentage of the budget, the need to deal with it, the need to provide funding and the need to look at future federal budgets. The federal government has a role to play in ensuring that there is a basic standard of health care services from coast to coast to coast. However, there is concern in terms of the government not taking the necessary action to make a difference.

Government Orders

I have raised the issue of seniors. Far too many seniors in Winnipeg North and everywhere else in our country are having a difficult time meeting their basic economic requirements. We need to do more to provide that support to our seniors. I would have liked to have seen more going toward senior pensions and the guaranteed annual income portion of it.

• (1750)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Transport), CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Winnipeg North. I would note that the party that formed government previously cut \$25 billion from the provinces, which caused a great deal of problems.

I would also note that his party voted against many initiatives that benefit that member's riding, be it the F-35 contract, or the money for the human rights museum, or any of the great initiatives this government has undertaken that benefit Manitoba, including significant transfer payments.

The member should also reflect on the fact that his party did not win a single seat in the rural areas of the Prairies. In fact, I understand that his party did not win a single poll in rural parts of the Prairies. I think that indicates that the Conservative Party reflects Prairie values, Canadian values.

Why will the member not just come to this side of the House and support the Conservatives and the people of Canada?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I can indicate to the House that the human rights museum is a wonderful project that I supported. When billions of dollars are spent, a lot of what is spent is fairly favourable toward good ideas and good projects. I do support those.

However, at the end of the day, there are some outstanding issues that are fairly significant. The member is right. In Manitoba we have 1 of the 14 seats but there was a time when we had 12 of the 14 seats. When the government takes a position, such as it has on the Canadian Wheat Board, I foresee a time in the future when we might be able to get back 12 of the 14 seats.

I would give it more of a cautionary note that the government might want to tread somewhat carefully in the current direction it is going.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Madam Speaker, perhaps my hon. colleague could shed a bit of light on the following. We have a government that has presented a budget, that is supposedly fiscally responsible and understands the situation, and yet by destroying the capacity of the Canadian Wheat Board to negotiate on behalf of farmers around this world and not having a feasibility study or anything on paper to show what will happen, does the member not think that this may not be quite the right direction in which we should be going?

• (1755)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, when individuals from the agricultural stakeholders in the United States are saying that this is a good thing, and when a majority of our Prairie wheat farmers are saying that they want to keep the Wheat Board, that should be sending up quite a few red flags.

Let there be no doubt that there has been very little, if any, statistical or factual research that the government has been able to do on this issue that clearly enunciates why it is a good policy decision. The reason is that it is a bad decision. The reason that the government is moving in this direction is more so because of a philosophical, ideological twist that the current Prime Minister has. I do not know why he is so passionately against the Wheat Board. It just does not make any sense, and a vast majority of Canadian Prairie wheat farmers have recognized it and that is the reason they voted the way they did in the plebiscite.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-13. I enjoyed the last speech and the questions and comments. The very short answer to that is my relatives who live in Wainwright, Alberta should have the same rights that my relatives who live in Lucan, Ontario currently have, which is choice in terms of how they market their grains. Rights should extend across the country.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: We're not getting rid of the Wheat Board.

Mr. James Rajotte: That is exactly right. We are not getting rid of the Wheat Board. We are allowing marketing choice.

I also want to respond to some of the comments made about the job creation numbers. I encourage people if they question figures that parliamentarians may be using on both sides, to go to the Statistics Canada website and read it. The October 7 release says that following two months, employment rose by 61,000 in September, all full-time employment. This increase pushed the unemployment rate down to 7.1%, the lowest rate since December 2008. It is also dramatically lower than the unemployment rate of the United States, which has been a reversal over the last two to three decades and has occurred under our government. As the Minister of State for Finance has said today, one person who is looking for work and is unemployed is too many and that is why we are continuing to work and introduced this budget implementation act.

For people following the debate, we introduced the first budget in March. The election occurred so we reintroduced the budget in June. However, following a budget there are typically two implementation acts that take all of the measures in the budget and puts them into legislation. We had the first implementation act in June, which passed Parliament, and now we are debating the second budget implementation act.

I will read some of the highlights of the bill which introduces the family caregiver tax credit, the children's arts tax credits making it eligible for artistic, cultural, recreational development activities, the volunteer firefighters tax credit. It removes the \$10,000 limit on eligible expenses that can be claimed under the medical expense tax credit.

Government Orders

There are many other things including the accelerated capital cost allowance, which I will speak about at length later. Qualifying environmental trusts for the Canadian pipeline sector is something that many of us from Alberta have worked on. This ensures that those in the pipeline sector set aside some money to ensure the land is returned to the condition it was in before when the pipeline is removed. I know the member for Calgary Centre has worked very hard on that initiative as well.

There are measures in terms of RRSPs.

The bill also proposes to amend the Canada Student Loans Act to authorize the minister to forgive portions of family physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners, guaranteed student loans if they begin in underserved rural or remote communities.

It also proposes to amend the Employment Insurance Act to provide a temporary measure to refund a portion of employer premiums for small business. This is the hiring credit and something the member who spoke previously should be very interested in and should support. This measure was proposed by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business to assist small businesses in hiring more Canadians, because they are the primary employers of Canadians.

The bill also proposes to amend the Wage Earner Protection Program Act to extend in certain circumstances a period during which wages earned by individuals but not paid to them by their employers who are bankrupt or subject to receivership may be the subject of a payment under that act. That is certainly a good measure and I encourage parliamentarians to look at that seriously.

Another measure is the amending of the Canadian Human Rights Act to repeal certain provisions that provide for mandatory retirement. This is another very good initiative in this legislation. That is why I am standing strongly in support of the bill.

I want to talk at length about the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for investments and machinery and equipment in the manufacturing and processing sector for an additional two years. This was a recommendation that came from our industry committee. In 2006 the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters and others even in the labour movement came forward at committee and said that manufacturing was facing some very severe challenges. They said that they were facing a dollar that had rapidly appreciated in a short period of time. They were also facing some energy costs and challenges from emerging economies such as China. They wanted Parliament to look at ways in which we could address these challenges. It was a very co-operative and collaborative approach. The committee studied it through 2006. I would commend members of all parties for their work in that area.

● (1800)

The report was tabled in Parliament in 2007.

In March 2007, the Minister of Finance, to his credit, took the first recommendation we made, which was the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance for two years, and put that in the 2007 budget. Now it is being extended for another two years in this budget. Essentially this would allow companies across the country to invest in their machinery and equipment.

I would encourage members of all parties to go to manufacturers in their own ridings or across the country and ask the plant managers or the CFOs as to how this has impacted them directly. When I did a walk-through with a manufacturer in Edmonton, he pointed to specific pieces of equipment and said, "This piece of equipment cost \$1 million. This one cost \$1 million. Because of the accelerated capital cost allowance which allows us to write it off at a faster pace, we can afford it. If that was not in place, we could not afford it."

It allows that company to be more productive. In fact, from an environmental perspective, it is using the most up-to-date technology. That means it is more environmentally efficient as well.

This is one of the reasons the committee obviously supported this in 2007 and it is the reason the government is continuing to extend this type of accelerated capital cost allowance.

Again, I would encourage members to talk to manufacturers in their own area as to whether they do support this measure or not.

I will point to a couple more companies.

Argus Machine in Nisku in my riding was very straightforward with us. I think the member for Westlock—St. Paul was with me when we visited that facility. Representatives of that company said there are some very specific things our government has done to assist them, such as the accelerated capital cost allowance and the work-share program. In the work-share program the government covered part of the cost of an employee and the company covered the other part. This enabled companies to retain employees through the downturn. One of the biggest challenges, in fact, perhaps the biggest challenge in an area like mine, in Alberta, is ensuring there are enough workers, both skilled and unskilled, who can satisfy that labour need. In fact, this allowed companies to retain those people for when their orders picked up, and they did not lose them to another company, or a company in another part of the country or, in fact, a company in another country. It enabled them to retain them.

The other thing they pointed to was the investments our government has made in things like the industrial research assistance program, which especially assists small- and medium-size enterprises, if they want to make some innovative investments.

Another thing that the IRAP does is it provides good mentorship to businesses, especially businesses in our area, that have gone from \$1 million to \$7 million in sales. It provides very good mentorship to companies that are expanding in that way.

Another program they point to is the SR&ED program, the scientific research and experimental development program. As parliamentarians know, we received the report today. We were very thankful for the input in that report because it is a very generous program. It is one that works generally very well, but there certainly could be improvements. I would like to thank them for their work in that area.

Government Orders

In terms of the accelerated capital cost allowance, I would like to quote from the March 22 press release by the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters:

The extension of the two-year write-off for investments in manufacturing and processing technologies announced in...budget [2011] is critical to sustaining Canada's economic recovery.... "In an era of economic uncertainty, this tax measure gives manufacturers the confidence to invest in their future by boosting purchases of productivity-enhancing technologies"....

Another area I would like to turn to is loan forgiveness, especially as it pertains to rural areas, on portions of student loans to family physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners if they begin to work in underserved rural or remote communities. The Canadian Medical Association stated:

The initiative to address the shortage of primary care physicians recognizes the particular challenges of providing health care in rural and remote areas of the country.

It is important to point to these specific initiatives because a lot of rhetoric flows when a budget is introduced. However, these are the specific measures that are in this budget implementation bill that members on the other side of the House should think very carefully about before they vote yea or nay to this measure.

● (1805)

Another initiative I want to point to is the extension by one year of the mineral exploration tax credit for flow-through share investors to support Canada's mining sector.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. member could elaborate during questions and comments. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to congratulate the hon. member from Edmonton—Leduc on his speech.

He talked about several measures to create jobs and get the economy moving; on the other hand, he did not talk about the environment. Yet the environment is very important to getting the economy moving, because it could be very costly in the long run. In a report released on September 29, 2011, the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy reported that climate change could cost Canada \$21 billion per year by 2050. So this is where investments are needed—in the environment, in renewable energy sources, green energy, innovation and so on—in order to improve the Conservatives government's record. For now, this budget does not cut it.

Should we not be investing in the environment, rather than in small measures that do not seem to make any difference right now?

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, the hon. member raised environmental issues, but as he knows, the budget did in fact make some investments in the environment.

If he is looking at this specific piece of legislation, the accelerated capital cost allowance which I mentioned, investments in new machinery, makes a specific company more environmentally efficient.

Further to that, this piece of legislation expands eligibility for the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation and

conservation equipment. I encourage him to look at that specific part. I also encourage him to look at the expansion of the eligibility rules for qualifying environmental trusts.

There are very specific measures in this bill that address environmental concerns he may have. That is why I encourage members on the opposite side of the House to think very carefully about the measures in the budget before they vote yea or nay to this measure. The environmental spending was in the first budget implementation act that was passed in June, but these specific measures that address some of the environmental concerns are in this budget implementation bill which we will be voting on very shortly.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his speech, but I also want to discuss the retention of work that he talked about, and some of the measures that are in the bill to help retain the workers.

I appreciate his comments on the capital cost allowance and other smaller measures. There is one measure, however, that is not directly addressed but is of great benefit to areas of higher unemployment, which is the current pilot projects that are in existence for employment insurance.

In one case in particular, by way of illustration, it allows people to rely on the best 14 weeks of work in order to achieve that benefit, whereas before this pilot project, it was the last 14 weeks. Without the pilot project there is a disincentive to go after shorter weeks, as we call them.

I would like him to comment on that. Should these pilot projects be a permanent feature of the Employment Insurance Act?

● (1810)

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, as the member pointed out, the pilot was extended in some fashion. He may disagree with the specific way in which it was extended, but it was extended to the best 14 weeks.

I would also point to the extension of the work-share program which did allow companies to retain a lot of the employees they had, especially during the downturn.

I also point to the hiring credit which was very strongly endorsed and recommended by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as the strongest measure that we could make at this time to enable small- and medium-size businesses to hire new employees.

If the member is concerned about job creation, the job creation numbers, as I mentioned at the outset of my speech, from Statistics Canada itself are fantastic when we compare them to those of other nations in the G7 and the OECD, in part because of things like the work-share program, the best 14 weeks, the sharing credit through EI.

I encourage the member opposite to look very carefully at these measures that are included in this budget implementation bill.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: I must inform the hon. member for Drummond that he may begin his presentation, but that I shall interrupt him at 6:15 p.m.

Government Orders

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is unfortunate that I will not be able to give my entire speech. Nevertheless, I will begin my speech on Bill C-13.

This bill would give large tax breaks to very large business without setting any conditions. What a mistake. Not only are these tax cuts not contingent on the creation of new jobs but they also do not put Canada on the right track for the future, that is the green track, the environmental track.

I will explain why this legislation is but a drop in the bucket in terms of the challenges we will face in coming years. And they will be significant challenges.

First, as I mentioned, the legislation will not create any jobs—and we need jobs. We must continue to create jobs because there are still too many people left behind in Canada and in my lovely region of Drummond. The huge gap between the rich and the rest of the population continues to grow. The vast movement of global occupation and protest make us realize that Canadian families, and those of Drummond as well, are feeling a tremendous amount of pressure. I recently noticed that relief agencies, such as the Comptoir alimentaire Drummond, are being used by more people, which worries me a great deal.

In this respect, let us look at the numbers and statistics that prove that the Conservative government is missing the mark when it comes to job creation.

The number of Canadians who are officially unemployed is still approximately 1.4 million. In addition, if we include those who are discouraged or underemployed, the number is close to 2 million.

So, we would expect serious and concrete job creation measures. For example, the Conservatives could draw on our excellent election platform in which we proposed the introduction of a job creation tax credit of up to \$4,500 for each new job created. This initiative would help to create 200,000 jobs per year, jobs that would meet the needs of families.

We also have other proposals that hon. members can find in our election platform. Unfortunately, I do not have time to share those proposals with them. These are concrete measures to reward businesses that create jobs, not just gifts for very large corporations, banks or the oil and gas industries. No. These are real measures that would benefit families in Canada and in my riding, Drummond. They are real measures that would create good-quality jobs for the future.

Speaking of the oil and gas industries, does the Conservative government really believe that these are the industries of the future? No, they are not. And it is not true that oil sands are an ethical oil source, that is for sure. Give me a break.

In my riding, people have joined forces. I have to stop there? Okay.

• (1815)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 6, 2011, it is my duty to interrupt the

proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

• (1840)

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

(*Division No. 39*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Hoepfner
Holder	James
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
McColeman	McLeod

Government Orders

Menegakis	Menzies	Footo	Fortin
Merrifield	Miller	Freeman	Fry
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Garneau	Garrison
Moore (Fundy Royal)		Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Nicholson	O'Connor	Giguère	Godin
O'Neill Gordon	Obhrai	Goodale	Gravelle
Oda	Oliver	Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Opitz	Paradis	Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Payne	Penashue	Hsu	Hughes
Poilievre	Preston	Hyer	Jacob
Raitt	Rajotte	Julian	Karygiannis
Rathgeber	Reid	Kellway	Lamoureux
Rempel	Richards	Lapointe	Larose
Richardson	Rickford	Latendresse	Laverdière
Saxton	Schellenberger	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Seeback	Shea	Liu	MacAulay
Shipley	Shory	Mai	Marston
Smith	Sopuck	Martin	Masse
Sorenson	Stanton	Mathysen	May
Storseth	Sweet	McCallum	McGuinty
Tilson	Toet	Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Toews	Trost	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Trottier	Truppe	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Tweed	Uppal	Murray	Nantel
Van Kesteren	Van Loan	Nash	Nicholls
Vellacott	Wallace	Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Warawa	Warkentin	Papillon	Patry
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Perreault	Pilon
Sky Country)		Plamondon	Quach
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks	Rae	Rafferty
Williamson	Wong	Ravignat	Raynault
Woodworth	Yelich	Regan	Rousseau
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)	Saganash	Sandhu
Zimmer— 149		Savoie	Scarpaleggia

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brisson
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking

St-Denis
Stoffler
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Finance.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

The Speaker: The motion that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:44 p.m.)

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