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Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

Opposition Motion – Taxes on Health and Dental Care Plans

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

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion today calling on the government to abandon any current and future plans to tax health care and dental care benefits. We need to ensure that the Liberal government stands in this House and supports our motion, to give some comfort to Canadians that their health and dental plans will not be taxed. These benefits lower the tax bills of 13.5 million Canadians and cost the Liberal government nearly \$3 billion in foregone revenue.

Until yesterday, the Liberals were planning to tax the health and dental benefits of Canadians. We want all members in this House, including the Liberal members, to support our motion and hold the Prime Minister to account on his word.

We have seen time and time again promises being broken. There is no trust. In the Prime Minister's election platform, he promised electoral reform, saying over 1,000 times that the 2015 election would be the last first past the post. All we wanted as Conservatives was to have a referendum so the people of Canada could decide how they wanted to elect their representatives. Yesterday, the entire election promise was scrapped, citing "no consensus".

In the Prime Minister's election platform, he promised to reduce small business taxes from 11% to 9%. Instead, the Prime Minister chose to ignore that promise and say that small business is only a tax haven for the rich. Maybe that applies to the Prime Minister. However, small businesses are the backbone of this country. Over eight million Canadians are employed by small businesses, a number that makes up nearly 50% of Canada's entire workforce and over 70% of the private workforce.

As well, the Prime Minister has committed \$7.3 billion outside of Canada, plus an upcoming commitment of \$2.9 billion to an Asian infrastructure bank to build infrastructure in Asia.

The Prime Minister committed to all Canadians that he would run a very small, tiny deficit that would go towards infrastructure and to stimulating the economy. He also promised that the budget would be balanced by 2019, but we can see now that none of this is true.

This morning, the parliamentary budget officer released a report called "Following the Money". This report focused specifically on the Liberals' new infrastructure plan. The parliamentary budget officer outlined several concerning issues, including that the Liberals had no framework to evaluate the program's performance and limited transparency on how the money is being spent. He also confirmed that there is a shortfall of \$9 billion in infrastructure funding and that the government will not meet its economic growth and GDP targets outlined in budget 2016.

The Liberals' infrastructure program was supposed to be the key focus of their economic growth plan. This is how they were going to balance the budget. Clearly, this is no longer going to happen, and it is no surprise. The Prime Minister and his Liberal government have spent so much money that the books will not be balanced until 2055.

The financial federal debt will hit \$1.5 trillion by 2050. That means that those who are 18 years old today will not see another balanced budget until they are 56 years old. Who will pay the tab? It will be the next generation, the generation this Prime Minister purports to be supporting, making sure they have jobs. That is who is going to pay the tab, our children.

Let us remember that the bill has to be paid. Let us look at how the Liberals might do that.

The Liberals have already increased the CPP premiums for employers and employees. They have scrapped the small business tax. Why on earth would we want to help anyone who is actually creating jobs? They have cut the contributions to the TFSA because seniors and young families do not really need to save for their future or retirement. They have increased the down payment requirements for first-time homebuyers to make it harder for young families to purchase a home and enter the market. They have squandered the \$2 billion surplus and two balanced budgets handed over by the Conservatives. Instead of using a common sense method and regulating or fining heavy polluters, what have the Liberals done? They have decided to implement a national carbon tax that will be paid by the taxpayer in higher home heating costs, groceries, and gas, while giving exemptions to those who actually need to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Liberals cite that this carbon tax is revenue neutral, but it is clear that it will only be revenue neutral for the government, not for the taxpayer. What did the Prime Minister forget to factor into the last budget? Indexing the Canada child benefit at a cost of \$22.3 billion. He forgot to include the fighter jets at a cost of between \$5 billion and \$6 billion. He forgot health care transfers at a cost of \$11 billion. Forgot a contingency fund at a cost of \$3 billion to \$6 billion.

Currently, the finance ministry is undertaking the review of all benefits and tax credits under the guise of simplification. The Liberals have already done away with the child tax credit on art, fitness, and textbooks. Therefore, when look at the economic strategy of the government, it is met with much trepidation. The Liberal government is looking for any and all ways to tax the people of Canada to pay for its out of control spending. The Liberals need to cover the cost of a \$1.2 million renovation of the minister's office for Status of Women, another \$800,000 for the renovation of the Minister of Infrastructure's office, \$220,000 for moving expenses of the chief's staff, and limousines for his ministers.

We must have concrete motions in the House of Commons to prevent and to try to control the Liberals' spending. We must curtail their urge to follow greed and their economic policies. We

have all seen how that ended. Canadians deserve much better from the Liberal government and we as the official opposition will ensure that this occurs.

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

Mr. Speaker, again, I will have to differ with many of the comments I have heard from across the way. In listening to the member, she says that the Liberals should be spending on this and should be spending on that. If we tally up the totals, it probably comes close to \$20-plus billion. Then the member talks about the Liberals' deficits and expresses concerns. I do not think she is consistent with many of the arguments she has put forward.

Let me focus a question on the deficit. I am sure the member realizes that the former government had deficits virtually every year, with the exception of the first two years when the Conservatives first came to office. They had billions of dollars in surplus from the Paul Martin government. However, before the recession started, the Conservatives had already put us into a deficit and that deficit, contrary to what the Conservatives might try to tell us, never disappeared. It continued to grow, and Prime Minister Harper actually had an accumulated deficit in excess of \$100 billion.

Why should this government listen to what was likely the most irresponsible, regressive government that ultimately put us into the position we were in not that long ago? Now we see a government that truly cares about Canada's middle class. Why should we listen to advice—

The Deputy Speaker:

Order, please. The hon. member for South Surrey—White Rock.

Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the economy and where it was when the Conservatives were in power, I find that astonishing. We went through and came out of a recession. We used stimulus money, got the economy going, and moved forward. Was there a deficit in doing that? Absolutely. Did we balance the budget? Did we have a plan? Did we end up with a surplus? Did we have balanced budgets? Yes, yes, yes and yes. We will not wait until 2050 to see if there will be a balanced budget. Therein lies the difference.

Mr. Robert Kitchen (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock knows, today is Groundhog Day. Similar to *Groundhog Day* fashion, in 1993 the Liberals campaigned to end the GST. Once they were in government, they kept it. In 2015, the Liberals campaigned on lowering the small business tax, and they have not done that. If we go back to 1994, the Liberals tried to implement a GST on health care costs. Fast forward to 2015, and they are doing the same thing.

How does my my colleague see these taxes affecting the small business industry, not only the doctors and dentists but also the patients and clients who use them?

Ms. Dianne L. Watts:

Mr. Speaker, when we look at who the job creators are in our country, it is small business. We need to create a low-tax environment for small businesses so they have the ability to grow and to hire people. We need to ensure we support those businesses. By adding red tape and taxes, by not completing the promises that were undertaken by the Liberal government, we are harming those businesses. They will move or shut down. We have seen it in every community across the country. Small business cannot afford the Liberal taxation plan, and they will shut down and not hire. The Liberal attack on small business is astonishing.