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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1000)
[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to nine petitions.

* * *

NUCLEAR LIABILITY AND COMPENSATION ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-20, An Act respecting civil liability and compensation for damage in case of a nuclear incident.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts: the sixth report on Public Accounts of Canada, 2008; and the seventh report on chapter four of the first nations child and family services program, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, of the May 2008 report of the Auditor General of Canada.

In accordance with Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to each of these reports.

* * *

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (for the Minister of Natural Resources) moved that Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Energy Efficiency Act, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

PETITIONS

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another income trust petition on behalf of Mrs. Jan Pickering of Nova Scotia who remembers that the Prime Minister made a commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud was a promise not kept.

The petitioners remind the Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts but that he broke that promise by imposing a 31.5% tax, which permanently wiped out over \$25 billion of the hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon the Conservative minority government to: first, admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions; second, apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise, particularly seniors; and finally, repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on tax on income trusts.

● (1005)

CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present four petitions from Ontario and one from Quebec supporting Bill C-458, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (library materials).

FUEL PRICES

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the following petition signed by hundreds of constituents across Ontario.

In this particular instance, the petition calls upon the Government of Canada to recognize the effect that high fuel prices are having on the economy, particularly as it relates to affordability.

The petitioners ask for the reinstatement of the office of petroleum price information, which was abolished by the government in 2006, as the energy market information service which, like the U.S. Energy Information Agency, would produce weekly reports to all Canadians on energy supply and demand, inventory and storage information.

Speaker's Ruling

The petitioners also call upon this Parliament to begin hearings into the energy sector to determine how the government can foster competition and provide transparency to the energy market and to eliminate the monopolistic efficiency-as-defence clause of the Competition Act.

These petitions were collected and signed well before the Suncor-Petro-Canada merger.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition with several hundred signatures calling upon the federal government to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

This declaration is one that is circulating at the international level. Members from my riding and other parts of the country press upon the Government of Canada to seek that declaration and to support it.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 15 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 15—**Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With respect to religious freedom around the world: (a) will the government recognize that religious persecution is an international crisis affecting many religious groups in the world; (b) will the government develop an automatic array of interventions that may be imposed by Canada against foreign governments, such as Iraq, that may support religious persecution or fail to prevent it; and (c) what steps is the government prepared to take to improve measures for refugees who have suffered religious persecution?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED MISLEADING INFORMATION —SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Malpeque on March 5, 2009, concerning information disseminated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. I would like to thank the member for having raised this matter.

[English]

In raising this issue, the member alleged that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans misused the privileges of her office in allowing the dissemination of misleading information for partisan purposes on her department's letterhead and website under the name of a Conservative senator. The member contended that the actions of the minister, the department and the member of the other place compromised his privileges as a member of Parliament.

The member for Malpeque explained that a press release by the senator was issued with the department's letterhead on its website. He also indicated that the senator was not an official spokesperson for the department. The press release concerning the seal hunt was critical of a member of the other place, the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party and, according to the member, distorted the position of the Liberal leader and the Liberal Party.

The member argued that it was the responsibility of the minister to ensure that media resources were used only for departmental purposes and that she had failed to do so. He quoted at length from the communications policy of the Government of Canada, illustrating how the news release had violated that policy. He further argued that, as a consequence of the minister's allowing the department's letterhead and website to be used in a partisan way by someone with no departmental affiliation, his privileges as a member had been violated.

[Translation]

The release of a departmental communiqué that is critical of members of the Senate and of the House is extremely unusual and is a serious matter that causes me considerable concern.

However, while the member may well be right that it is the responsibility of ministers to adhere to the government's communication policy, it is not within my purview to judge whether the minister did or not follow that policy. In the present case, my only role is to ascertain whether the actions of the minister and the department have violated the hon. member's privileges.

• (1010)

[English]

In the past, Speakers have been called upon to rule on questions of privilege relating to actions taken by government departments that have affected the privilege of members, for example, government advertising anticipating decisions of the House. In rare cases, such actions have been viewed as obstruction.

[Translation]

More often than not, however, as noted in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, on pages 91 and 92:

“—rulings have focused on whether or not the parliamentary duties of the Member were directly involved. While frequently noting that Members raising such matters might have legitimate complaints, Speakers have regularly concluded that Members have not been prevented from performing their parliamentary duties”.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

In the current matter, I do not think that the member has demonstrated a link to his parliamentary duties. Likewise, it has not been demonstrated that the events described have had an undesirable effect on the reputation of the House of Commons. For those reasons, I cannot find that the member's ability to perform his work has been obstructed and, therefore, I cannot find a prima facie question of privilege.

I wish to thank the hon. member for his vigilance. In raising the matter, he has drawn public attention to a serious situation that needed to be remedied. His views have been heeded from media reports and, on examination of the website of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it appears that the offending communiqué has been removed and the departmental officials have apologized.

[Translation]

No doubt ministers and their officials have taken cognizance of these unfortunate events and will ensure that nothing like this happens again.

[English]

I thank the House for its attention to this important matter.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—VOTE 35 IN MAIN ESTIMATES 2009-10

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.) moved:

That, due to the extraordinary nature of the spending authority proposed in Treasury Board Vote 35 in the Main Estimates for 2009-2010, this House calls upon the government to table in the House, by April 3rd, 2009, a list of the departments and programs which are likely to require access to this extraordinary authority; and

on each occasion that the government uses Vote 35, this House calls upon the government to table in the House, within one sitting day of each such use, a report disclosing:

- (a) the name and location of each project to which the funding is being provided (including the federal electoral district in which it is located),
- (b) the amount of federal funding,
- (c) the department and program under which the federal funding is being provided, and
- (d) what each project is intended to achieve in fighting the recession, and why it requires recourse to Vote 35 rather than any other source of funds; and

that each such report shall be posted on a publicly accessible government website, and referred immediately to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and to the Auditor General.

The Speaker: Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 2009, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of the supply of bills.

In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this opposition day motion. The burden of my argument is that the request we are making to the government is so utterly reasonable that

any decision by the government not to accede to this request will be seen by all reasonable people to be utterly unreasonable.

It is reasonable because, with regard to this \$3 billion fund, all we are asking from the government is that it provide a modicum of accountability to the people of Canada. It could do so at absolutely no cost in terms of any significant resources required and no cost in terms of any delay in getting the money out the door.

[Translation]

It is quite reasonable to ask the government for some transparency and accountability, especially since there would be no delay in terms of spending the money needed to boost the economy.

• (1015)

[English]

Let me begin first by explaining what it is we are asking for. The government has asked, through the estimates, to have this special \$3 billion fund under the so-called Treasury Board vote 35. These funds would be spendable over the period April to June of this year. Liberals do not have any objection to that in principle because we acknowledge the urgency of getting money out the door. The problem is the government will not tell Canadians what the money is to be spent on.

In the estimates there is the statement that the funds will be used “to supplement other appropriations” as well as to provide for budget initiatives. In other words, as written, it is a blank cheque because the funds can be used for purposes stated in the budget and to supplement other appropriations, in other words, anything under the sun. This is what we deem to be unacceptable. Canadians should be informed as to at least the general nature of these expenditures rather than delivering a blank cheque to the government.

The Liberal request comes in two parts. First, we want the government to provide to Parliament and Canadians a simple list of the programs and departments that will be covered by the \$3 billion by April 3. This is hardly an onerous request because I have actually seen such a list in a private briefing received from Treasury Board officials. The list already exists, so I see no reason why the government should hesitate to provide that list to Parliament and to the people of this country.

The second thing we are asking is that the government table after-the-fact reports, and I stress the term after-the-fact reports, on spending projects. This involves no delay because it is after the fact and it involves no significant additional work because all of the work would have been done, in any event, to obtain the Treasury Board approvals. All we are asking is for the government to provide a list of programs and departments, which it already has, there is no cost involved, and an after-the-fact report on spending projects which the government would have in its hands, in any event.

Let me quote some Conservatives who wax eloquent on the subject of accountability and should agree with us in the Liberal Party when all we are demanding is a modicum of accountability.

Business of Supply

The then Treasury Board president in 2006 said, “To instill confidence, the government must be open and it must be more accountable. It must ensure that Canadians and parliamentarians have the right controls in place and it must provide them with the information they need to judge its performance”.

The same minister in April 2006 said, “Canadians said loudly and clearly that they wanted an open, honest and accountable government. They want their taxpayer dollars spent wisely and well”.

This statement was made in the Conservative Party election platform in 2006:

Governments cannot be held to account if Parliament does not know the accurate state of public finances.

Therefore, when we on the Liberal side ask simply that the government provide a list that it already has as to which departments the \$3 billion will be coming from, we are not asking too much. It is entirely consistent with the stated views of the Conservative Party.

I saved my best quote for the end because this is a quote from the Auditor General of Canada on March 23, 2009, which addresses the very issue that is before us today. She stated:

It's not unreasonable. \$3 billion is a fair bit of money and they must have ideas, even in broad strokes, how that money will flow between April and June. I must say that I don't buy the argument that they can't tell them something — maybe not the detail of, say, what festival, or how much, but they could at least say where the money is going, whether it's (to) infrastructure or festivals.

That was stated by the Auditor General of Canada. We are not even asking for festivals and infrastructure. In the list, we are simply asking for the amounts of money by program and department, and an after-the-fact accounting of where that money goes.

● (1020)

Imagine the now Prime Minister in his role as leader of the opposition if the shoe were on the other foot and if a Liberal government were to have the temerity and the lack of accountability to propose a \$3 billion blank cheque, or slush fund some might call it, without indicating to Parliament or to Canadians any idea at all of how a putative Liberal government would spend that money. I contend that the Prime Minister would have had an absolute hissy fit at the very notion that such a blank cheque should be delivered to a Liberal government, but now seems to want it delivered to his own government.

The need for accountability is compounded by the fact that the government has shown itself to be untrustworthy. I refer to the information we have had for some time now that in terms of infrastructure projects a disproportionate amount of infrastructure projects ended up in Conservative ridings. An even more egregious case which was reported only yesterday by David Akin of Canwest News that with regard to the program new horizons for seniors, since February 17, distributions of approximately \$20,000 per case were made in 33 ridings. It is difficult to believe this is the case, but according to Mr. Akin, of those 33 ridings, 32 were held by Conservatives. I would contend it goes beyond any reasonable statistical probabilities that this was a purely random event; 32 out of 33 is a very high fraction.

[*Translation*]

I think that the government has only one defence against the proposal we are making today, and that is that the money must go out the door quickly because Canada's economy is in crisis and it is imperative that there be no delays.

[*English*]

On this we are 100% in agreement. It is we who have said for months that the Conservatives' delay in bringing forward a decent budget was delaying infrastructure projects, shovel ready projects, and if they acted earlier many more thousands of Canadians would now be employed.

We rushed this budget through at lightning speed, notwithstanding its inadequacies, because we recognized that the top priority had to be to get the money out the door. We have agreed as well, in terms of us putting the government on probation, that one of the things we will be watching like hawks is whether it does indeed get the money out the door because we all know its record, for example in infrastructure, has been dismal, getting less than 20¢ on the dollar out of the door in terms of every dollar it has announced.

We also know that the Business Development Bank of Canada committed to billions of dollars of much needed business credit lending but has yet to get any money out the door or even to have something that could be described as a plan.

It is the Liberals on this side, as much as anyone on the government's side or any other party, who have been seized with the urgency of fast action to get money out the door, but the point is that the modicum of accountability that we are proposing will not delay this money by one nanosecond.

Let me just repeat that, in case somebody on the other side has missed the point. The first thing we are asking for is a list, which already exists and which I have seen with my own eyes. All the government has to do is produce that list of proposed expenditures by department and by program by April 3, so clearly that will cause no delay. The other thing we are asking for, after the moneys have been approved, is a reporting to Parliament of what those projects are.

The idea that it cannot do this because of the urgency of getting money out the door is an argument that has no foundation whatsoever. To put it differently, the Conservative government should be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. It should be able to both provide to Canadians at least a broad explanation of how it proposes to spend taxpayers' money and it should be able to get that money out the door expeditiously.

Canadians should not be asked to choose either accountability or rapid fiscal stimulus. Canadians should be entitled to both. In terms of the specifics of our motion, I have demonstrated very clearly that there is no choice required. There is no trade-off here. It is entirely possible and extremely simple both to get the money out the door quickly and to do so in a reasonably accountable fashion.

Business of Supply

My last point is this. What is the reasonable person, the non-partisan person, to conclude if the government says no to this ultra-reasonable request by the Liberal Party of Canada? A reasonable person would have no choice but to conclude that the government must have some ulterior motive because if it is able to provide this accountability at no cost in terms of delay, at no cost in terms of the resources of the public service, then what would be the reason to say no?

I can honestly think of no reason to say no unless the government has some agenda to use this \$3 billion for purposes not stated in the budget, for purposes of a Conservative riding-directed strategy of the kind described by David Akin in the case of new horizons for seniors, or of the kind documented by infrastructure expenses.

I conclude by saying to the government that what we have asked of it today is so eminently reasonable, so modest, so appropriate, so costless to do, that if the government refuses to do this, a reasonable person would have no alternative but to conclude that the government has something to hide.

• (1025)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this motion is fairly worthwhile given the very unusual situation where we are being asked to accept that the Conservative government be given a \$3 billion discretionary fund that it could spend in a highly partisan way.

In our experience, this type of thing went on when the Liberals were in power, and some of the money was spent on the sponsorship scandal.

Does my colleague not believe that by accepting that the government have this \$3 billion vote to spend as part of this budget, we could find ourselves in a situation where there is not much accountability, which is what happened previously in a scandal that made the news around the world?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I agree with most of what my colleague said, especially in light of this government's behaviour and the fact that 32 of the 33 ridings that have received money are Conservative ridings, which can hardly be a coincidence. That is why we put forward this motion. Canadians have the right to know in general terms how this government plans to spend money. It is not very difficult. All we are asking for in advance is a list of the major programs of the departments that will be doing the spending. The government would have until April 3 to provide this information. We believe that this is quite a reasonable request, and I hope the government will agree to it.

• (1030)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what is really concerning is we have a finance minister who barely two months ago stood up in the House and said that he had a surplus. Before that, he said that if there was going to be a recession it would have already happened and that we missed this recession.

Now we are not only \$30 billion in the hole but we are being asked for an extra \$3 billion unaccountable slush fund that the government should be able to spend however it wants, how quickly

it wants and under whatever circumstances. We see no pattern with the government of any form of accountability on a long list of pork-barrel projects.

As parliamentarians how can we sit back and entertain this kind of \$3 billion slush fund without accountability when we know what the result is going to be six months or a year down the road with the Conservative government?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I could expand on my colleague's list of the government's silly statements, contradictory statements, all over the map statements. The member may recall that two months ago the Prime Minister very irresponsibly spoke of Canada heading into depression. More recently he has lurched to the other extreme and talked in Pollyanna terms about Canada snapping out of recession before anyone else. He has gone from one extreme to the other. It is not so much optimism or pessimism; it is all over the map. It leads us to the position where I do not think anyone can believe what he says any more on the state of the economy.

In terms of the member's question as to why we would pass the budget, notwithstanding its many inadequacies which are too numerous to mention, I would remind him that Canada is in a state of economic crisis right now. Jobs are falling by the tens and hundreds of thousands. Had we joined the NDP in voting down the government over the budget, we would be in an election now. We would have delayed the flow of billions of dollars by several months.

While the NDP is free to act irresponsibly without consequence, we in the Liberal Party have to understand that we have to also take account of the state of the economy and the needs of the unemployed people. It was our conclusion that it would not have been responsible to cause an election, to cause a delay of months in getting the money out the door even though the budget left much to be desired.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend across the way, the member for Markham—Unionville, made good use of quotations. It seems to me there is another quotation that might be relevant to the House and it reads as follows:

I feel entirely principled in doing the right thing which is to do everything in our power to get the money out the door. When the economy is as bad as we've been saying...priority number one has to be to get that billions of dollars of support in the economy. I have no apologies whatsoever for that position.

It was the member for Markham—Unionville who said that. I do not know when he changed his mind and decided that it was more important to get a one day report after spending was done.

He said that he has seen the list and I have not heard him raise any alarm about the list. I want to make sure that he is not raising any alarm about the list that he has seen and that he would not expect Canadians to raise any alarm. If he did want to raise an alarm, is that just going to delay these billions of dollars from getting out the door?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, it sounds as though the hon. member was totally asleep during my speech and my answer to the previous question, because I must have said repeatedly, seven times perhaps, to the boredom of those who were listening, that our priority was to get the money out the door. And he quotes me saying the same thing as if it is some attack on me. That is crazy.

Business of Supply

What was his other point? Oh yes, have I seen the list. I have seen the list and the list is fine, I think. If they do not make the list public and commit to it, they are not obliged to stick to the list, are they? If they put that list out, it will not delay the money by one second.

The member continued to sleep through my great speech and totally missed the point.

• (1035)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this basic issue goes right to the fundamentals of our democracy. It has been a long tenet here that any tax on the Canadian people and any appropriations from the federal fund come as a vote in Parliament through the budget process or the estimates process. It is a little unusual to get the money out quickly.

The issue becomes that we, the Parliament for the Canadian people, want to be told. Just tell us how the money is going to be spent. I cannot see why we are even debating that. Then again, I think the concept goes back to whose money we are talking about. I ask my friend, the member for Markham—Unionville, to whom does the \$3 billion belong?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to respond to my colleague from Charlottetown. Some nine years ago we used to sit in a similar place in the rump, so it is good to be back together in a different context. He will play an important role in this should the government agree, because I believe my colleague is now the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It is one of the committees that plays an essential role in terms of the stewardship of taxpayers' money.

As he knows, in answer to his question of whose money it is, it is the money of Canadians. It is a first duty of parliamentarians to ensure appropriate scrutiny is provided to this money before it goes out the door. Of all people, it is the Conservatives who ran on this point of view in 2006. Now when they are the government they are taking the unacceptable position of abandoning every notion of even the smallest modicum of accountability.

I agree with my colleague that this is not acceptable behaviour.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is in play is a lot of politics with a capital "P". When the Prime Minister in November 2007 rightly raised an alarm, he was pooh-poohed by the opposition. When he tries to be optimistic and lead Canadians in a bit of hope, he is pooh-poohed by the opposition. This is nothing but politics with a capital "P".

How does the hon. member intend to vote this afternoon when this comes up for a vote?

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I will certainly vote for the motion. I proposed it; it would be a bit peculiar if I voted against the motion that I proposed. I would ask that the member and his party consider supporting this motion also because, as I said, it is an extraordinarily modest request that asks for a slight amount of accountability—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board.

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

This government has brought forward an aggressive multi-year plan to help Canadians in tough economic times.

[*Translation*]

This plan is timely, targeted and temporary. It will enable individuals, families and communities in all regions and provinces across Canada to access funds.

[*English*]

It puts in place measures to ensure that funding flows to those who need it most, while ensuring that due diligence is done. One of these measures is a special central vote in main estimates of \$3 billion assigned to the Treasury Board Secretariat for budget implementation. The funds allocated by this vote will allow our government to provide immediate funding for ready-to-go initiatives announced in the economic action plan in advance of the normal parliamentary supply schedule.

These are extraordinary times. We cannot wait for the normal supply period in June before getting money to some of the ready-to-go projects. We have to act immediately if Canadians are going to feel the positive impact of the economic stimulus this year. Time is of the essence. I would ask all members of the opposition to get on board instead of playing political games with the well-being of Canadian families and businesses. Nero fiddled while Rome burned. The hon. members opposite risk doing the same.

This government has a job to do. We need to get money flowing to the people who need it most. Even the International Monetary Fund said as much. In a recent report it said that Canada's immediate focus should be on implementing the budget to mobilize spending.

That is why we are working day and night to get everything lined up now, and we are doing this responsibly. We are striking the right balance between the rapid delivery of stimulus measures and appropriate due diligence and transparency.

The process we have in place to provide accountability and transparency in the use of these funds is the same as the normal process we use when asking for parliamentary approval. The only difference is the timeframe has been moved forward from June to April so that these funds can be applied to the ready-to-go projects at the beginning of the construction season rather than at the end. That makes a huge difference when we are trying to create jobs so that people can feed their families.

We will be reporting to Parliament so that Parliament can hold the government to account on the use of these funds. The process is completely transparent.

There seems to be an assumption among some members of the opposition that there is an ulterior motive here. I can tell members that the only motive is to help Canadians during these difficult times. Our record speaks for itself. We brought Canadians the Federal Accountability Act. We brought Canadians the Lobbying Act.

Business of Supply

Given the Liberals' record of scandal, they are not the people to lecture us on accountability.

All of the funds distributed through the \$3 billion appropriation will be thoroughly accounted for. In keeping with this government's desire to be responsive and responsible, we have established clear conditions for the use of this vote to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are in place.

Let me be clear about this. The \$3 billion can only be used for economic action plan initiatives announced in budget 2009 and approved by this House. Every initiative funded from this vote requires the approval of Treasury Board. Existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met. For example, grants and contributions payments are subject to the transfer payments policy. The use of this vote is time limited. Funds can only be allocated between April 1 and June 30, 2009.

Contrary to what has been reported, we chose to create a special vote to provide bridge funding for departments to ensure due diligence in approvals, transparency in reporting, and accountability for its use.

We will also streamline the review and approval of policies and programs, while ensuring appropriate controls and respect for parliamentary authority. For example, we will use simplified or omnibus Treasury Board submissions for straightforward program extensions or top-ups. We have better aligned the timing of the budget and estimates. Parliament will have full disclosure. Reporting on allocations on the vote will be done in supplementary estimates and in regular reports to Parliament on the economic action plan.

In addition, thanks to our efforts to strengthen accountability and transparency, the public service is better equipped to handle this process than ever before. For example, over the past three years, financial management standards across government have been improved, departments have independent audit committees that include members from outside government, and steps have been taken to ensure departments have qualified chief financial officers. Departments have also bolstered the management of their operations.

● (1040)

Under the management accountability framework assessments, large departments and agencies, representing over 90% of government spending, have improved in the area of financial management and control. Recent results show that financial management indicators rated acceptable or strong have risen to 90% from 59%.

We have also increased departmental oversight with a committee of deputy ministers who will be tracking progress and overseeing the implementation of these measures. The Auditor General will also audit spending. For the second year in a row, the government plans to use early spring supplementary estimates as a vehicle for budget measures.

We all appreciate that we have a big job ahead of us. We will be balancing appropriate due diligence and transparency, while getting money out the door to help Canadians. We are up to the task and intend to help Canadians in these difficult times. That is more than I can say for some members of the opposition, who want to play games with the \$3 billion needed to prime the stimulus pump.

The economic stimulus, including the \$3 billion, is money invested to assist Canadians when they need it most. I hear from my constituents in my riding of North Vancouver daily. They are excited about the economic action plan. They know that the projects outlined in our plan will improve our communities and provide much needed jobs.

Some of the programs my constituents are excited about include investments in trails, recreational centres and green infrastructure projects, to name a few. Communities across the country will benefit from our plan. The people in North Vancouver and all Canadian communities are looking forward to these important investments and jobs.

I am getting to work for North Vancouver and all Canadians. I encourage the hon. members opposite to put aside politics and get to work as well.

I am shocked that some members of the House are playing politics at a time when Canadians are turning to government for help. I am disappointed in their insistence on opposing for the sake of opposing and making political hay out of nothing when they could be pitching in to help, not hindering Canadians in their efforts to climb out of this pit. I am saddened they would put scoring cheap political points before compassion.

I am proud to be part of a government that believes in Canadians, a government that has remade the way Ottawa works under the banners of accountability and transparency, a government that is dedicated to ensuring every tax dollar delivers results.

This is the government that will get dollars out of the door with due diligence and respect for the Canadian taxpayer. This is not the time to play politics with our economy. We do not need more roadblocks; we need more roads built.

● (1045)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's interest in reading his speech and talking about the mantra of playing politics.

On everything the parliamentary secretary has just said about transparency and accountability, he has to ask a question on behalf of his constituents and Canadians. If he has set the bar high in terms of transparency and accountability, why is the hon. member, his party and the minister not prepared to come forth with a detailed budget that suggests line for line how money is to be spent?

If the hon. member is serious about being accountable and bringing this test of accountability to a new threshold, maybe he would like to start by recognizing that grants for seniors seem to be going only to Conservative ridings.

Business of Supply

If the hon. member has any interest in ensuring he is not playing politics, which he is doing by those statements, and getting down to the business of helping Canadians, he will also like to tell his constituents in North Vancouver why he took a two month break from the House when he allowed the Prime Minister to prorogue the House at a time when the economy needed his help.

Will the hon. member now stand in his place and tell us exactly where this money is being spent, which is what this motion calls for?

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, first, we do have an action plan. It is a 360-page booklet. I hope the hon. member takes the time to read this booklet because in it are some very important things for the future of Canada.

When it comes to accountability, I point out that the money to be used during the period from April 1 to June 30 is subject to Treasury Board approval and current accountability requirements and is for a limited time. We will be reporting on it. In fact, our Liberal colleagues have asked us to report on a quarterly basis, and that is what we will do. We will also report on the estimates, so members will know where these funds have gone.

I also point out that we are working with other levels of government to get these moneys out the door. We are working with municipalities and provinces across the country. We need to consult with them to ensure the money goes to where it is needed most. It would be inappropriate to announce spending ahead of time without their consultations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was listening as the member across the floor talked about playing politics. I would like to point out to the member that that is why we are here, to practice politics. If he thinks this is not the place to practice politics, perhaps he should go elsewhere. That would be the best solution for him.

In his speech he said the government is working night and day. If this government had been the least bit responsible, the problem would have been solved long ago. When it was time to solve the problem, this government proposed ideological, rather than economic solutions, and instead decided to shut down Parliament.

As we saw in December, the government's economic statement contained nothing concrete. Now it desperately wants to spend money and get the economy going. However, during the election campaign, which was not so long ago, there was no deficit, life was good and everything was just fine. Now we have an \$83 billion deficit for the next two years, and the government wants \$3 billion to stimulate the economy. It should have thought of that before preparing its economic statement in December. It should have thought of that then, and taken action that would have been good for Canadians.

Why should we have faith in the government now, when it has been talking nonsense for months?

• (1050)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, our government has been working hard to protect Canadians. Around the world, Canada is

being looked at and praised as being a country that is doing the most to help its citizens right now. Our banking system is in the best condition of any banking system in the world, according to the World Economic Forum. This is because of prudent measures that have been put in place by our government.

We have been working hard to lower taxes so this recession will also not be so difficult for people and so they will have money in their pockets. They know where to spend that money better than anybody in Ottawa. We want to ensure this money gets to the people who need it most. We want to ensure this money creates jobs. We do not want to lose this construction season. We have a limited period of time to get these construction projects going, and we do not want to miss that opportunity.

We recommend that the opposition not play partisan politics, but look after the interests of Canadians first and support the bill.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity today to speak in support of vote 35, the \$3 billion required by the government to kickstart our economic action plan. The government's action plan will help Canadians and businesses weather the storm and it will help the economy become strong. It is a good plan. It is timely, it is targeted and it is temporary and lays out the path for our return to prosperity.

The Prime Minister stressed this in his recent speech to the Brampton Board of Trade when he said, "We are positioned to emerge from this global recession in a stronger position in the world than we have ever been". I just returned from a trip to Asia where we dealt with the economic circumstances in the globe today. Asian leaders are well aware of the strength of the Canadian position and are very appreciative.

Our multi-year plan outlines the many measures that will be taken to stimulate the economy, to protect Canadians hit the hardest and to secure our long-term prosperity. The stimulus in our economic action plan represents 1.9% of our economy for the next fiscal year and approximately 1.4% for the year after. However, for these measures to have a real impact, they have to be implemented as soon as possible. We need to get this money out the door quickly to help Canadians in the short term. Quite honestly, we are not the only ones to think so. Even the International Monetary Fund in a recent report said that Canada's immediate focus should be on implementing the budget immediately to mobilize spending. That is exactly what we are doing.

One of the key measures we are putting in place to this is vote 35 of the main estimates for \$3 billion assigned to the Treasury Board Secretariat for budget implementation. This appropriation will allow Treasury Board to provide initial funding for ready to go initiatives announced in the economic action plan after April 1. Reporting on these allocations from the vote will be done in the supplementary estimates and in quarterly reports to Parliament on the economic action plan. All the funds distributed will be thoroughly accounted for.

Business of Supply

In keeping with the need to be responsive and responsible, we have also established clear conditions for the use of the vote to ensure the appropriate checks and balances are in place. My constituents would demand that as would the constituents of all members. It is our responsibility as parliamentarians.

For example, it can only be used for initiatives announced in the economic action plan. Every initiative funded from this vote requires the approval of Treasury Board and existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met. Also, the use of this vote is time limited. Funds can be allocated only for that brief period between April 1 and June 30.

Contrary to what has been reported, we chose to create this special vote to provide bridge funding for departments to ensure due diligence and approvals in transparency in reporting and accountability for its use.

In addition, we will streamline the review and the approval of policies and programs while ensuring that appropriate controls and respect for parliamentary authority are in place. For example, we will use simplified or omnibus Treasury Board submissions for straightforward program extensions or for top-ups. Existing programs will be dealt with in an omnibus way because these have received prior approval from Treasury Board.

In addition, we have better aligned the timing of this budget and the estimates.

Thanks to new measures put in place by the Treasury Board Secretariat, the public service now is better equipped to handle this process than in previous years. Over the past three years financial management standards across the government have been dramatically improved. Departments now have independent audit committees that include members from outside government as well as qualified chief financial officers. Departments now have also improved the management of their operations from an efficiency rate of 58% to 59% now up to over 90%, a dramatic improvement. We are very thankful for the improvements at the department level.

Under the management accountability framework assessments, large departments and agencies have not only improved by a bit, but they have improved their performance in financial management and total control across the board, and we are very appreciative of that.

We have also increased departmental oversight with a direct committee of deputy ministers who will be tracking progress and overseeing the implementation of these measures, a recommendation from the Auditor General. The Auditor General, of course, will be in addition auditing spending.

•(1055)

In addition, for the second year now, the government plans to use early spring supplementary estimates as a vehicle for budget measures. One could hardly say that there are no measures of accountability.

We have streamlined our process. We have advanced the normal parliamentary supply schedule because this economic crisis demands quick action.

People in my riding have called strongly for this type of stimulus. I expect that members from all parties have experienced the same type of demand. The processes are there to do it. The public service is working day and night to do it. The government is pushing in the House to do it.

I have complete confidence in the ability to support our fellow citizens in this time of crisis. That is what we are here for. We are Canadians, and in a time of crisis Canadians have always risen to the occasion. We have come together, but what are members of the official opposition doing now? Respectfully, they are dragging their feet. They are slowing down the flow of money to Canadians by playing politics with this very simple vote.

We have the capability, the expertise and the desire to help Canadians. Public servants are putting in exceptionally long hours to help Canadians in their time of need. Will the members of the opposition please give them a hand and help too? Will they please stop obstructing the measures that Canadians clearly want? That is what I ask of them.

With the economic action plan as laid out by this government, as passed by the opposition, this government has laid out not only a plan for sustaining the economic downturn, but also a blueprint for our future prosperity.

Canada was the last advanced country to fall into this recession. We will make sure its effects here are the least severe. We will come out of this faster than anyone and stronger than anyone.

I ask the opposition members today to simply work with us to ensure that these critical and crucial investments are not delayed.

The eyes of Canadians are upon us all. I ask hon. members to support vote 35 and get the money flowing, or will they simply put up more roadblocks and turn their backs on those asking for their help? I would certainly hope not.

Canadians are depending on us and on that money to stimulate the economy at this time of economic duress, but we certainly appreciate the fact that we all have a big job ahead of us. I do believe that all of us in the House are up to the task.

I hope the members of the opposition will join us in doing the right thing. Really, why should we not? After all, we are all Canadians in this House.

•(1100)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member and always enjoy his speeches.

I cannot imagine there would be any Conservative who would vote against the motion if he or she did not vote against the first two speeches that the PMO has written asking for transparency. This is a simple motion on transparency. Would the Conservatives vote against their own Prime Minister who came into office asking for accountability and transparency? They should simply post it on a website as President Obama has done. A Canadian, Rod Duncan, wrote to me asking for this very thing.

Business of Supply

The first Conservative speaker used the example of Nero fiddling while Rome burned. That is exactly what the finance minister did. He fiddled by putting pay equity in the budget implementation bill, stalling it. It could have been in place. Women in need could have been helped by now if he had not fiddled while Canada was burning. He fiddled while Canada was burning by putting in the Navigable Waters Protection Act. We could have had the budget in place. Finally, he fiddled while Canada burned by fiddling with the Competition Act, which did not have to be in the bill, and which slowed the budget down. The money could have been flowing already.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if the hon. member wants the money to flow very quickly, then he should pass vote 35 and we would be done with this. We could get this over and done with and Canadians could get the help they need.

A number of concerns have been registered by the opposition members with regard to the lack of accountability. When I arrived in the House I was very fortunate in that I was put on the committee for public accounts. It is an oversight and accountability committee working under the guidance and on the recommendations of the Auditor General. I take those responsibilities of accountability and oversight very seriously. I am pleased that the Auditor General has commented on the bill.

The opposition's finance critic read a comment that was taken out of context. Should I have enough time in the House, I would certainly be pleased to follow up with the full text of the comment by the Auditor General. She suggested creating a high level coordinating committee to provide oversight and help manage and control spending. This government has done that. We have appointed a full committee of deputy ministers to do just that.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have listened over the last couple of weeks to some Conservative members talk about projects in their ridings that have been approved and in some cases even announced. I have not heard anything in my riding about that sort of thing. I am assuming that this is from the \$3 billion the government expects to be able to spend.

The Treasury Board and deputy ministers are not Parliament. The Auditor General has been very clear in the past in saying that spending by all departments must be approved by Parliament. She has been very clear on this.

I was wondering how the member reconciles that with a group of deputy ministers being in charge of this spending as opposed to Parliament being in charge.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I cannot honestly give the member a response with respect to the circumstances in his riding as I am not familiar with that. What I can do is give him a personal relation of facts from my own particular riding.

The infrastructure spending in my riding and in most ridings across the country is joint spending. It is spending that is approved by all of the different levels of government. It is a partnership in spending: one-third municipalities, one-third federal, one-third provinces. They go through an entire vetting process and come to an acceptable agreement as to which projects would be afforded the

confidence of the respective governments to spend the money on, based on the quality of the application that has been submitted.

That has happened in my riding. There were certain projects that were not funded which quite honestly I would have liked to see funded, but there were other projects that were funded that happened to be more of a priority for our provincial government. That is the nature of politics. That is the give and take that takes place on the level of dealings between all the partners in the implementation of this program.

• (1105)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

It is worthwhile to take part in this debate on the motion by the Liberal Party, because it enables us to revisit the entire Conservative budget, a budget that the Bloc Québécois obviously considered absolutely inadequate and unacceptable for Quebec, which is why we voted against it.

As we know, the budget contains a government request for a special vote of \$3 billion. That strikes us, when all is said and done, as tantamount to handing the government a blank cheque. It is of great concern to us, knowing the federal government's tendency to use similar funds in the past for purposes that were not all that acceptable from the point of view of political and socio-economic objectives. Sometimes, as we are also aware, funds were actually embezzled, as in the sponsorship scandal.

It is, therefore, extremely worrisome to see the Conservative government asking for this blank cheque, and worrisome as well to see that the official opposition is prepared to again hand over a cheque that, while not perhaps totally blank, is pretty close to it, just as it did for the budget it criticizes in every question period. Yet it voted in favour of the Conservative budget and is therefore complicit in its inadequacies and inequalities.

We will be in favour of this motion before us, nonetheless, because it is truly the minimum as far as accountability is concerned that one can require of a government. It seems to me, however, that the Liberal motion could have gone much farther and we will be proposing an amendment to the House as a whole, and the Liberal Party in particular. My colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain will be doing that shortly.

This motion does, therefore, strike us as insufficient, but it is nevertheless a step toward the necessity of requiring a far more serious accounting from the government. It is obvious, for instance, that the motion as worded by the Liberals means that we will be informed once the funds are allocated, when it will be too late to intervene and hold a public debate on how they will be used.

Business of Supply

The wording of the motion would make it possible for the money to be spent not only on the measures announced in chapter 3 of the budget, but also on increasing other expenditures. We have been given vague information. I would note that all of the measures announced in the budget are in chapter 3, so the information provided by the Minister of Finance is really quite general. We have also been told that other expenditures might be increased. In light of the fact that the money has to be spent by June 1, I think that we have the right to know what the government has in mind before it spends the money.

There is no way that the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board do not already know which programs will be getting a share of the \$3 billion. I do not understand why the government cannot provide that information right away. We are not necessarily asking for all the details, but I think that parliamentarians should be given at least some basic information because this is about taxpayers' money, after all. The role of parliamentarians, those from Quebec anyway, members of the Bloc Québécois, is to ensure that the money is spent in a manner consistent with the values and interests of those we represent, who are, in this case, Quebecers, of course.

As I said, the budget is both inadequate and unacceptable. For example, half of the measures announced by the Minister of Finance are tax cuts. Not only have virtually all experts and economists condemned tax cuts as ineffective when it comes to kick-starting the economy in a time of crisis, which is where we are now, but that money could have been used to right wrongs.

I would like to list some of the ways in which Quebec has been wronged. That money could have been used to right such wrongs. First of all, the new formula in the budget will cut a billion dollars in equalization payments and also cap payments. That means a billion-dollar shortfall for Quebec. That problem could have been fixed and the previous formula left in place, as the Prime Minister promised. The building Canada fund will also be short \$2 billion, and post-secondary education funding will have to make do with \$800 million less. That is a very big deal.

• (1110)

Higher education, like education generally, is the key to the future of a nation and a country. Transfers to Quebec—and, indeed, to the other provinces—for post-secondary education have not been adjusted to make up for the cuts by the previous Liberal government. The result is that these transfers remain at the 1994-95 level.

I have another example. There is \$600 million for the Canada social transfer, that is, for social assistance. There is \$460 million invested in research infrastructure. There is \$421 million for the ice storm, since the government still has not assumed its responsibilities in this regard. There is \$250 million, which was announced on the sly just before Christmas. In that case, the revenues of Hydro-Quebec are not considered in the same way as those of Hydro One. I might add that the federal government has never paid its share of the harmonization of the Quebec sales tax and the GST, which it had undertaken to do with the other provinces. The Maritimes have already benefited.

The cuts to income taxes are poorly targeted and exaggerated. The \$6 billion fiscal imbalance with the Quebec government could

have been corrected. This situation has been criticized by all parties and observers. So, a lot more interesting things might have been done instead of what was actually done.

The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development announced this morning that she will add another \$60 million to reduce delays in processing claimants' applications for employment insurance. At the moment, processing takes 55 days to 60 days in the regions where unemployment rates are still reasonable. I can imagine what it must be like in the regions hit by the forestry or fisheries crises. She has announced another \$60 million to hire people who will process the applications and she thinks that this will bring results. She wants us to believe that it will bring results. It is a smokescreen.

The fundamental problem with employment insurance, its administration and its processing is the Employment Insurance Act itself, which, over the years, has been made so complex by the Liberals and Conservatives, simply in order to prevent the unemployed from enjoying benefits, that it is now unmanageable. This is the first time that, following cuts by both Liberals and Conservatives, their employment insurance plan—not mine—is running off the rails because it has been tailored with one objective only, that of cutting off as many potential claimants as possible. The bureaucracy of this plan is now bogged down.

We will not fix the problem by injecting \$60 million. What will work and will help those who lose their jobs is a standard eligibility threshold for all unemployed workers. The proposed threshold of 360 hours is a criterion that can be easily applied. According to the current law, between 420 and 900 hours, together with all kinds of other conditions, are required. Although there are difficulties at present with the administration of employment insurance, this complex system could be fixed.

For instance, there is a completely unjustified two week waiting period when the unemployed are not entitled to benefits. Why? Are they responsible for having been laid off? We are in an economic downturn and there are not many people who have lost their jobs of their own accord. The two week waiting period is an anachronism dating back to the start of employment insurance, in 1942, when workers who paid into employment insurance did not pay premiums for the first weeks of work. Thus, the two week waiting period was put in place. It can no longer be justified and it should be changed.

I want to mention one last thing about the problems with employment insurance. I am referring to the belief introduced by the Liberals and taken up, perhaps even more energetically, by the Conservative government, whereby employment insurance claimants are potential cheaters. They should be trusted. They should be paid and investigations carried out later. The few dozen potential cheaters can be dealt with later so that the 200,000 workers who have lost their jobs over the past two months are not penalized. It is scandalous and that is what should have been addressed by the budget. Unfortunately, the Liberals approved it and the situation cannot be corrected with the motion they have introduced today. It is unacceptable.

Business of Supply

•(1115)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know the member is an experienced member of the House, so I would like to ask him about infrastructure. I think every member of the House would like infrastructure funding to flow as quickly as possible at this time.

In that respect, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Yukon Communities and municipalities across the country are asking for the money to flow faster, partly through the gas tax. All the opposition parties got together and moved that positive motion that we would move some of the money faster. It passed in the House. All of the Conservative speeches talk about moving the money faster.

We have come up with a way to do that, yet there seems to be no action over there. I wonder if he, as an experienced member, could suggest how we might move that forward so we can get this money moving faster to the people who need it.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Like the Government of Quebec and all parties in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois believes that the Quebec government alone has legitimate authority over infrastructure programs.

What Quebecers want is to see this money transferred to the Government of Quebec. The precedent has been set. To date, successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have always agreed to do so after long and difficult negotiations. That is the problem and therein lies the danger.

The federal Conservative government should take its inspiration from the agreements reached with Quebec, such as the agreement between Claude Ryan and the Mulroney government in the early 1990s, when we were also in a recession, not as serious as the current recession, but a deep recession nonetheless.

We have an example to follow. Why try to reinvent the wheel, when formulas already exist to ensure the successful transfer of funds to infrastructure programs prioritized by the Quebec government and the various communities in our regions?

The precedent exists, but there is no political will. In recent months and years, we have tried to encourage its growth among the Conservatives, but I think it is a lost cause.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about employment insurance. Just yesterday, Tembec announced that about 500 employees will be laid off. This is unacceptable.

Would my colleague agree that, in order to really stimulate the economy, one of the first things that should be done is to ensure that people can access employment insurance benefits and eliminate the two week waiting period, as called for in the motion we moved two weeks ago?

Economists have said that every dollar paid to EI recipients represents a stimulus of \$1.64 in the economy and that this would be the best way to really stimulate the economy.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question, which is very pertinent.

A number of European countries have decided to issue cheques directly to families so they can start spending. In that way, they ensure that the money is spent and not saved and that the banks do not keep the money to buy their own shares, as some are currently doing. By issuing these cheques directly to families, they are stimulating the economy through consumption.

What makes things difficult is that there must be a conduit for the cheques. We have such a conduit—the employment insurance system. By abolishing the two week waiting period, we are ensuring that all those who lose their jobs—200,000 in the past two months—will receive two additional weeks of employment insurance benefits. Not only are we helping them, but we are also supporting economic activity in our regions. Political will is the only thing required to implement this measure.

I am very pleased with the additional five weeks of benefits. However, I would ask the members opposite to listen to my next comments and learn something useful. Unfortunately, the additional five weeks are available for only two years and for those individuals who exhaust their benefits. In 2006, not even one quarter of recipients exhausted their benefits. Thus, at the most, this will allow 25% of claimants to extend their benefit period. I am happy for them, but the other 75% are being ignored by the Conservative government, which is an anti-social government.

•(1120)

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise on this Liberal motion which basically takes us back to a discussion of the budget in general and the measures brought forward by the government. This great question of Vote 35 is something new. The Conservative government has asked for a blank cheque to spend such huge amounts that even the Auditor General said she was very concerned about how such a fund would be managed. She is worried about how transparent the government will be in its handling of a fund like this. It is a blank cheque. It is really frightening, but the Liberal Party still decided to support it.

As I was saying, this takes us back to a study of the budget in its entirety. We have been saying all along that the Conservative budget is clearly inadequate and unacceptable to Quebec. There are several things that take us back to this point. We spoke about the personal income tax cuts. The Conservative government included these cuts in its budget, but they are not targeted very well. In addition, as it itself admitted, the cuts will not do much to kick-start the economy.

Business of Supply

In order to benefit fully from these tax cuts, an individual has to earn at least \$81,500. That is not at all representative of the middle class. The people who are most affected by the economic crisis are those in the middle class. Income tax cuts would have been helpful if they had been targeted better at the middle class or people below the middle class who really do not earn very much. But that is not what the government did. It ensured once again that the people who really benefit from the tax cuts are the ones with very high salaries. That is not what the government should have been trying to do. Unfortunately, all this was supported by the Liberals, who have turned their backs on Quebec once again.

Another major point in the budget that we could highlight is the tax evasion issue. In 2007, the Conservative government took a step in the right direction and mandated a task force to see how double deductions could be eliminated for companies doing business outside of Canada. The task force made its recommendation to the minister, and he set out immediately to follow up on it. However, he went back on his word, and once again these companies can double dip. In the meantime—as he himself said in 2007—the government collects less tax because companies are double dipping and it is the middle class and small businesses that have to pay more. That is very unfair. I am just repeating here what the finance minister said in 2007, and he is still the same person.

We cannot understand why the government wants to make things easier for these companies to the detriment of the middle class, which ultimately includes most of the people of Canada and Quebec. Once again they are being cheated by the Conservative government, and that is very disappointing.

My colleague spoke just now about employment insurance. We know that the measures presented will benefit only 25% of those on employment insurance. This is not a measure that is equitable for everyone. We should have made the rules for accessing employment insurance more flexible and reduced the number of hours for people to qualify. We should have eliminated the two week waiting period.

● (1125)

Such measures would have been really attractive for all the people who are unemployed, and there are a lot of them. We are in an economic crisis, and a great many people have lost their job and need access to employment insurance. What is hurting them most with regard to employment insurance—I have said this before, because people in my riding whom I often meet with talk to me about it—is the two week waiting period before they can get their money. When people are periodic employment insurance claimants, they have to accumulate these two weeks from one year to the next, and they always have difficulty dealing with the problems this causes their family. Very often both spouses work in the same company which, year after year, has to close its doors temporarily. At this time much more than that is involved. Companies are not closing temporarily, but for good. This is one more reason for taking time to deal with these problems of people who are having great difficulty making ends meet.

We could talk for hours about the problems and major drawbacks to be found in this budget. The Conservative government has come up with this idea of non-lapsing appropriations and interim supply, and a \$3 billion fund which some have termed a slush fund. We

know very well that the government will strut around and try to score political points.

The fact that the Liberal Party and the Liberal members support such a measure takes us back to the whole sponsorship affair that eclipsed this Parliament for months a few years ago. Although the issue of transparency must be a concern for everyone in this House, we cannot be too surprised that the members of the Liberal Party should be supporting this request. We could be forgiven for thinking that they are going down a road they have already taken. Some very serious questions should be asked.

This is truly disappointing. We see that the Liberal Party will agree to give the Conservative government \$3 billion that would be beyond the control of Parliament. That is the big question. Parliamentary control has always been an important standard for the elected officials of this chamber. The Conservative government, hand in hand with and supported by the Liberals, is going in this direction. Some very serious questions should be asked.

Nonetheless, the Liberal motion would force the government to a minimum level of accountability. However, it does not go far enough. Yes, it is a start, but the accountability is truly minimal. Requiring the government to post on a website tomorrow or the days that follow the list of committees and projects it will implement, etc. is a minimal measure which we will support. All the same, we are in fundamental disagreement on the very essence of this amount. We will continue to hound the Conservative government to make sure that the moneys in this “slush fund” will be disbursed legitimately. The details demanded in the Liberal Party’s motion are a beginning, but clearly insufficient.

I would also like to move an amendment to this motion. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Joliette, that the motion be amended by replacing the words “this House calls upon the government to table” with the words “this House requires the government to table”, in the two places where those words appear.

● (1130)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. If the sponsor of the motion is not present, the deputy leader, whip or deputy whip of the sponsor's party may give or refuse consent on the sponsor's behalf.

Since none of these members is present in this House to give consent, the amendment may not be moved right now.

The member for Mississauga South for questions and comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member who just moved the amendment has made his point. I think the issue of requiring this reporting to be done is extremely important because it is reflective of the lack of trust in the government of the day.

Business of Supply

The member will well know that there are economic lags. It takes time before a proposed initiative will actually have the intended impact and that the moneys will be able to flow and results will be able to be achieved. As a consequence, if we are talking about a \$3 billion fund to be spent between April and June, it would necessarily already have to have a lot of these particular proposed expenditures identified and quantified in terms of the funding requirements and the regions to which they would go.

It would appear, from my point of view, that the request under this motion is almost automatic, unless it is the intent of the government not to be accountable and not to disclose its intent and maybe to use it beyond the scope of what the budget was really intended to do.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on the level of accountability not being expressed by the government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. As I said in my speech, it is very important to insist that the government be accountable. During the 2005-06 election campaign, this government promised that accountability would be a very important value in Parliament. It was so important that the government introduced accountability legislation and modified accountability for many people associated with the government. Today, the government is in denial, in a way, because it is proposing to set aside accountability for two or three months while it spends money on projects. But we do not know which projects, and Parliament will not be able to approve them. This raises serious questions. What is more, the government is talking out of both sides of its mouth.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, vote 35 under Treasury Board indicates that “Subject to the approval of the Treasury Board and between the period commencing April 1, 2009 and ending June 30, 2009,” these moneys are to be used “to supplement other appropriations and to provide any appropriate Ministers with appropriations for initiatives announced in the Budget”.

That phrase, “to supplement other appropriations”, all by itself basically says that the government can use it for anything it wants, even if it is not in the budget. That is a problem.

Again, I think it is reflective of the lack of transparency, openness and accountability of the government to suggest that somehow this \$3 billion is going to be used for purposes that may not even address the objectives that Canadians want to see, which are to save current jobs, to create new jobs, and to help the vulnerable in our society on whom this economic crisis will have an impact.

I wonder if the member shares the view that again the government is using wordsmithing to somehow avoid accountability, which is a prerequisite for all Canadians.

● (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question, and I would like to comment.

However, as we wonder whether the government is trying to get around basic accountability rules and we question the fact that it

wants to fund projects that, by its own admission, are not even included in the current budget, the big question is why did the Liberals support this budget, when it was poorly drafted? Why are they going to support the \$3 billion, which the member feels is improper and which, as I said earlier, is practically a slush fund?

I can comment, but I have a hard time understanding the Liberals' position.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased also to have this opportunity to speak to the Liberal motion.

I must admit that they were particularly inspired in drafting this motion, since they have in large part copied mine. For a number of weeks we have been raising the idea in this House that the government ought to be more accountable to this House, hence our idea that accountability be required of the government.

The Liberal motion lacks a number of things, however. One point it fails to mention is that this is a secret fund, i.e. one that the government can dip into without parliamentary overview.

[*English*]

When looking at these issues it is sometimes important to understand the history of the parliamentary rules involved. This one is actually rather old. It goes back to Runnymede in 1215. In fact, the Magna Carta only mentions older forms of taxation such as scutages and aids. By the end of the 1200s, 1297 to be exact, *Confirmatio Cartarum* made it illegal to approve this type of spending except with the authorization of what was then the Commons.

It is the same thing here. This is one of the oldest rules in the British parliamentary system, that the executive is responsible for preparing a budget. Nobody questions that. What is at issue here is whether the House of Commons is going to be able to control that spending.

The Liberals are in a bit of a bind on this one because they have given the government a blank cheque. They love snapping their suspenders and claiming that they have put the government on probation. Of course, in fact they have given the government their approbation. They have approved everything every step of the way.

The reason they have done that, of course, is that they are afraid to stand up and say something in the House that would displease the government.

I caught one of the questions asked of the Liberal presenter earlier, and I found it quite interesting. One of the Conservatives asked how he was going to vote this afternoon. He stood up, blustered and said, “Of course I am going to vote for it. It is my motion”.

I think there might have been a little lesson in that from the Conservatives. It is now well over 60 times that the Liberals, first under the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartier and now under the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, have voted their confidence in the Conservatives. So they lack all credibility when they stand up in the House and claim that they want something done differently.

Business of Supply

Here the Conservatives are undermining and attacking the very foundations of our parliamentary system. They are attacking the right of the House of Commons to supervise and provide oversight to government spending. They want a \$3 billion blank cheque. It is not the first time in this whole budgetary process that the Conservatives have cynically taken advantage of the very real economic crisis to deliver poison pill after poison pill of their right-wing ideological agenda.

Let us look at some of the things that were in the budget that the Liberals backed and voted for.

Despite claims on the other side to be in favour of the Canadian Charter of Rights, despite the fact that Pierre Trudeau, a Liberal, brought in the Canadian Charter of Rights over a generation ago, Liberal member after Liberal member stood up and voted against a woman's right to have equal pay for work of equal value.

That is right. That is shameful, but that is what the Liberals did because they have no values. They simply do not believe anything.

We are going to get another demonstration of it today. After having voted for the budget and giving the blank cheque to the government, the Liberals are now going to stand up and claim that they want to put some sort of controls on it by asking for *ex post facto* rendering of account here in the House.

What else was in the budget in terms of a poison pill? The government has taken away social rights, legally negotiated bargaining rights. It has removed them with the stroke of the pen, and the Liberals have voted for it. It is removing the Navigable Waters Protection Act. These great believers in the environment, the same ones who signed Kyoto, saying they believed in the environment, what did they actually do on Kyoto? They presided over the single greatest increase in greenhouse gas production of any country in the world. That was the Liberals with 13 years in power.

• (1140)

It is a good thing that Eddie Goldenberg was kind enough to deliver a speech in the spring of 2007 before the London Chamber of Commerce and then put it into his book. He was former chief of staff of Jean Chrétien. He said that when the Liberals signed Kyoto, they had no plan and no intention of respecting it. He said that they signed it for the purpose of galvanizing public opinion. CQFD, it was a public relations stunt.

That is the Liberal Party of Canada. It talks a good game on rights and then puts in a leader who is already on the record as saying that the torture by a state of human beings can be justified because it is the lesser of two evils. It is the same leader who, from his august seat in a prestigious American university, encouraged George Bush in his invasion of Iraq.

That is the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada today and that is why Canadians have to know what the Liberals have done in the House in the past couple of weeks. They have abandoned any claim whatsoever to representing social or progressive ideals.

People have a right to know what the Liberal Party has become at this time. Today's events are further proof of that. Liberals are proposing, after spending \$3 billion, that the Conservatives have to provide some sort of accounting to the House. What they are

forgetting is they have already approved all that spending and have delegated that authority to the government.

However, the most interesting thing this afternoon is going to be whether the government makes this a confidence motion. If it does, we are going to watch the Liberals vote against themselves. It will not be the first time we have seen that. We have seen them propose something in the House, the government makes it a confidence motion and the Liberals vote against themselves. It is an absolutely pathetic spectacle, but one that we have grown used to.

Back in November, we were in full economic crisis. At the end of November, the Conservatives arrived in the House and were still predicting a budget surplus. It was total science fiction, but it was not going to stop them. They said that we were heading for a budget surplus. They brought in a fiscal and financial update. Instead of stimulating the economy like the G7 and the G20 said we had to do, they simply told a bald face lie to the Canadian people, saying we were heading for a budget surplus.

No such thing was going to happen, and that was clear from the analysis of Kevin Page, the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That was clear from the analysis of every thinking private sector economist. Everybody knew that Canada was already in a deep recession.

Prior to that, Conservatives had said if we were going to be in a recession, it would have already happened. That was not true. Then when they finally had to admit we were in a recession, they invented a new category that only applied to the Conservatives, which was that Canada was only going to have a technical recession, whatever that was supposed to mean.

Then the Conservatives brought in the update. What did it have? It had an attack on women's rights. It had an attack on social collective bargaining rights. It had an attack on the clean party financing that was put in place in the wake of the biggest political financial scandal in Canadian history, the Liberal sponsorship scandal, wherein the Liberal Party and its agents stole millions of dollars from Canadian taxpayers. A clean party financing system was put in place and the Conservatives wanted to get rid of that with a stroke of the pen.

It is worth noting that two months later, on January 27 when the Conservatives brought in their budget, they were still removing a woman's right to equal pay for work of equal value. They were still removing union and social rights. The only thing they put back was clean party financing. Therefore, the Liberals stood and voted for it. That makes their priorities completely clear. The Liberals will only vote for it if they are taking care of themselves. Abandoning women's right to equal pay for work of equal value does not bother anybody in the Liberal Party of Pierre Trudeau any more. The Charter of Rights be damned. They do not care about any of that.

The Conservatives went further, though, in January. The attack on the environment was pre-announced when a document was leaked from the environment department, showing that they planned to gut environmental assessments in our country. They were going to put in a new rule that any project under \$10 million would no longer require an environmental assessment.

Business of Supply

Imagine for a second if that were brought in. A precious wetland, which a mayor of a municipality has been longing to backfill in order to put in an industrial. As long as the industrial park infrastructure is not more than \$9.9 million, the mayor can fill in the precious wetland because there will not even be an environmental assessment any more.

• (1145)

It is not the economic value of the project; it is the environmental value of what one backfills and destroys. However, that does not matter to the Conservatives, either. They are removing the protection of the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

It was an interesting experience for me, having spent 15 years in Quebec City as an elected official and minister and 15 years prior to that as a director and president of a large regulatory agency. I did not know the lay of the land as well as some did in Ottawa, of the behaviour of the Liberal Party of Canada. Honestly, it is breathtaking and it is something to behold. We watched them day after day come in and complain about something.

I heard the hon. member for Beaches—East York stand up and in a very moving speech in the House say how terrible it was that the Conservatives were taking away a woman's rights to equal pay for work of equal value. I met her in the hallway after that. I asked if she would do the same thing as the Newfoundland and Labrador members of Parliament on the Conservative side had done, which was to stand and vote against their party and the budget. She turned beet red and said that she would do whatever she could. I saw her stand and vote for the budget to remove a woman's right to equal pay for work of equal value. The Liberal member voted with the Conservatives.

That is what happened in the House in the past couple of weeks. The masks have fallen. Any pretence on the part of the Liberal Party of Canada to claim that it represents progressive ideas, that it represents a forward-looking Canada, something we have always been proud of, is now gone.

The only national party standing for those values and rights is the New Democratic Party of Canada. I am extremely proud to be part of the NDP, especially at this time.

There are a very small number of things that could have been done very quickly and without difficulty to help people in these grave economic times. Hundreds of thousands of people have been turned out of work. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to remove the two-week waiting period for employment insurance.

What happens when people lose their jobs and they have no money? Most people are a week away from not having money in their bank account. They use their credit cards. What are the banks charging on those credit cards? Maybe 18%, 20%, or 22%. That is the reality. People put the first couple of weeks on credit cards. They have even more trouble getting out of debt and are getting very low employment insurance premiums that are being offered so far.

Across Canada there is a patchwork quilt of qualifications rules for employment insurance, which could easily be standardized. We could put more money into retraining and it would have been very easy to do that but for one thing. The Conservatives stole \$54 billion

from the EI account, transferred it into the general revenue fund, supposedly to reduce the debt.

That money had been paid as premiums, the way we pay premiums on life, car, or home insurance. It was for a specific purpose, for the people and workers who were earning those dollars. Their employers also paid into that fund. That is why the move the Conservatives made at the time was so reprehensible, and, again, they were backed by the Liberal Party of Canada.

It is a bit rich to hear the Liberal members this week complaining about the employment insurance roll. They are the ones who gutted employment insurance and lowered premiums. Now they are backing the Conservatives because they are one and the same. Canadians are faced with the Conservative-Liberal alliance party. There is only one strong voice of reason and principle on these important issues right now in the House, and it is the NDP.

For the past three years, the Conservatives have hollowed out the industrial sectors of Ontario and Quebec. Prior to the current crisis that began at the end of last summer, more than 340,000 jobs had already been eliminated from the manufacturing and forestry sectors, mostly in Ontario and Quebec. In the case of forestry, B.C. was also very hard hit.

The reason for that is quite simple. The Conservative ideology is that governments do not have a role in the marketplace. There is a pristine market that comes up with the best solution in all these cases. What the Conservatives did was give away \$60 billion to the most profitable corporations.

Why the most profitable? By definition, if a company in forestry or manufacturing was hard hit by the high Canadian dollar and had not made a profit last year, it did not get anything back from a tax reduction since it had not paid taxes. The \$60 billion went to the oil and gas sectors and to the banks in particular. They got the lion's share of those reductions.

• (1150)

When the current crisis hit, the government no longer had the fiscal capacity to take care of people. The Conservative ideology is all about that. It reduces the ability of government to do its job.

It was interesting to see what happened in the cases of listeriosis and salmonella. Those are jobs that governments have been assuming in the western world for well over a century. The essence of a modern state is taking care of the public good. What could be more important than providing clean water, taking care of sewage and inspecting the food supply chain that goes out to people's homes? The Conservatives abandoned that, but the Liberals had started it before them.

Most galling is the current minister made jokes about people dying from listeriosis during the election campaign and he is still there. That is what is so shocking and appalling about the Conservative government and its callous attitude towards these issues of public interest, safety and protection.

Business of Supply

We are going to have another case coming up very soon. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police are on the public record saying not to reduce the protection offered by the gun registry. If that happens, society will be a more dangerous place. These are not a bunch of soft thinkers in a university setting. We are talking about the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. The Conservatives will still try to gut the gun registry because it corresponds to their ideology.

I have a son who has been a police officer for 10 years. I know my colleague from B.C. has two sons who are police officers. When my son goes to a house where there has been a case of domestic violence in the Lower Laurentians, it is important, to the extent possible, that he know whether there are registered firearms in the house. It is a question of public protection. That is why this gun registry has to be there.

This year is the 20th anniversary of the Polytechnique massacre. Shame on anyone in the House who can stand up and reduce the protection of the gun registry. Shame on anyone who would put the lives of police and the lives of their fellow citizens in danger. However, that is exactly what the Conservatives will try to do.

The Conservatives have tried to remove the protections of the state and the regulatory structures, whether it is in terms of food, transportation or the environment as we mentioned before. There are whole sectors of public and social protection that they want to remove. They have been in lockstep with their Liberal coalition partners, who every step of the way have voted to remove public protection and rights.

That is the scandal of a party that still bears the word liberty, liberal, in its name but does not believe a single thing. That is the Liberal Party of today, with its new right-wing leader. That is why the Liberals have no trouble offering their support to the Conservatives. They have the unmitigated conceit to claim to have put the government on probation. What a patent fraud. They have given the—

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order of relevance. I understand the member's concern about a variety of issues, but the motion before the House today relates to vote 35 under treasury board, with regard to, specifically, the issue of the \$3 billion of additional funding from April 1 to June 30 and the request under the motion that reports be filed in the House.

I am concerned about listeriosis. I am concerned about gun registry. I am concerned about all the other issues the member has talked about, but respectfully, he should address the motion now before the House.

•(1155)

The Deputy Speaker: There is only about a minute left in the time provided for the hon. member for Outremont. If he could be mindful of the motion that is before the House in his time remaining, we will then move on to questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, if you had listened to what I was saying, you would have understood immediately that I never strayed from the one subject before us today: the shameful and anti-

parliamentary behaviour of the Conservatives with respect to our parliamentary traditions, with the complicity of the Liberals.

Since this new government began in November, we have seen them taking away rights and we have seen the shamefully spineless Liberals supporting them every step of the way. That is the scandal we are talking about, and that is why this motion is a matter of too little, too late.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with regard to the motion before the House on vote 35, specifically the spending of the \$3 billion but more specifically than that the reporting of the projects that are going to be funded under this between April 1 and June 30, the member will well know that projects need to be identified, justified, signed off on and the amounts need to be determined. To spend that kind of money over that period of time, that information is already well under way, if it exists at all.

The issue for me, notwithstanding the member's concern about a variety of other issues, is that the motion is a declaration that we do not trust the government to do what it said it would do and specifically the phrase in there about funding and other appropriations that can be interpreted that it would not relate to budget related matters.

This is an important question. I respect the member and I hope he will give his thoughts on the necessity of the government to demonstrate transparency, openness and accountability and to provide such reports so that the House is confident that the appropriations of some \$3 billion currently unspecified will be acceptable and will meet the objectives that we were trying to meet with regard to the stimulus package for Canada.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, I took note of the exact words of my colleague from Toronto. When he says that the information is well under way, despite the fact that I believe I master both official languages, I have no idea what that means.

If it were not for the fact that the Liberals supported the Conservatives in undermining the role of this Parliament, we would not need to be debating this motion. Even though it is too little too late, obviously it is better than nothing and we are going to support it. As I mentioned at the outset, it is essentially the idea that the NDP put forward several weeks ago.

What will be most interesting to see, if the government declares it confidence, will be whether the Liberals wind up voting against themselves as they have done every time. They are so worried that they back the Conservatives on absolutely everything: removing women's rights, destroying the environment and removing social rights. The only time they ever stood and said that they were willing to vote down the government was when they were going to lose some of their own money for political party financing.

The reason I talk about the Liberals' money as opposed to the others is that the Liberal Party of Canada relies more on public financing because nobody gives the Liberals any money. They used to rely on big donations from very few people. Now that we are supposed to survive by getting smaller donations from a large number of people, the Liberals cannot do financing anymore.

Business of Supply

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member has repeated his argument about how people voted on the budget many times, and I respect his opinion, but he needs to understand that if the government were defeated on this budget, notwithstanding all the poison pills and all of the lack of accountability, it would mean that Parliament would again stop, that the stimulus and the economic assistance to Canadians in this national economic crisis would stop and that Parliament would not get to the same point we are now until sometime next fall, next October or November, at a time when Canadians need Parliament to be working.

I would hope that the member would at least concede that there is a significant risk that the economic stimulus that he supports as well will not happen and will not be there to assist Canadians if the government is defeated at this time. The member needs to acknowledge that at least.

● (1200)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, here is what we acknowledge. For weeks we have been listening to Liberals stand in the House, tear out their forelocks and take their hankies out to wipe a tear from their eye as they say how terrible the budget is and how awful it is that it takes away women's rights and the rights of future generations to have the same type of environment that we have known, on top of dumping on the shoulders of future generations all this debt. They find it so horrible that they will vote for it.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Madam Speaker, I wonder if my colleague could comment on a story in the newspapers this morning regarding a number of grants that were given to seniors' groups across the country. I do not have the article in front of me but I think about 30 grants were given out and only one was to a riding that did not currently have a sitting Conservative member.

Does my colleague see the same pattern with the \$3 billion? Does he have any hope that when the Conservatives allocate the \$3 billion, as it appears to be a slush fund, primarily to ridings that currently have Conservative members sitting, if that does show up as a pattern, that the Liberals would actually move to bring down the government or follow their normal pattern of voting with the Conservatives?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, that is a very important question. We have heard what the all-round Conservative champion, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has had to say about this.

When he gets to the House, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities takes great delight in having everyone hear and see him pointing at his colleagues to announce "Your project has been approved. And yours. And yours."

Recently, when he met with a group involved with urban mass transit, he told them straight out that cities like Montreal and Toronto—since there are zero Conservatives in Montreal and Toronto—can just sit back down and forget it, because there will be nothing coming their way. That is nothing but patronage, and what I would call a slush fund. This is why it is so scandalous that the Liberals are continuing to back the Conservatives up on this. It is very clear that, as far as the Conservative government is concerned, this is a great

opportunity for pure unadulterated patronage. A person might think we were back in the Duplessis era.

The government is starting to adopt the attitude that, since the official opposition is nothing but a bunch of lapdogs and puppets that will let them do anything they want to them, why not take advantage of that. So that is what they are doing. They are going to set up a nice little fund for themselves and their little pals, \$3 billion in hard cash just for them and their cronies. The Liberals will stand up and exclaim about how terrible it all is, but then they will vote in favour.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, the issue here is trust. The government has not been accountable on its expenditures. The member will well know that we have several hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure funding that was approved and ready to go for the current fiscal year ending March 31 and that will be allowed to lapse.

I recently read a story about fetal alcohol syndrome and the annual funding of \$3.3 million for programs for children who suffer from alcohol related birth defects and one-third of that funding was allowed to lapse.

It appears that the government has a pattern of making promises and continuing to re-gift but it never spends the money. Does the member not agree that this is an issue of accountability?

● (1205)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I agree that the Liberal Party of Canada is at it again, standing and using a very important social issue in our society. A good friend of mine, who works in Toronto, works very closely with fetal alcohol syndrome.

The member stands and makes his case about how terrible it is that the government is taking money away from that important issue, or not spending it in this case, but he will vote for it. That is the fundamental paradox that the Liberals will need to deal with. They live in a bubble where they believe they can come into the House and convince Canadians that they have put the government on probation, believe it or not, as pretentious, ridiculous and absurd as that seems. They have even put up a website called "probation". This is the biggest joke in recent Canadian political history, that this gang of lapdogs, these marionettes, these hand puppets of the government, would claim to have put the government on probation.

The only problem the Conservatives have whenever the Liberals say that they have put them on probation is that the Conservatives have a great deal of difficulty restraining their laughter.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pickering—Scarborough East.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand and speak to this motion today. As we have heard in the House already, this is very much a motion about trust, trust in this House of Commons and trust that Canadians do or do not have for their government.

Business of Supply

While the Liberals agree that extraordinary action is needed to address the economic crisis, we believe that there is no need to sacrifice accountability while taking action. We are not requesting any additional red tape. We are asking the government to disclose, which can be done on a website as one of the tools, as we have done to hold it accountable. It is simply not credible for the government to ask for approval for spending but be unwilling to provide any details for it.

As parliamentarians, we have been duly elected by our constituents and we have a responsibility to examine, to perform due diligence and to know beforehand where these dollars will be going.

I would like to tell members a little about my own province of Manitoba. We hear the words "trust me" coming from across the way. There are challenges that those of us who are not in government face in Manitoba and in fact challenges faced by those in Manitoba who do not support the government.

I come from a small province. We know each other. We work together. We make things happen and frequently things happen in the jurisdiction of Manitoba way ahead of other jurisdictions because we cooperate. We work together. We know each other. We discuss and we collaborate and we make accommodations. However, we find some very serious problems with the current federal government. The Conservatives come before us in this House and tells us to trust them, that if we give them the money they will do it.

I come from a province where public servants of a different party and public servants across the board are often overtly intimidated by government members. That is a reality. The public discourse in Manitoba often includes misleading the public on the positions of elected representatives from other parties. That is a reality. Most recently, we had a cabinet minister in Manitoba sit outside the door of an auditorium keeping track of those who came and went when hearing the leader of another party speak.

Funding is announced, reannounced and reannounced once again, and little of the money flows. A disproportionate amount of the funding that is announced and that does flow does not go into ridings of opposition members. It only goes into ridings of cabinet members.

There are many more items of this sort that I could list.

The Conservatives' behaviour is troublesome. They tell us to trust them but their behaviour in Manitoba creates a climate of fear, a lack of trust and a lack of respect for other public figures, whether elected or non-elected. The government that campaigned on accountability said that it could not be held to account if Parliament did not know the accurate state of public finances. That was in its 2006 Conservative Party election platform.

How can the Conservatives be trusted with \$3 billion when they have shown time and again that they cannot get the money out the door? I am repeating myself but I believe Canadians have a right to know ahead of time where their tax dollars are going to be spent and they have the right to know if these funds are being used solely for the proper economic stimulus measures that Parliament believes should be in place and that all Canadians can track, or whether these moneys are being used for partisan purposes and buying votes.

The issue is trust. The issue is the record that we have had in my province and it is an issue of great concern for us.

• (1210)

On the infrastructure projects, much has been said. In 2007, of the \$8.8 billion building Canada fund, we know that only a small amount of it has flowed. The figure that is most commonly used is 6%, only \$1.5 billion. So far the government committed only to \$1.5 billion and only \$97 million has flowed. The money is not out the door. Yet the Conservatives are asking us to please give them free access with this \$3 billion slush fund. How can they be trusted with \$3 billion of unaccountable money when they have not put out the dollars for the projects that have been announced and committed to and that have gone through the due diligence of department and Treasury Board surveillance?

The Minister of State for the Status of Women continually boasts that her department has funded the highest levels ever, but that money is not going out the door. In 2007-08, of the \$30.1 million in total authorities, her department spent \$25.3 million.

We know that there has been no proposal call since July 2008. Just this morning there was a group in my office asking when it will happen. We do not know. Why is this money not going out? Why is this money not flowing?

The \$5 million that was slipped could have gone to women in need. It could have gone to projects denied by the government that we know met program criteria. Women's groups are being denied funding or being told where their funding must go. They are being told that they can have funding if it goes to a certain geographic area or program. Groups have received cuts and we know that women are being hardest hit by this recession.

We are also encountering a real discrepancy in status of women funding. We have heard members of the government in the status of women committee speak to the fact that we do not have the responsibility to fund areas that are within provincial jurisdiction, but there is a real ambivalence, because if a person can gain access to those programs that are funded by the status of women, and gaining access to them has become a bit of a challenge, we know that they are indeed crossing over into provincial jurisdiction. That is a challenge for us.

We also know that the criteria for program funding in status of women has changed with every subsequent minister. We have been asking for an opportunity to see the changing criteria. It has been weeks since we have asked for this both of the minister and of her senior bureaucrats and for some reason we cannot get it.

We talk about accountability and transparency, but there is virtually nothing on the website. Parliamentarians, the public and women's groups want to know, but there is nothing there.

Another issue I have with this \$3 billion slush fund, for lack of a better comment as it relates to trust and transparency is that we have no indication to whom this money will go. That is a given. Do we know that it will go to the most vulnerable? Do we know that it will address poverty? Do we know that it will benefit Canadian women?

Business of Supply

When we look at an analysis of the budget, we know that there was certainly no consideration of priority to the vulnerable. There was no consideration of priority to women. Again, transparency, trust, how can we count on the government to do it? It clearly wants a \$3 billion blank cheque. I, for one, have a great deal of difficulty signing that blank cheque without the accountabilities that my colleague has proposed for the government.

As I mentioned earlier, the government has committed to funding time and time again in Manitoba, but the real challenge in Manitoba is that the money, when it is committed, trickles out, if it gets out. Continually there are announcements and reannouncements for major projects and press conferences are staged, but nothing is happening.

The Red River floodway expansion has been announced a few times. Of the \$141.5 million committed to it, not all of it has gone forward to the floodway authority. We are waiting.

•(1215)

There is \$18 million for Lake Winnipeg, the heart of the province of Manitoba. This funding has been announced and reannounced. There have been press opportunities and photo opportunities. People are waiting. The funding is not coming. There are small amounts coming out. This funding was announced in 2007 and 2008. If this money is not moving, why is a \$3 billion slush fund needed?

Municipalities in my province need funding. Madam Speaker, as you are indicating that my time is up, let me just make the point that the Association of Manitoba Municipalities has been totally cut out of the infrastructure process. How can we trust a government that eliminates those who know best?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was initially heartened to hear my friend speak because she mentioned the problem of members and politicians misrepresenting the positions of those opposite. That gave me some hope that perhaps we were going to hear a sincere speech. Then I heard her refer to this necessary \$3 billion as a slush fund. My friend has to know that it is no such thing. In fact she is misrepresenting the government's position.

I am going to ask this as a sincere question in the hope that I might get a sincere answer from my hon. colleague. Does she understand that the money in question is going to be fully reported in the June estimates? All we are trying to do is to avoid the necessity of having to do the paperwork immediately rather than in the usual course in June. Does she understand that the only difference between what the motion requires and that is two or three months to get the paperwork done?

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Speaker, indeed, I do understand it, but I still have a difficulty with it. One does not write a blank cheque without knowing where the money is going. I say to the member opposite, there has been a great deal of money in the budget that has been ready to go out. It has been approved in previous governments. Why has that not gone out? Have the government and its officials been too busy, too hamstrung? What is it that has prevented the government from getting dollars out earlier, dollars that have been approved, committed and the government knows where those dollars are going?

My difficulty is in approving money without knowing where it is going. I do not dispute the importance of getting the stimulus out to Canadians, but I think it is incumbent upon us as parliamentarians to know where and how that money is going to be spent.

•(1220)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think that leaving this \$3 billion in the hands of the Conservatives is quite a departure from the spirit of the Federal Accountability Act passed a few years ago when the Conservative government came to power. We see how the ministers from Quebec use public funds for partisan purposes.

For example, 25% of the budget allocated to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec was spent in a Conservative minister's region. As the Minister of the Environment himself admitted, the political ministers of each region will be consulted concerning this budget and how the money made available by vote 35 will be allocated.

This leaves the door wide open to political interference, which the Liberals are supporting. We have seen this since the Conservatives came to power. Money is always distributed based on partisanship.

Can my colleague explain how the Liberals can support this budget and, by the same token, vote 35?

[*English*]

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Speaker, the issue is that we do not approve of the budget and what I call the slush fund. We must know where the moneys are going prior to their going out.

We recognize the importance of getting money out to Canadians. We recognize there are many important issues in the stimulus plan. We recognize there are many vulnerable Canadians. There is an expectation among Canadians that government will respond. That is the basis upon which we are taking action.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, as has been stated by many journalists, accountability on how this money is going to be spent will be the acid test of the government's credibility. We are being told that if we do not hand over a blank cheque for the government to spend in whichever way it wants, which is a slush fund, we are somehow failing Canadians.

Does my hon. colleague not think that the fundamental obligation of members of this House is to ensure that the government is accountable in how it spends taxpayers' money?

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Speaker, I could not have said it better. Our primary responsibility as parliamentarians is not only to represent the interests of our constituents but also to hold the government to account in its spending and to ensure that there is transparency, accountability and open dialogue on all spending.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to have the opportunity to join this very important debate.

Business of Supply

The motion moved by my colleague from Markham—Unionville urges the government to recognize the importance of the \$3 billion it is about to spend. The government is planning to spend at least \$3 billion, but it has not provided any details about where the money is to be spent.

This motion is very important. It will ensure that Canadians know where the money is going to be spent and that they understand why it is to be spent, which is to stimulate the economy and help the people whom we, as members of Parliament, are very concerned about.

We want the government to be transparent, and we want to make sure that we have a good idea of where the money is to be spent.

[*English*]

I am obviously very pleased to have this opportunity today to speak to this very important issue introduced by my colleague, the member for Markham—Unionville. I know that while there is opportunity for us to demonstrate and to talk about the political side of this, I think the most important part of this is the insurance that we have a modicum of accountability that is consistent with the traditions of this House, with the committees, and with the traditions that Canadians expect that their government be accountable for every penny that it spends, particularly in difficult times.

The suggestion has been made, and I have heard it here from hon. colleagues on the government side, that somehow this is playing politics. I can assure members that what was playing politics was turning an economic crisis into a political crisis, and vice versa, when the government decided to pull away from this Parliament for two months and try to re-figure its program.

Of course, it is clear the government itself did not understand the import or did not want to understand the import of the looming crisis which members on this side, members like myself in committee and others, were well aware of over a year, a year and a half ago. I am reminded of the evidence of my good colleague from Edmonton, I believe, who was chair of the industry committee in November 2007 during the looming credit crisis.

I also, last year, indicated that there was a real concern with respect to the distortions in energy crisis which would have a troubling affect on the health and well-being of our economy.

The government is now, after several months of denial, calling an election, obfuscating, ignoring the obvious signs that are troubling around the world and that somehow Canada would escape these things. However, there is a final recognition forced by this party, forced by this Parliament, to effectively come forth with a stimulus program.

On this we do not disagree. But what is important, what is critical, and what is fundamental is that we observe the need to ensure that the moneys that are spent, which our children and our grandchildren might ultimately have to pay for, are spent wisely and with the maximum impact that provides not only transparency for us as parliamentarians, but I think for Canadians in general.

For those reasons, I support the motion presented by my colleague, the critic for finance and member for Markham—Unionville. I think it is an important step at demonstrating to Canadians that they can continue to have trust in the members that

they elect and that are there to represent their needs at a very critical time.

I am very concerned that we are now in a situation where the government seems willing to resist, the government seems willing to move away from its sworn obligations, in fact, its own rhetoric that it used in many campaigns about transparency. We are asking for due diligence. We are asking that Parliament be given the authority, the right, which it has always had, to ask of the government how it intends to disburse funds. That is the essence of why we have a Parliament, a government that has to be accountable, that has to be responsible to this House. If we rupture that or break that or change the tradition because we suggest that extraordinary times justify bending the rules and changing the traditions, I suggest that in the day we will lose confidence and the trust the public has in our institutions.

In difficult times, as we have learned from previous crises and recessions, there were always concerns about trade impacts, there were concerns about how to stimulate the economy, but always, and it does not matter what historical version we take or the one that we saw in 1981-82 when we had a recession, it was absolutely critical that Canadians had a modicum of understanding and faith that governments in difficult times would stand up for them and that they would have an appreciation and understanding of the extent to which that action was taking place.

We have been flying blind. The government says that the \$3 billion that it is prepared to put forward is one of those things where we simply have to trust the government and it will tell us down the road. I raised these questions with the President of the Treasury Board and with the Minister of Transport, but here is what we had yesterday, March 23, from the Auditor General:

It's not unreasonable. \$3 billion is a fair bit of money and they must have ideas, even in broad strokes, how that money will flow between April and June.

And here is the kicker:

I must say that I don't buy the argument that they can't tell them something — maybe not the detail of, say, what festival, or how much, but they could at least say where the money is going, whether it's (to) infrastructure or festivals.

● (1225)

It seems to me that the very Auditor General who the House relies upon has sent a very clear signal. Take away the partisanship and the politics. In the past, the Conservatives have talked about their willingness to be transparent. The purpose for which this motion has come forward should be an easy one. It asks the government for four conditions: provide what the funding is, where it is going, how much will be spent in that particular area, and what impact that will have in terms of achieving the stimulus that we all agree needs to be done.

Sooner or later, the government is going to have to determine where that money is. I am hoping it is not covering up something that is embarrassing. However, what else can we conclude? We have seen a government that has let \$2 billion to \$3 billion in the previous budget lapse and made announcements that have had absolutely no impact. Those programs were never spent upon and as a result we have a situation in Canada today where programs need to be funded.

Business of Supply

We need to know what departments are receiving those funds. We need some degree and modicum of accountability. If we do not have that, I would humbly suggest that we turn out the lights and all return home because the government obviously has a plan. It does not want to tell us what it is, but it takes the point of saying let us—

• (1230)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We do not have quorum in the House to carry on this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): We now have quorum.

Resuming debate, the hon. member has one minute and 40 seconds left.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Madam Speaker, I know the hon. member from the government side who called the quorum of course recognizes what a great speech this is and invited more of his members to come and listen to it. I am prepared to give them what they need.

We are simply looking for truth and transparency. We are looking for the ability to accommodate what I think Canadians expect of this place, especially in a minority setting. I would ask the government to strongly reconsider. We have accomplished a lot in a very short period of time. It seems to me that the \$3 billion, which is not chump change or a small amount of money, is significant in and of itself.

There are concerns that have been raised by the Auditor General, pretty much every party in the House of Commons and by Canadians. This does not pass the smell test. Frankly, if we are not prepared to make this kind of change to ensure that there is absolute probity and scrutiny on these allocations of funds, it sets a very dangerous precedent for down the road.

If extraordinary times require extraordinary measures, they also include the need for extraordinary oversight. For that reason and almost that reason alone, this motion is certainly worth consideration. I invite all the members of the government who have just come in to listen to my speech to do the right thing and vote for this great motion.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member has taken a lead role in terms of the issues of accountability, transparency and openness on a number of files. This one clearly calls out for accountability on behalf of the government.

The member will know that when one is planning to spend \$3 billion in three months, and it is starting in just a couple of days, things have to be in place. Projects need to be identified and scrutinized. Appropriate funding levels have to be determined. They have to be allocated on a regional basis and then we get the approvals and the sign-ups.

This stuff takes months in itself. However, if the period over which the government is trying to spend this money is a three month period, then clearly all of this work has already been done. If it has not, then we have another problem totally.

It appears to me that the request in this motion is to provide accountability, openness and transparency to Canadians by identifying the applications of these moneys in the \$3 billion so-called slush fund, so that they will understand that these items meet the criteria that were intended under the budget.

Hon. Dan McTeague: Madam Speaker, I cannot think of a more qualified member to ask such a question, particularly when it comes to accountability and accounting, given his years of experience here in the House. Between the two of us, we have almost 32 years of experience in this place.

We have seen a lot come by here, but very few have involved this kind of situation where one would have these kinds of considerations, as the hon. member has suggested. The Treasury Board, the bureaucracy, and the civil servants who are having to manage this amount of money and get it out the door in a very diligent way cannot do so in a three month period. It must lead to the conclusion that the government already has money ready to spend. Those programs are ready, but because of a failure for several months in not acting when the country needed it, it is now playing catch-up. That is a very serious situation because it definitely means that accountability has been sacrificed in favour of incompetence by the government.

• (1235)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is quite interesting that the Liberal members are putting forth a suggestion for accountability to the Conservatives, given the fact that they keep telling us they voted for the budget because it was good. Yet, they keep knocking it down. It is interesting to hear Liberal members speak about accountability when they do not even believe in women's equity and the navigable waters act. They voted against those issues. They do not believe in moving forward on EI because their government took \$54 billion out of it. Let us not forget the sponsorship scandal.

Could the hon. member tell us why he feels we should be supporting this motion, given the fact that we cannot trust their promises nor the Conservatives' promises?

Hon. Dan McTeague: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member was not here in 2005 when her party threw out \$40 billion of investments in social programs, daycare, and things that would have helped Canadians. However, that is a debate from a year gone by.

This is critical. Canadians expect this Parliament to act diligently. One cannot simply throw the baby out with the bathwater and throw accountability out with it. Whether the hon. member agreed or disagreed with the stimulus program to help Canadians at a desperate time, she should appreciate that the last thing this Parliament should do is sacrifice transparency, accountability, and due diligence.

It is the hon. member's job. I recognize she is a new member and I welcome her here. I hope the hon. member would understand the parliamentary process here which is that we have to hold that government to account on its expenditures. If we do not, then our roles as members of Parliament are obsolete. Frankly, without accountability, transparency and responsibility, we have lost an important and indispensable element of our functions here as members of Parliament.

Business of Supply

The hon. member should know that. I hope this is an opportunity for her to take those things into consideration.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed listening to my colleague across the way and appreciate the contributions he has made to this debate. Although he was wrong in a number of respects, it simply gives me the opportunity to correct the record.

As we know, this government has brought forward an ambitious, aggressive multi-year plan to support Canadians during these difficult economic times. These difficulties, I would emphasize, are global, not simply national or provincial. The plan is timely, it is targeted, and it is temporary. It is a solid plan to get the money flowing to those who need it quickly. We are talking about individuals, families and communities in all regions and provinces of the country.

Our economic action plan includes actions to help Canadians and stimulate spending, including enhanced benefits to unemployed workers and more funding for training.

It also includes actions to stimulate housing construction, including the home renovation tax credit, which has so far received an overwhelmingly positive response from Canadians.

It includes action to build infrastructure, including some \$12 billion in new funding over the next two years.

Our plan includes action to support businesses and communities, including the \$7.5 billion in additional supports for sectors, regions and communities.

Finally, our plan includes actions to approve access to financing and strengthen Canada's financial system.

These are real concrete actions to stimulate the economy, but in order for them to have impact, they need to get out the door. Even the opposition has acknowledged that for these measures to have a real impact they must be implemented as soon as possible.

Allow me to quote from none other than the sponsor of this motion, the member for Markham—Unionville. On February 25, he told the *Ottawa Citizen*:

I feel entirely principled in doing the right thing, which is to do everything in our power to get the money out the door.

That is exactly what we are doing. Doing the right thing means responding to an unprecedented economic situation with extraordinary measures. Doing the right thing also means striking a critical balance between the rapid flow of stimulus measures and ensuring that due diligence is done.

Let me note that our government took the unprecedented step of proactively engaging the Auditor General to ensure she plays an active role in this process. There have been inaccurate media accusations that she has sounded an alarm over this process. Let me clarify right now that is not the case.

The case is that her recent correspondence was simply a response to the initiative that we took in contacting and involving her in this process up front. Her intervention is welcomed, her advice is timely, and we requested it. We are working closely with the Auditor General and looking forward to continuing to do so, because we are

committed to ensuring Canadians know that this process is being handled properly and has independent oversight.

In the 77 days since the budget, our government has cut red tape and taken extraordinary and unprecedented action to ensure that crucial investments are not delayed. That is what vote 35 is all about.

I am referring to the special central vote in main estimates of \$3 billion assigned to the Treasury Board Secretariat for budget implementation. The funds allocated by this vote will allow our government to provide immediate funding for ready-to-go initiatives announced in the economic action plan in advance of the normal parliamentary supply schedule.

As most members know, with our existing parliamentary process the first wave of funding for budget initiatives is not usually allocated until the first supplementary estimates are voted on. In past years, the supply bill for the first supplementary estimates would be in December.

• (1240)

Last year our government worked hard to more closely align the budget cycle with the estimates cycle. This meant that some funding for budget 2008 initiatives was available in June 2008. We are doing this again this year, but given our current economic situation, June is too late for Canadians. The construction season starts now, not in June. That is why it is essential that all members unite to support this special time-limited vote included in the main estimates.

All members need to know that the process put in place to provide accountability and transparency in the use of these funds is the same as normal processes we use when asking for parliamentary approval. The only difference is the timeframe that has been moved forward from June to April so that these funds can be applied to ready-to-go projects at the beginning of the construction season rather than at the end. That makes a huge difference when people are trying to put bread on the table.

We are not playing games here.

Not long ago the member for Outremont said the NDP favours a significant spending program for “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects. That came from the January 13 edition of the *Financial Post*, a curious statement given the consistent position of that party to oppose all budgetary measures, even those that would help Canadians in these particular difficult times.

About the same time, the Leader of the Opposition told the Canadian Press that, “You have to change the rules by which this money gets out the door”. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, that is exactly what our government is doing, so it confounds me why the opposition members would rather stage a time-consuming debate in this place than roll up their sleeves and actually do the work.

Work is what we are doing as a government. We will be reporting to Parliament so that Parliament can hold the government to account on the use of these funds. The process is completely transparent, and I will speak further to this point in a moment, but first, one other point.

Business of Supply

There seems to be an assumption among certain members of the opposition that government cannot be both efficient and honest at the same time. Members opposite are not the people to lecture us on accountability.

All of the funds distributed through the \$3 billion appropriation will be accounted for. Some have raised the spectre of the sponsorship scandal. It should not take a long institutional memory to recall that the sponsorship funds were never, never formally approved by Parliament with related conditions attached. Individual initiatives in the sponsorship scandal were not subject to any kind of oversight or parliamentary scrutiny. There was no Treasury Board approval. There was no reporting on the end use of the funds as a separate item in the estimates, in public accounts, or any other public reporting. The public service was in fact bypassed, not involved.

By comparison, all expenditures under our economic stimulus fund will be thoroughly accounted for. In keeping with this government's desire to be responsive and responsible, we have established clear conditions for the use of this vote to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are in place.

Let me underline this. The \$3 billion fund can only be used for economic action plan initiatives announced in budget 2009 and approved by the House. Each initiative funded from this vote requires the approval of Treasury Board.

Existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met. For example, grants and contribution payments are subject to the transfer payments policy, and the use of this vote is time limited. Funds can only be allocated between April 1 and June 30 of this year. This is entirely consistent with what the Auditor General has recently stated in her correspondence.

Contrary to what has been reported, we chose to create a special vote to provide bridge funding for departments to ensure due diligence in approvals, transparency in reporting, and accountability for its use.

•(1245)

We will also streamline the review and approval of policy and programs while ensuring appropriate controls and respect for parliamentary authority.

For example, we will use simplified or omnibus Treasury Board submissions for straightforward program extensions or top-ups. It just makes sense to use faster processes for programs that have already gone under the microscope, for example, providing additional funding for existing training and recruitment programs to put Canadians back to work, and we have better aligned the timing of the budget and estimates.

Parliament will have full disclosure. Reporting on allocations on the vote will be done in supplementary estimates and in regular reports to Parliament on the economic action plan.

In fact, just two weeks ago we released our first quarterly report to Parliament that outlined the steps that we have taken to cut red tape and ensure that critical investments are not delayed, entirely consistent with the approach that the Leader of the Opposition has asked us to take.

We have also launched a new website that comprehensively details our plans and gives information about specific initiatives and projects when they are announced.

In addition, thanks to the efforts to strengthen accountability and transparency, the public service is better equipped to handle this process than ever before. For example, over the past three years, financial management standards across government have been improved. Departments have independent audit committees that include members from outside government, and steps have been taken to ensure departments have qualified chief financial officers. Departments have also bolstered the management of their operations.

Under the management accountability framework assessments, large departments and agencies representing over 90% of government spending have improved in the area of financial management and control. Recent results show that financial management indicators rated acceptable or strong have risen to 90% from 59%.

We have also increased departmental oversight with a committee of deputy ministers who will be tracking progress and overseeing the implementation of these measures. Obviously those who are familiar with the sponsorship scandal from the public accounts committee will remember that the deputy ministers and the departments were in fact excluded from that spending.

The Auditor General will also audit spending. We are happy to be working closely with Madam Fraser and her team to ensure funds flow as they should.

As mentioned earlier, for the second year now the government plans to use early spring supplementary estimates as a vehicle for budgetary measures. It puts in place measures to ensure that funding flows to those who need it most, while ensuring that due diligence is done.

These are extraordinary times and we cannot wait for the normal supply period in June before getting money to some of the ready-to-go projects. We have to act immediately if Canadians are going to feel the positive impact of the economic stimulus this year. Time is of the essence, and I would ask all members of the opposition to get on board instead of playing politics with the well-being of Canadian families and businesses.

Make no mistake about it. The motion by the member for Markham—Unionville sets out impossible requirements that will bury the public service in paperwork rather than getting money out the door. It also ignores a key element to the way the federal government operates in this country; that is, it ignores the partnership role that our government plays with the provinces and municipalities in requiring disclosure before contribution agreements are signed and executed.

Business of Supply

The opposition motion is asking the government to ignore the fact that it contributes only one-third of the money in most of the cases, and it asks it to act in a unilateral fashion as though it were the sole contributor. That is the disappointing aspect of this particular motion, and the member for Markham—Unionville knows that. He has deliberately set up this paperwork in order to ensure that bureaucrats cannot get the money out, and secondly, that we run roughshod over our partners, the provinces and the municipalities. He understands the difficulty that it will create in working with his premier, Dalton McGuinty. He understands that, and he has deliberately done it.

• (1250)

We want to get money flowing to the people who need it most rather than setting up the paperwork bureaucracy.

It is interesting how the member flips his position. On one point he says to get the money out the door, and on the other he says that there have to be appropriate controls. Unfortunately, the appropriate controls are a thinly disguised scheme to stall the spending so that the money does not get out to Canadians. That is the role of this particular motion.

Hon. Anita Neville: That is nonsense.

An hon. member: Phoney baloney.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. There will be an opportunity for members of the opposition to ask questions.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, the member for Winnipeg South Centre who understands well the sponsorship scandal should be asking herself that question about the role of Parliament. Where was she when her government was abusing taxpayers' money and funnelling it to Liberal Party operatives? Forty million dollars disappeared and she said nothing.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I do not see why the member should be subjected to that personal attack. We are talking about a motion regarding accountability and what the government is going to do, and the member is using cheap partisan tactics to deflect from his speech. I would ask him to stay on point and speak to the issue at hand instead of dragging up everything he can from the past.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The President of the Treasury Board has three minutes to complete his intervention and I would ask him to speak to the motion.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, the members opposite continued to interrupt my speech and I felt I had to respond to that since the Speaker was not calling them to order.

We are striking the right balance between the rapid delivery of stimulus measures and appropriate due diligence and transparency. We all appreciate that we have a big job ahead of us. We are up to the task and we intend to help Canadians in these difficult times.

That is more than I can say for some of the members of the opposition who want to play games with the \$3 billion needed to prime the stimulus pump, which is exactly what this motion is all about. It is designed to stop the flow of that money. I am disappointed on their insistence on opposing for the sake of opposing, on making political hay out of nothing when they could be pitching in to help, not hinder, Canadians in their efforts to climb out of this pit. It especially disconcerts me when I read quotes from some

of the loudest opposition critics that they want to proceed with due speed, yet they would have this House drag its feet.

Why are we here discussing instead of doing? Why are we debating this particular issue? The strategy of the opposition is to call for action and at the same time bog down the process in redundant paperwork. In other words, the opposition members are trying to set up the stimulus initiative for failure.

I am proud of the government that is getting things done for Canadians and that is concerned about the lives of ordinary Canadians. I would ask all members to support this particular initiative and vote against this motion.

• (1255)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, about five times in my speech this morning I stressed the need to get money out the door, so when the minister quotes me as saying that, I fail to see how that provides him with political ammunition.

The basic point I made over and over again, and the minister still does not seem to understand it, is that there is no conflict between getting the money out the door and following due process and accountability. What we are asking the government to do will not delay expenditures by one nanosecond.

Let me make clear the two things we are asking and I challenge the minister to explain to Canadians how these two measures will in any way cause any delay. First, we are asking the government to provide a list of the programs and departments that will be included in the \$3 billion. I have already seen that list in a Treasury Board briefing. It exists. The government is simply being asked to table it by April 3. That will cause zero delay. Second, after the fact, after the expenditures are already approved, we are asking for the kind of information on the different projects that would be produced anyway for Treasury Board purposes.

I challenge the government to explain how those two measures would delay in any way the expenditures. Why is the minister resisting to apply even a modicum of accountability to his program?

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, the member is trying to gloss over the distinction between the fact of approval and the reality of the announcement.

An hon. member: Answer the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, order.

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, because the federal government is in a partnership with other partners, with provincial governments and municipalities, there has to be a delay in the actual announcement of the funding. I can assure the member that as soon as every project is announced, it will be put on the web. We cannot act unilaterally and pretend—

Hon. John McCallum: That is not what we are asking you to do.

Hon. Vic Toews: That is exactly what the member for Markham—Unionville is asking me to do.

Hon. John McCallum: Rubbish.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. If the member for Markham—Unionville continues to interrupt, I will not recognize him the next time he stands.

Business of Supply

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I appreciate that very much. I think that is a ruling that is well needed in this House. I think that all members should take note of that.

What the member in fact is asking us to do is to proceed unilaterally to announce before the provinces and the municipalities have had a chance to announce the expenditures of their own money. In a federal system that simply cannot be tolerated.

As soon as that announcement is made, it will be on the website for all Canadians to see.

• (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Madam Speaker, two messages have come across in the speeches. First, that people are playing petty politics at the Conservatives' expense, and second, that the President of the Treasury Board must tell us how he plans to spend the \$3 billion. I have not yet received an answer, and I think that Canadians expect answers.

We do not want to be told that the government might inject some funds here and there or that some of the money will go to workers. Canadians want to know how the \$3 billion is going to be spent. We want to know today, not at the last minute when this all comes into force and the government starts sprinkling cash wherever it pleases.

We already know that the Conservative Party is the most partisan party in the House of Commons. The Conservatives are only interested in helping their cronies, their members. That is what happened in Quebec, where a minister spent 25% of Quebec's BDC budget in his own riding.

Why should we trust a government that wants to spend \$3 billion, but does not want to make sure that Canadians understand how the money is to be spent during this recession?

I would like to believe that they want to get the country out of this recession, but if that is really what they wanted to do, they would have made up their minds long ago. They would have told us what they planned to do in the economic statement, but they did not. That suggests that they have lost the confidence of the people and that members on this side of the House have lost confidence in the government.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I might just reiterate some of my comments.

The \$3 billion fund can only be used for economic action plan initiatives announced in budget 2009. It is clear the programs on which the money can be spent. It will be approved by this House. Every initiative funded from this vote requires the approval of Treasury Board. Existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met. The Auditor General will be reviewing it. This process is entirely transparent.

When we as a government are contributing, in most cases one-third of the spending, we will not simply stand up and announce that this is what we will do. For example, in my home province of Manitoba, as a regional minister I sit down with the premier of the province or the relevant minister to determine which projects should be approved.

I can tell the member that the list of projects has not yet been finalized. There will not be that kind of ability to show those projects until the provincial government and the municipalities that will actually do the tendering process have approved. As soon as that agreement has been made and it has been announced in a cooperative federal manner, then all of the projects will be put on the website and there will be clear scrutiny.

If our government has approached this matter in a partisan way, as the member suggests, the people of Canada and this House will hold us accountable. I am confident that we will be able to meet the member's concerns and deal with this stimulus in a way that crosses all regions of this country and indeed all areas of the province in which he resides and represents.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, there is a habit the government has that if opposition members do their job, we are attacked as traitors, as being seditious, and called 21st century Neville Chamberlains, anything it can throw at us. However, our job is to ensure accountability.

When it comes to accountability, in November the government told us there was no recession. It was going to have a surplus. It said that if we voted for the coalition, we would end up with \$30 billion in spending and how could we justify that. Two months later the Conservatives said that not only do we have \$30 billion in spending they need to get out right now, but they will have another \$3 billion fund that is not going to have any oversight and it has to get out immediately. What happened to the great surplus that was supposed to have been there in November? It disappeared.

We are being asked to trust the government on blind faith, yet its record, in terms of its partisan spending is, as the *Toronto Star* said, extremely shoddy.

There is no confidence in terms of the government. The Conservatives attack us every time. They do not want to work with anybody. They seem to prefer to play to their base. Yet the issue at hand is whether or not we give the government a blank cheque to spend \$3 billion without any accountability to Parliament. At the end of the day, our responsibility is to go back to our voters and tell them how that money was spent. That money has to be spent accountably.

If the member cannot deal with the fact that there has to be accountability, I think he has a problem and he probably does not deserve to be in government.

• (1305)

Hon. Vic Toews: Madam Speaker, I can appreciate that maybe my voice has not carried down to the far end of the chamber or the member was not listening. I can list the aspects of accountability and I can assure the member that there is no difference in respect of the accountability, how the money is spent, whether it is the \$3 billion fund or any other fund of money in the Government of Canada. It goes through the same process and the same checks. We are simply asking to move the date up to authorize the spending of \$3 billion from June 30 to April 1.

The member thinks about conspiracy theories. He was a member of a coalition that plotted in the dark to undermine the democratic will of the people of Canada.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the official opposition motion. As I listened to the President of the Treasury Board, I noted that he presented a bit of disinformation and I would like to correct something. I encourage him to read the motion itself and not simply rely on the briefing notes prepared for him. In the first paragraph, the Liberal Party motion clearly states:

... this House calls upon the government to table in the House, by April 3rd, 2009, a list of the departments and programs which are likely to require access to this extraordinary authority; ...

The extraordinary authority is the \$3 billion blank cheque. The President of the Treasury Board tried to confuse the issue by saying that the government will be unable to provide this information on April 3 because, when a project is approved, if it has partners such as the municipalities or the provinces, those partners must be willing to make the agreement or partnership public.

However, this has nothing to do with the government's ability to table in this House a list of the departments and programs which, as the motion states, are "likely to require access to this extraordinary authority".

The President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and the various departments know whether their budgets will come out of the government's economic stimulus package.

[English]

If the President of the Treasury Board is claiming the government is unable to abide by the first paragraph of the Liberal opposition day motion, then that is an admission the government is clearly incompetent and does not merit the trust of Canadians to govern. For that minister to stand in the House and say that he does not know which departments might use this extraordinary power and that he does not know which programs may be used in effecting this extraordinary power is an astonishing admission.

I am sharing my time, Madam Speaker, with the member for Charlottetown.

I have been a member of the House since June 2, 1997. This is the first time I have heard a representative, a member of the government, say that he or she and the government do not know what departments or what programs may be used in order to realize certain objectives. It is unheard of. For the minister to stand and say that it would also be premature is nonsense.

The second part of the Liberal motion requires that once the approval is made, and clearly if there are partners it would be contingent on those partners also coming to an agreement and an actual accord, the government table in the House, within one sitting day of each such use, a report that discloses the name and location of each project to which the funding is being provided, including the federal electoral district in which it is located.

The reason this section is in the motion is the government's public records indicate that under its building Canada infrastructure program, the overwhelming majority of projects approved went to ridings held by Conservatives. I believe the figure is something like 77%. Clearly, there is something wrong.

The Auditor General, in the *Ottawa Citizen* on March 22, said:

I must say that I don't buy the argument that they can't tell them something—maybe not the detail of, say, what festival, or how much, but they could at least say where the money is going, whether it's (to) infrastructure or festivals.

That is in stark contrast to what we have just heard from the President of the Treasury Board. I wonder why he is still in his position, given that he does not seem to have the basic understanding of how government operates.

The government comes to the House with a budget. It asks for spending approval and that approval is designated for certain departments and programs. For the minister to stand and say that the Conservative government cannot abide with the Liberal motion and that is why it will vote against it, is one clear admission of incompetence. If it is not incompetence, then it is wilful disregard to the public, to the right of Canadians to know how their tax dollars are being spent.

We are in too much of a dire situation to have the Conservative government play politics.

If we look at the employment figures for Canada only, in February we lost 82,600 jobs. That pushed our unemployment rate up to 7.7%. In January Canada lost 129,000 jobs. In fact, since October 2008, 295,000 Canadians have lost their jobs and have no income coming in.

● (1310)

We hear about Canadians who apply for employment insurance and wait two to three months before they receive their first cheques. Then we hear the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development show her ignorance of the law she is there to apply. She stated that someone who is eligible for employment insurance can access the fund the government put in place for training, even if they are not touching their benefits yet.

The minister does not know her own law. She stated that the budget is for people who do not qualify for employment insurance. Yet we have thousands of workers who have either lost their jobs or have been informed by their employers that they will lose their jobs before summer. They will receive some form of severance, but under employment insurance, they cannot begin to collect EI benefits until their severance has completely expired.

Under the Employment Insurance Act, those unemployed workers cannot access job training while they are living off their severance. How silly is that? If they were allowed to have their training immediately, there is a good chance they might find a job before their employment insurance benefits begin to flow. Saving money for the taxpayers and bringing in stimulus measures that make sense is too complicated for the government.

I urge all hon. members, including hon. members of the governing party, to read the motion, independent of whatever brainwashing information ministers have given them, and support it motion when it comes to a vote.

● (1315)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have dealt with the largest economic meltdown in 80 years and it is a time when Parliament should work together. Yet we have seen the government ridicule and attack anyone questioning it.

Business of Supply

The fact is we knew the recession was coming. The government said that there was no recession, that we had missed it and if there were a recession, it would have happened by now.

There was a complete lack of planning from the finance minister right up into November when he presented his motion before the House, which attacked pay equity. He had no plan for an economic stimulus.

Suddenly now there is a sense of urgency. Now we are being attacked for asking the government to tell us what its plan is. How will we know that this is not just scattershot spending of money? How are we to know that this \$3 billion fund is not just a pork barrel project? We have not seen anything from the government that instills confidence.

Could the hon. member tell us what she thinks of a government that has misread the economic signs so badly and so continuously? How can we trust it with a \$3 billion fund that is seen as a slush fund?

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, because of the government's record, because of its incompetence and inability to govern in an efficient and effective fashion and to tell the truth to Canadians, the official opposition has come out with its motion today.

It is an attempt to force the government, if it cannot be competent, effective or do the job, to at least give up the facts so Canadians can see these for themselves. It is an attempt to bring some form of accountability to the government. It is an attempt to demonstrate if my view that the government and the Prime Minister are incompetent, the facts will show it. The motion will force the government to reveal the facts on that \$3 billion so it is not a slush fund.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the exact wording in the vote includes the phrase "to supplement other appropriations". It goes on to say, "and to provide any appropriate Ministers with appropriations for initiatives announced in the Budget".

It would appear that there are two separate items. One consists of the matters in the budget under the minister's responsibility. The other is to supplement other unspecified appropriations. This is an issue of accountability. This is an issue of openness and transparency.

I do not understand why the government would not want to provide the details of the proposed spending. Clearly all of the work necessary to put approved projects in place for this period of time would require months of work in advance. The only way to get it over the next three months is if that information is already available. Therefore, it should respond affirmatively to the motion before the House.

• (1320)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, in response, I want to talk about why we should trust the Tories, the Conservatives, the government with \$3 billion of Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars with no controls whatsoever.

Let us look at how the Conservative government has already spent money that was approved in the House in past budgets. If we look at

specific infrastructure projects the government approved and announced in 2007 and 2008, 77.8% of them were in Conservative ridings, but the Conservatives represent only 46.4% of all ridings in Canada. When we look at the building Canada fund, they announced 37%. While 30% went to Conservative ridings, only 7% went to non-Conservative ridings.

Let me quote Greg Weston, who is an *Ottawa Sun* columnist. He said, "Welcome aboard", and he used the Prime Minister's first name, "pork-barrel express". That is why we have put forward the Liberal motion. We want to ensure that there is accountability, that the facts do come to light and that we do not wait for a year, two years, three years before an Auditor General report comes out.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes allotted to me in this debate, I would like to frame the issue as part of a larger concept. The gist of this motion is that the government be required to tell Canadians how it is spending their money. It is a fundamental question that goes to the very essence of this institution, the House of Commons and Parliament, and by extension to the democratic institutions that we enjoy today.

It was not always this way. Our system of democracy, the Westminster system, got its roots on the banks of the Runnymede in the year 1215 when King John met an angry group of lords and noblemen. Before then the king or queen ruled by edict, but henceforth any taxation would require the consent of the people as represented and any expenditure of money would require the consent of the people. The governor, in this case the king, would have to meet the governed and be accountable for the taxes and for the way that money was spent. That was codified in the document known as the Magna Carta.

That is the system. Of course it has evolved considerably over the last 800 and some years and it is the system that we enjoy today. Fundamentally it is the basic system that if a government wants to tax Canadians, it has to be done by legislation that is approved by Parliament, and through Parliament by the Canadian people. It is the same when the government wants to take money from the general revenue fund. Through the estimates process, that has to be approved by Parliament. In other words the government has to tell the Canadian people how it intends to spend their money. I underline and emphasize the words "their money".

In Canada our system of financial accountability starts with a budget which is the political document of the government in power that sets out the goals and objectives of what the government wants to accomplish. That has to be approved by the House, by the Canadian people. If there are any taxes, they have to be included in ways and means legislation which, before it becomes operative, has to meet the consent of the people. That is the raising of money, but then the spending of money requires the estimates process, the supplementary estimates or the main estimates. Again, that tells Canadians how their money is being spent. Before it is legitimized, it has to be approved by Parliament representing the Canadian people.

Business of Supply

Of course there are the departmental performance reports, the departmental reports on plans and priorities which are all part of the supply process. That all concludes with the audited financial statements issued by the Office of the Auditor General which certify that the expenditure money is done in an accurate and compliant manner.

To the question at hand, the government wants to spend \$3 billion. I assume it is a reasonable request but it is a breakdown in the chain as we know it. Because of the urgency of the matter, the government wants approval from Parliament to spend the money. Parliament has considered this. It has debated it and it has said it is a reasonable request. We will bypass the ordinary chain of accountability and allow the government to spend the \$3 billion. Because of the time in which the Canadian public wants the money spent, there should be no delay. Everyone in the House of Commons agrees with that. There is no dissent on that.

However, in getting to the essence of what this debate is about, all we are saying is to tell us. Once the government has made its decision as to how, in what manner, where and when it is going to spend that \$3 billion or any part of the \$3 billion, it should tell us, tell the Canadian people.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why any member in the House, why any person in the country could be against that very simple concept. There is a \$3 billion fund. It is going to be in the process of being appropriated. We, the Canadian people, have allowed the government to spend it on the general purposes that it has enunciated. All we have is a very simple request. It is understood by everyone. All we, the Canadian people, are saying is to tell us, once the decision is made, tell us how, why, when and where the money will be spent. I cannot understand why anyone would be opposed to this concept.

●(1325)

This comes back to a problem that certain members develop in the House after they have been here for a few years. They want to keep it secret because if it is kept secret, it cannot cause any problems. Where people get off the rails very seriously is that they have to come back and ask whose \$3 billion we are talking about. Let us ask that question first. Does that money belong to the Government of Canada? Does it belong to the Conservative Party? Does it belong to the House of Commons? Does it belong to Parliament? Does it belong to the bureaucracy living and working here in Ottawa? No, it does not. In answer to the question as to whom the money belongs, it belongs to the Canadian people.

Through the representative democracy under which we operate, the Canadian people have allowed the executive to spend the money on their behalf. The Canadian people have a very simple request. They want the executive to tell them how, why, where and when the government is spending the money. That goes to the very essence of why we are here. We are all members of Parliament. For those of us who are not in cabinet, it is our fundamental job, duty and occupation to hold the executive to account that they spend the money in accordance with the authorities delegated to them and they tell the Canadian people through us as to how they are going to spend this money.

From what I heard today, the Conservative Party across the aisle does not want to do that. The Conservatives do not want to tell us why they want to spend this money. I am disappointed in the debate. Needless to say, they will be accusing me of all sorts of things in the questions and comments session. It is a very simple request. I think we should boil it down. What is wrong with telling the Canadian people why, where and how their money is being spent? I do not believe that this debate does anything to enhance the House. People watching this debate on TV will be shaking their heads asking what is wrong with the government telling them that it is going to spend \$3 billion.

I should also point out that this time last year, Parliament legitimately appropriated \$4.6 billion, I believe, to be spent on infrastructure projects. I stand to be corrected, and someone will correct me if I am wrong, but the fiscal year ends next Tuesday, March 31, and I understand that the government is only going to spend \$1 billion or \$2 billion of that money. It is going to leave \$2 billion or \$3 billion on the table. It is not even going to spend it. Now there is a great big urgency, and we agreed. We have a very simple request in return. We want the government to come back and tell us how it is going to spend the money.

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are signalling that I am out of time. I just want to say that I will be supporting the motion. I believe the public watching and listening to this debate will have no appetite for anyone who gets up and argues that the government is not going to tell Canadians how the government is going to spend the money. I urge everyone in the House to pass this motion immediately.

●(1330)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to boil the issue down for the people who are watching this debate. I would like my hon. colleague to comment on the question as I see it, which is only a matter of timing. Instead of forcing our civil servants to try and prepare daily reports as they advance funds under this envelope, we will report that information to Parliament with the supplementary estimates in June.

Is it not a little unfair for any hon. colleague opposite to suggest that this is about not providing information when really it is just about when we are going to provide the information? I would like my hon. colleague to comment on that.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. My understanding of the process in the spending of government money is that there is the application process, the negotiation process, the due diligence process, and at some point in time there is the contract, for example, to spend \$1 million on the Ottawa sewer system. Once the contract is signed, the work is done. The public servants have done a lot of work leading up to that, but once the contract is signed, all they have to do is go to the website and indicate that they have just approved \$1 million for the Ottawa sewer system, push the send button and it is done. It might take four or six seconds or somewhere in between. All the work is done in the due diligence process. I agree that it does take some time, but to file it with Parliament immediately, we are talking seconds.

Business of Supply

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noticed my colleague referred many times to his surprise at the government's intransigence on this issue but it would speak to a very clear pattern. This is the wrong government at the wrong time. We have a Prime Minister who is habituated to conflict and not working together.

When this \$3 billion fund was first raised and opposition members said what kind of accountability, what kind of oversight will there be, the Prime Minister's initial response was not to say that he would talk about it and explain it. He said that he would bring Parliament down and go to an election immediately unless the opposition bowed down. That is the wrong kind of messaging in a time of economic crisis and yet that is the pattern we have seen again and again.

The Prime Minister broke his own election law in September and said he could not work with the opposition because it would not work with his agenda and yet he had not met with any of the opposition about the agenda. He came back after the election for about five days and then he had to prorogue Parliament because his so-called economic stimulus package was so ideologically toxic that we were almost in a constitutional crisis.

Now we are here once again with the Prime Minister who uses buccaneer-style politics to say that if he does not get his way, if he is asked for any accountability, any oversight, if opposition members do any of their work, which is what they are supposed to do, he threatens to bring down the House.

Does my hon. colleague think the Prime Minister is even capable of taking us through a crisis like this given his predilection for conflict?

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I believe I would need more time to answer all those comments. One comment is we have to bill this down.

The \$3 billion is a very important point. We agree with the Prime Minister that this should be spent as part of the stimulus package. This should be spent immediately. We agree with that. We agree with all the steps, but there is one step that we seem to have a major difference with, and that is the reluctance on the part of the government to tell us and all Canadians how it is spending our money. I am going to underline the word "our". That is a fundamental problem. It is a violation of every democratic principle we all stand for.

I ask members across to reconsider their position on this issue and consider the repercussions when a government in power has asked for an unusual portion of the estimates process and once it gets approval will tell the Canadian people that it will not tell them how the money is being spent.

• (1335)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Gatineau.

I am pleased to speak on this Liberal opposition day. The motion we are studying today comes in the wake of the Conservative government's 2009 budget, which the Liberals supported and the Bloc Québécois condemned. In this budget, the government asked

for \$3 billion to be spent by the Treasury Board by June. The details of this vote are still unknown, and the Conservative members are saying very little about it.

We do not know where or how the Conservatives plan to spend this money. We do not know which sector or which regions they want to target. In short, on the pretext that they have to get the money out quickly to boost the ailing economy, the Conservatives are asking Parliament to sign a blank cheque for \$3 billion. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has admitted that the political ministers in each region will be consulted on allocating the money.

This is a far cry from the federal Accountability Act. We now know that this government has a partisan, ideological agenda, and we have little confidence in it. This situation opens the door to political interference in allocating funding, at the expense of economic effectiveness. At a time when polls show that their popularity is waning and that people are unhappy with their political performance, the Conservatives will be able to use this money to win more votes instead of actually stimulating the economy.

In the interest of rigour and transparency in the management of public funds, the Bloc Québécois opposes the Conservative government's attempt to spend \$3 billion with no parliamentary oversight. Too often, the federal government has shown that it can be negligent in managing slush funds, as the Liberal Party proved in the sponsorship scandal.

We have to admit that it is rather ironic that the Liberals, in today's motion, are concerned with rigour and transparency in the management of public funds, given that this party has a great deal of experience, even expertise, in the partisan use of public money. However, an analysis of the Liberal motion reveals that it does virtually nothing to prevent the Conservative government from spending the \$3 billion as it pleases. In fact, the Liberal Party agreed to allow the federal government to use this \$3 billion fund without parliamentary oversight when it voted for the budget and it is doing so again today with this motion.

Nonetheless, this motion does force the government to be accountable, albeit minimally. It is evident that the motion, as described by the Liberals, ensures that after the budgets are adopted, we will be informed too late to intervene in the use of these public funds. That is shameful and therefore we will continue to hound this government to ensure that the money disbursed from this fund is spent legitimately and equitably.

• (1340)

Apart from the issues of rigour and transparency in the management of public funds, the government's request for a vote of \$3 billion shows another fundamental problem. This request demonstrates, once again, the ineffectiveness of the stimulus plan adopted by the Conservatives and supported by the Liberals.

Business of Supply

The government was incapable of proposing an appropriate plan to navigate the crisis and now must ask the House for additional funds, which, it says, will allow it to propose recovery initiatives not included in its plan.

In other words, this measure demonstrates once again that the Conservative's 2009 budget did not address the crisis at all and did not take the needs of Quebecers into account. It is a completely unacceptable budget for Quebec and for a population that, in this time of recession, was entitled to expect appropriate and sufficient measures from the current government.

We know that the Conservative government, with the Liberals' backing, has decided, instead of helping Quebec, to deprive it of important ways of dealing with this crisis. On the other hand, they have chosen to heed the wishes of Ontario, the west, and the oil companies, while, the furniture industry in Berthier—Maskinongé is struggling, as are the agriculture and forestry sectors everywhere in Quebec.

As for employment insurance, while 26,000 Quebec jobs were lost this past January, the Liberals and Conservatives decided to do nothing to remedy the accessibility of EI, even though approximately 50% of people losing their jobs are not eligible for benefits. What is more, they refused to do away with the waiting period and ensure that people can get their money as quickly as possible without penalty, in this time of economic crisis.

Not only is the government refusing to improve access to employment insurance, but it has also decided, backed by the Liberals, to let big business get out of paying billions of dollars in taxes by using tax havens. Those lost billions could have been put to far better use for the jobless and low income seniors. But no. There is one indisputable fact: while the Bloc wants to work for our regions and our people who are struggling the most, the Conservatives and the Liberals are still, as always, protecting the great multinationals that want to use these tax shelters and not pay taxes.

I could also speak of the changes to the equalization formula made without consulting Quebec, changes which will deprive Quebec, in these times of economic crisis, of \$1 billion of the equalization payments it ought to have received this year.

To sum up, the Liberal Party's motion has given us yet another opportunity to demonstrate that this budget and the proposed measures do not meet Quebec's needs. This debate has also shown that it is impossible for elected representatives from Quebec who belong to major federalist parties in the House to defend Quebec's interests effectively, that only Bloc Québécois members can do the job, and that we need Quebec sovereignty has become more important than ever before so that we can control all of our own economic, political and social tools.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon: We have been hearing that it is important for 40 years now.

Mr. Guy André: Even the Conservative member opposite agrees that becoming a sovereign nation is very important.

● (1345)

[English]

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member spent a lot of his time talking about the budget and how, in his opinion, it did not benefit the people of the province of Quebec and that Quebec did not get its fair share. However, I do not think the issue really deals with that at all. It deals with the way these estimates are being presented, the failure on the part of the executive to share with Canadians how this money is being spent and that they are not sharing it with the people living in Manitoba, Ontario or Quebec.

Does the member not agree with me that the issue here has nothing to do with Quebec as a region or any regional differences, but that it goes to one of the basic tenets of our democracy and does not have anything to do with regions?

[Translation]

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, the member has raised the issue of democracy. People pay taxes, and all regions, all Canadians and all Quebecers are entitled to their due in return for the taxes they pay. The Conservatives have strayed far from the Accountability Act they brought in a few years ago.

We have seen the Conservative ministers from Quebec make partisan decisions about how to allocate funds to the regions. Therefore, we cannot trust the government with this \$3 billion fund, which will no doubt be used to bolster their partisan policies as they face a significant loss of support in the polls because of the bad political choices they have made with respect to Quebec.

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my friend on his speech. He spoke about how the Conservatives are not very good at coming up with new plans. That is what members of this House have been saying for some time now. They have a plan for this and a plan for that, but when the time comes to define a given plan, they cannot, so they tell us anything and give us only a general outline.

Now, they want \$3 billion that they can spend in some as yet unknown way. We are trying to find out how that money will be spent. I believe that there are indicators that can be qualified and quantified. When the Conservatives were elected in October, they did not have a plan or a budget, and they did not know what to do. They said, "There is a crisis. There is no crisis. We are going to pull through the crisis. Everything is fine." Later, they realized that they were in trouble and that we were faced with a crisis. Their reaction was to shut us out and try to come up with a plan.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that the Liberals supported all that. They had some bargaining power with the Conservatives, but they did not use it.

I would like my eminent colleague to tell me what he thinks of the Liberals, who support bad budgets and try to take money out of our pockets to line their own, the pockets of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Business of Supply

Mr. Guy André: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent question. Of course, both the Liberals and the Conservatives have short-changed Quebecers. In my opinion, Quebecers understand that there is only one way to get out of this parliament, which is becoming partisan. The Conservatives are trying to get votes, as we saw in the most recent budget. They are trying to get votes in Ontario by giving more to the auto industry, but they are forgetting Quebec, because they get fewer votes in Quebec.

In my opinion, this is doing nothing for Quebec's social, economic and political development. If we controlled our own economic and political levers, had sovereignty and could use all our own tax revenues, we would not be caught up in this situation, this political squabbling, that threatens our very development.

• (1350)

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today in connection with the Liberal Party motion concerning vote 35, that is the interim vote of \$3 billion. Let us review the motion itself:

That, due to the extraordinary nature of the spending authority proposed in Treasury Board Vote 35 in the Main Estimates for 2009-2010, this House calls upon the government to table in the House, by April 3rd, 2009, a list of the departments and programs which are likely to require access to this extraordinary authority;

on each occasion that the government uses Vote 35, this House calls upon the government to table in the House, within one sitting day of each such use, a report disclosing:

(a) the name and location of each project to which the funding is being provided (including the federal electoral district in which it is located),

(b) the amount of federal funding,

(c) the department and program under which the federal funding is being provided,

(d) what each project is intended to achieve in fighting the recession, and why it requires recourse to Vote 35 rather than any other source of funds;

that each such report shall be posted on a publicly accessible government website, and referred immediately to the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and to the Auditor General.

To begin with, the fact that the government wishes to appropriate the means by which taxpayers' dollars are to be spent is totally unsatisfactory and disrespectful of democracy. Let us start off by acknowledging that the Conservative budget is clearly insufficient and unacceptable for Quebec. I will take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to give you an example of this, since I know you are very attentive to the question.

In the last budget, the forestry industry is allocated an envelope of \$170 million, while close to \$4 billion in loans are offered to the auto industry. A rapid calculation if we put those two amounts together gives 4% for forestry and 96% for the auto industry. This is unequal and unacceptable.

I am thinking today of the workers at Abitibi-Bowater in Gatineau, who are waiting for another downsizing exercise. This paper mill employed 1450 in 1992, but the figure had dropped to 580 in 2007 and is now less than 400. Abitibi-Bowater, the biggest newsprint producer in the world, is now involved in debt restructuring. Its deadline for announcing its plan is tonight.

It is quite understandable for workers to be holding their breath, because they are wondering, quite simply, whether there will be more job losses. We have to feel for these folks. The budget does not.

We can certainly understand the remarks by Gaston Carrière, the president of section 142 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, which has a membership of some 370 tradesmen at the Gatineau pulp and paper mill. In this morning's *Le Droit*, he criticizes the federal government's lack of intervention to help the forestry industry while the automotive industry in Canada is getting nearly \$4 billion in loans. Pulp and paper in Canada has lost 25,000 jobs in the past two years or so. It is scandalous.

Mr. Carrière went on to say that they had been through streamlining, that the Gatineau plant was among the most efficient and that they had worked to increase productivity and competitiveness. He pointed out that the government helps the automotive industry and the oil industry in the west.

Mr. Carrière is not very impressed by the Prime Minister of Canada and his refusal to help the forestry industry.

In the light of Mr. Carrière's remarks, we reiterate that the Conservative budget is totally inadequate and unacceptable to Quebec. In addition, the Liberal party failed to assume its responsibilities and preferred to have the budget passed, a budget that did not meet Quebecers' needs.

Out of concern for rigorous management of public funds, the Bloc québécois opposes giving the federal government a blank cheque for \$3 billion.

• (1355)

The federal government has been negligent in the past in its management of secret funds, as the sponsorship scandal revealed.

The Liberal party will give the Conservative government the sum of \$3 billion, which will not be under the control of Parliament.

The Liberal motion does not alter the fact that the Conservative government will be able to spend the \$3 billion however it likes.

The Liberal motion obliges the government to be accountable, albeit minimally, in managing the \$3 billion under vote 35.

Despite the passage of this motion, the Bloc will continue to hound the Conservative government to ensure that the money invested from this secret fund will be spent legitimately. The details sought by the Liberal party are a start, for sure, but quite inadequate. On the basis of this principle of accountability, we will support this motion.

After the 2009 budget was tabled, the Conservatives tabled with the main estimates, a request for a vote of \$3 billion to be spent by June 2009, this coming June, by Treasury Board. So, 11/12 of this vote will be voted on this evening as interim supply.

The details surrounding this vote are unknown and that is the scandal. In other words, under the pretext of rapidly injecting money into the economy, the Conservatives are asking Parliament to sign over a \$3 billion blank cheque.

Yet as the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities himself admitted, the political ministers of each region will be consulted concerning the allocation of the money made available by vote 35. This is what I would call favouritism.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]*

In that regard, I would like to quote from a period of questions in the March 5 meeting of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, that is, 19 days ago. My colleague, the transport critic and member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, asked the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities the following question:

My second question is about community recreational facilities. The Minister of State Responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, [the Conservative member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean], announced that his department was prepared to receive applications, but no forms are available. Earlier you mentioned that the [Minister of Public Works and Government Services, the Conservative member for Mégantic—L'Érable], was also looking after this file. Which [of the two ministers] will manage programs for community recreational facilities in Quebec?

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the Conservative member for Ottawa West—Nepean, replied:

I work constructively with all my cabinet colleagues.

Listen carefully, for all is revealed in his next comment.

The political minister in each region is obviously one of the principal advisers whom I would turn to for advice and counsel. [The Conservative member and minister from Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean] works for the Regional Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec. Obviously that might be a delivery agent for one or more initiatives. We'll be coming forward in very short order with some specifics on that.

That is favouritism. Is that not scandalous? The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities will consult his colleagues in each region—the Minister of Public Works and Government Services this time and maybe the Minister of State responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec another time—to determine whether the project is worthwhile rather than examining the quality of the project, all without having any criteria. That is favouritism, that is taking taxpayers' money and doing what they want with it. And to do what? To put up a building here, in a riding that did not win a project last time, or to build a road there, in a riding they want to hold onto in the next election. This is an appalling and unacceptable way of doing things.

I am thinking of forestry workers, the paper mill workers in Gatineau today, who will find out tonight if they are still employed. The federal government has money and what does it want to do with the \$3 billion? It wants to hand it out to friends because it is not in the least accountable to taxpayers. That is unacceptable and I understand Quebecers' and Canadians' outcry and revolt against these types of proposals from the Conservative government.

• (1400)

It is shameful. We should be ashamed and vote against a government that acts in this way. We will support the spirit of the motion by voting for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments for the hon. member for Gatineau will take place after oral question period.

WEST GREY PREMIUM BEEF

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I want to congratulate West Grey Premium Beef, who just took home the top two prizes at Ontario's finest meat competition held by the Ontario Independent Meat Processors, an organization representing 180 different Ontario meat processors.

West Grey's win for best beef steak was announced as part of their annual conference. This family-owned and operated packing plant uses some of the finest cattle produced in my riding. By doing this, the company is able to guarantee consistently high quality beef based upon its flavour, aroma and appearance.

I want to congratulate Doug Calhoun, George Maxwell and Peter Knipfel, and managers Chet Calhoun and Dave Tedford, who together own and manage West Grey Premium Beef. Their commitment to high quality beef makes them an integral part of our community, worthy of our recognition and appreciation.

We have always known that Canada has the best beef in the world, but now we know that West Grey Premium Beef and Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has the best of the best.

* * *

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Tuberculosis Day. TB kills 1.7 million people each year. That is one person every 20 seconds. Many of these are among the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations, particularly women, people living with HIV and aboriginal people.

The tragedy is that we know how to fight this epidemic and treating TB costs as little as \$20 per person for the life-saving drugs.

In a time of economic crisis, developing countries are hit hard as they feel the effects of the downturn and a decrease in aid dollars. As fiscal belts are tightened, it is important to note that studies show investing in TB control is one of the most cost-effective public health investments that can be made.

The World Bank acknowledged the economic imperative to treat TB in an impact study that showed scaling up funding to fight TB would not only prevent unnecessary sickness and death, it would be cheaper than maintaining the status quo. Canada has been recognized as a leader in TB control, but we are wavering. Canada's actual spending is down \$30 million in 2007.

We know how to fight the epidemic and treat the disease in Canada. I would like to ask all members of the House to fight this—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

NANCY LEDUC

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the 2009 Winter Special Olympics were held last February 7 to 13 in Boise, Idaho in the United States. Over 3,000 athletes from 85 countries competed in seven sports.

Ten athletes from Quebec took part in these games, constituting the largest Quebec representation since the event was created in 1977.

One member of this delegation was Ms. Nancy Leduc, of Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, in my riding, who participated in the snowshoe race event. Ms. Leduc, with her coach Ms. Johanne Noël, went through a stiff regimen of five days' intensive training per week to prepare for this competition. Her efforts and perseverance bore fruit, for she returned home with three medals, one gold and two bronze.

On my own behalf and that of the Bloc Québécois, I salute Nancy. She is an example of courage and determination for us all.

* * *

[English]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education is important to northern Manitoba and to Canada.

In northern Manitoba we have one of the youngest populations in Canada. People in the north tell us that post-secondary education is key to our future. As a former researcher and instructor at the University College of the North, I have seen the issues firsthand. Canadian students need support.

Aboriginal students across Canada have been calling for adequate funding for their studies and the need for the federal government to respect that education is a treaty right. In terms of research, students, researchers and academics across Canada have decried the cuts and ideological earmarking of research funding. The refusal to see commitments to all research as integral to our economic recovery is damaging to us.

Finally, we need a comprehensive approach to support post-secondary education. We need a long-term commitment to support our institutions, researchers and students in terms of infrastructure, programming and access.

A plan for a strong economic recovery ought to place a priority on post-secondary education.

* * *

●(1405)

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, March 25, will mark the 202nd anniversary of the enactment of the Slave Trade Act by the British Parliament. While this monumental act led to the end of the Atlantic slave trade, there are more humans enslaved today than at any given moment throughout history.

Human trafficking is a modern day slave trade that holds over 27 million men, women and children in captivity, and generates more revenue annually than Nike, Google and Starbucks combined.

Dr. David Batstone, co-founder of the Not For Sale Campaign, has led modern day abolitionists to combat human trafficking. I am pleased to commend Dr. David Batstone, Professor Benjamin Perrin and the students of the University of British Columbia Human Trafficking Working Group as well as the Canadian Religious Conference for launching the website, slaverymap.ca last week, a tool to track human trafficking cases in Canada.

I would invite hon. members and all Canadians to visit the website and help end slavery once and for all in our nation.

* * *

VINCENT MASSEY COLLEGIATE

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees 2009 Premier Award for School Board Innovation was won by Vincent Massey Collegiate in Fort Garry, in Winnipeg, given for its alternative energy array project.

Guided by a student-led sustainable development committee, the school made alternative energy and sustainability a priority for learning and action. After establishing a weather station on the roof of the school and collecting data for nine months, student research determined what energy sources should be focused on and what type of equipment was required to meet those needs.

The goal was to establish a small-scale wind turbine, solar cells, a green roof and a greenhouse. The wind turbine was launched in the fall of 2008. The green roof and solar cells are to be launched in the spring of 2009 and 2010.

Their goal, as stated in their application for the award, is to create a learning environment where—

The Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member's time has expired.

The hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

* * *

MILITARY SPOUSES

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the military spouse.

While the military member is thousands of miles from home, it is the military spouse who manages the home front.

Whether it is taking the kids to lessons, getting maintenance done on house or car, dealing with bills, attending parent-teacher interviews, taking a sick kid to emergency, tucking in the kids and telling them that daddy or mommy will be home soon, whether it is waiting for the phone call or email from halfway around the world or controlling the gnawing fear when it does not come as expected, whether it is being there for a friend who has lost his or her mate through service to Canada, or living in fear of the black staff car in the driveway, or putting on a brave face when his or her spouse returns early to Trenton, it is the military spouse who bears the burden of service every bit as much as the military member.

It is the military spouse who deserves a medal, because he or she is every bit as heroic as those who wear the maple leaf.

As poet John Milton wrote in the 17th century:

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Truer words were never spoken, and we should all remember the military spouse in our thoughts and prayers.

* * *

[Translation]

KEVIN AND VINCE NELLS PAPTIE

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Kevin and Vince Nells Papatie of the Algonquin community of Kitchisakik on the production of their respective short films *L'amendement* and *Petit Prince*. Young filmmakers crossed Canada in a mobile recording studio, Wapinoki Mobile, allowing young people from aboriginal communities to express their culture through film by means of video and musical productions.

L'amendement by Kevin Papatie, which concerns the loss of the Algonquin language, won the award for best film in an aboriginal language at the imagineNATIVE 2008 festival in Toronto, as well as a prize at the FILMER A TOUT PRIX festival in Brussels, Belgium. The short film by Vince Nells Papatie, *Petit Prince*, will be screened at the Native American Film + Video Festival in New York later this week.

I join with my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois in extending our congratulations. Kevin and Vince can be proud.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

NATIONAL BLACK ENGAGEMENT DAYS

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of National Black Engagement Days. In this historic event, the leadership of the national black community will be meeting with ministers, other members of Parliament and senior government officials.

This event highlights our government's strong commitment to Canada's cultural communities. By engaging in dialogue with these pioneering men and women, we are laying the foundation for strong and powerful relationships with one of Canada's most vibrant communities.

Statements by Members

I am honoured to have this chance to participate in National Black Engagement Days as it gives me the chance to better understand the intricate fabric that makes up this beautiful country.

Please join me in honouring the delegation that is in Ottawa today. They are all an inspiration, and I hope this is only the beginning of a new phase of engagement with Canada's black community.

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CBC CAPE BRETON

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, CBC Cape Breton is a vital part of our island. It provides a unique voice for Cape Bretoners and it is vital to open discourse and democracy. It provides the island with a town square where people of all walks of life gather daily to share news, culture and their ideas.

Programs such as *Information Morning* with Steve Sutherland and Laurel Munroe, and *Mainstreet* with Wendy Bergfeldt, provide Cape Bretoners with a link to their neighbours, their culture and the world.

It means that somebody in Sydney can understand the concerns of somebody in Inverness. It brings together rural and urban, and it bridges cultures both old and new.

Cape Bretoners have suffered many economic blows over the years, but we have taken strength in our culture. CBC Cape Breton has been there during our triumphs and our tragedies.

I want all members to join with me in calling on CBC to keep CBC Cape Breton as a local independent voice well into our future.

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SEAL HUNT

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Green Party leader Elizabeth May recently came out in support of a Liberal bill that would ban the seal hunt. May's position on the seal hunt is especially concerning given that a Liberal-NDP-Bloc coalition would have appointed her to the Senate, allowing the anti-seal hunt bill to move to the next stage and putting the hunt's future in tremendous jeopardy.

All they need is one more senator to support this Liberal bill to lead to it coming closer to being adopted and the seal hunt banned, which just happens to be the goal of Liberal campaign boss Warren Kinsella.

Canadians should also be aware that all of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal and NDP members of Parliament signed that coalition agreement, so they would have been responsible for putting May in the Senate to advance this anti-Newfoundland and Labrador, anti-Canadian debate.

* * *

WATER

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I congratulate Bill Goers, recipient of the fourth annual World Water Day award. Bill was recognized at Victoria's Toast to Tapwater event for bringing back to life Fernwood's Spring Ridge community well, one of the first public springs to be protected in B.C. in the 1800s.

Oral Questions

Through this toast to public water, Bill and the Greater Victoria Water Watch Coalition want government to understand that public water is critical to our collective future.

They ask that the federal government show leadership on the global stage and recognize water as a human right, that Ottawa address the lack of clean water in first nations communities, wanton waste of water in tar sands development, unsustainable escalation of the bottled water industry, and the alarming pressure for privatization of our dwindling fresh water resources.

* * *

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economy is going through a virtually unprecedented period of crisis. Quebeckers are suffering and they expect the Bloc members who were elected to treat their hard-earned money responsibly.

So while Quebeckers suffer, what does the Bloc do? Well, just imagine Bloc members heading off on nice holidays down south at taxpayer expense.

We asked some legitimate questions yesterday of the Bloc tourists but did not get any answers. In view of their inability to deliver the goods for Quebec in Ottawa and really advance the interests of the Quebec nation, we are entitled to demand an accounting. If the Bloc does not do any good for Quebec in Ottawa, it certainly will not do any better in Washington.

On behalf of the citizens in my riding, I officially deplore this shameful waste.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last weekend the Liberal leader waffled on at great length before his party workers but had nothing specific to offer Quebeckers.

He says he wants to improve the employment insurance system, which was butchered by the Liberals, but does not have anything in particular to propose. He says too that he was the first federalist politician to recognize the Quebec nation, but he refuses to say what he intends to make of it. Even worse, he describes the fiscal imbalance as ancient history when the Quebec National Assembly agrees unanimously that it should be dealt with.

While the Bloc Québécois was making clear, detailed proposals for jump-starting the economy, the Liberals were content to sit back and support the Conservative budget without even deigning to propose any amendments to meet Quebec's particular needs.

Is this the kind of leadership that the Liberal Party of Canada is offering Quebeckers? It is nothing but empty words. A lot of talk but little action.

• (1415)

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on March 20, 70 governments and member states honoured the French language during the International Day of La Francophonie. Canada took the opportunity to celebrate French as the country's second official language.

Today, the Secretary General of the International Organization of la Francophonie is in Canada. I am delighted that the Université du Québec en Outaouais has honoured him with an honorary doctorate, and I am very pleased that Mr. Diouf has paid us a visit. I hope that this event will prompt our government to confirm its commitment to the international Francophonie.

The Conservative government has withdrawn Canadian aid from several countries that are members of La Francophonie, so it will have a hard time convincing its partners that it keeps its promises to respect democracy and support development in francophone nations.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is taking unprecedented steps with our economic action plan. Yet someone does not believe the Conservative government's effort to cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5% puts money back into the pockets of hard-working Canadians. That measure helped prepare Canada for this global recession by stimulating the economy years ago, yet someone wants to raise the GST.

Our Conservative government knows cutting taxes while putting money into shovel-ready projects is one of the best ways to stimulate the economy. Yet someone wants to slow down the process of putting shovels in the ground and getting infrastructure projects working. Meanwhile, someone wants a job-killing carbon tax that will have a negative impact on the Canadian economy.

That someone has a senior adviser who considers Canada's seal hunt "appalling and more trouble than it is worth", and a senator from Ottawa Centre on behalf of the Liberals wants to end the hunt and tell 6,000 families just "to find something else to do".

That someone needs to put the needs of Canadians first. That someone needs to do a better job of being the Liberal leader.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there were 24,000 new claimants for employment insurance this January. That is bad enough, but thousands more Canadians are losing their jobs and are not able to claim EI even though they paid into the system.

Oral Questions

The government is trying to patch EI with duct tape while evading the real issue, which is eligibility.

Will the government adjust the eligibility requirements so that all Canadians, wherever they live, can claim EI when they need it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party should know that eligibility for EI is determined by the region in which one lives, according to a formula. As, obviously, employment conditions become more difficult, eligibility becomes easier.

This is the government that has put additional moneys into EI. This is the government that has ensured that people who need EI during this recession will be able to access it for a longer time to get more training. We have brought in new additional EI training. Also, we have ensured that EI cheques get out faster.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I take that as a no, so I will rephrase the question.

Lots of Canadians have paid into EI but when they lose their jobs they cannot get the benefits they need when they need them.

Again, is the Prime Minister prepared to review eligibility requirements for EI so the system is fair, because it is about fairness here, for all Canadians?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that those who are not eligible for EI it is often because they did not pay into EI in most cases because they are not participants, and, of course, there are cases where they do not have sufficient hours.

However, this government has brought in important enhancements to EI. The Leader of the Opposition was asked for some proposals for the budget but he did not provide any, which is why we have moved forward with the proposal to increase the number of weeks of eligibility.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps asking me for proposals. It is as if he wants me to do his job. I would, of course, like to do his job when the time comes.

However, I will the question again. Is he saying that the fact that the unemployed are not eligible is their fault?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we are not saying that and that is why this government has been acting to help the unemployed during this recession.

What we are saying is that whether somebody is prime minister or not, when they are elected to have responsibility in this House during a recession, they are here to help Canadians, not just to try and play on bad news for their own strategic advantage. It is irresponsible and Canadians see through it.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are doing nothing to help the forestry

industry, yet the Canadian auto industry is getting close to \$4 billion in loans. In the past two years, 25,000 jobs have been lost in Canada's pulp and paper industry.

[English]

AbitibiBowater is in the 11th hour. We could see massive layoffs and plant closures in Quebec and Atlantic Canada while the Conservatives have remained silent on the issue. After months and months of crises, why is the forestry industry still waiting for much needed help?

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have answered this question many times.

I would like to take the precious time the opposition member has given me to remind her of all the positive measures we have announced for the forestry sector: \$1 billion over two years to help communities; more money and resources for Export Development Canada, to facilitate assistance for companies such as forestry companies; \$8.3 billion for the Canada skills and transition strategy; \$2 billion to expedite construction at our colleges and universities; and \$170 million for new forestry products and marketing programs.

We are getting the job done.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is clearly not enough. AbitibiBowater, the world's largest newsprint producer, has until Wednesday evening to find a way to refinance its debt.

Once again, we see the Conservatives giving consent by remaining silent and putting off stopping the attacks on another Canadian industry.

Will the industry have to collapse to get the Conservatives' full attention?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my opposition friend knows, the major problem facing the forestry industry has to do with markets. Everyone knows that. For various reasons, the economic crisis and mortgage issues have seriously weakened our forestry industry. Everyone know that, except the people who want to play politics.

We have helped workers by introducing measures that will increase the maximum employment insurance benefit period from 45 to 50 weeks, for example. We have extended work-sharing agreements by 14 weeks. To target this industry, we have provided \$500 million for the construction of new facilities—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with the current economic crisis, the number of employment insurance recipients has risen 22.8% over last year. By doing away with the waiting period, which would be like giving the rising numbers of unemployed one extra cheque, the government would be helping all the unemployed and at the same time stimulating the economy.

Why does the Prime Minister not listen to reason and come promptly and effectively to the assistance of all those who are jobless, by doing away with the waiting period?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc, as a member of the coalition, asked the government to add two weeks of benefits to help the unemployed. We added five, but the leader of the Bloc voted against that measure. The Bloc Québécois is a party with no serious economic policy. It is against everything, and for nothing.

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister has just said is totally ridiculous. The five weeks affect 25% of people who have access to employment insurance, while abolition of the waiting period would affect everyone unfortunate enough to be on EI. This would put money into the economy immediately. It would stimulate the economy. Those people would not be buying stocks or investing money in the US, unlike the oil companies which have got more money out of this government.

Will he listen to reason?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again this morning there was an announcement of increased access to employment insurance through our economic action plan. We announced five more weeks of eligibility for work sharing. This was greeted with pleasure by Action chômage Haute-Côte-Nord. It means workers will have more support to keep them working in their community. This is action. Not just criticism.

What is more, as part of that same plan, we yesterday announced \$200 million for the awarding of a contract in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, which will help out the textile industry. It represents 150 direct jobs and 4,900 spread over Canada and Quebec. Again action, not just criticism.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is trying to make piecemeal improvements to the employment insurance system, a system that has become too complex and unfair over the years and needs a complete overhaul. The Bloc Québécois' proposed bills would improve the system by establishing uniform minimum eligibility criteria—360 hours—and eliminating the two week waiting period.

If the minister really cares about what happens to the unemployed, she should vote for these two bills. What is she waiting for?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should know that we have an employment insurance system that adjusts automatically every month to changing conditions in each of Canada's 58 regions. When conditions get worse, the system adjusts

so that the unemployed can collect employment insurance benefits much more easily after having spent fewer hours in the labour market. They will also receive benefits for a longer period of time.

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister failed to mention that the system excludes 55% of unemployed workers. She needs to acknowledge that the forestry crisis resulted in 40,000 job losses in Quebec alone. The minister is refusing to recognize that many of those older workers cannot be retrained.

The need is urgent. When will the minister announce a program that really supports older workers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it makes me sad to hear the gentleman say such a thing, to say that older workers cannot learn. My government and I believe in older workers. That is why we have expanded the targeted initiative for older workers and the program for long-tenured workers. We believe in workers. Why does he not believe in them as well?

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 129,000 more Canadians were thrown out of work last January and yet the number of EI recipients only went up by 23,000 in that month. That means that 100,000 Canadians who lost their jobs did not get any help from the government. Meanwhile, the government claims that there are no delays in processing the EI requests.

If that is the case, could the Prime Minister explain the huge discrepancy between the number of people thrown out of work and the number of people who cannot get help for their families when they need it most from the government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, with an increase in unemployment we will see a rise in employment insurance benefits. That is why the system is there and why it is there to help. We have increased the benefits during this time of global recession to ensure more Canadians, particularly those who seek a long job search, will be able to access that, along with additional training.

What those people will be wondering is why the New Democratic Party voted against all of those benefits for them.

• (1430)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1,310,000 people in Canada were unemployed in January but only 560,000 of the total unemployed were receiving any help from EI.

Under the Prime Minister, 57% of those hard-working Canadians who live by the rules, paid into the insurance fund and needed help cannot get it. Why will he not fix it? He could reduce the minimum to qualify, drop the waiting period and increase the wage replacement rate. He could ensure that no matter where people live in Canada, they receive the same kind of help. That is what Parliament wants him to do. Why will he not do it?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of people who have become unemployed are eligible for employment insurance but, of course, no thanks to the NDP. The NDP asked that we add two additional weeks of employment insurance and we added five weeks. The NDP voted against it.

I do not know which is worse, the Liberal Party that votes for something then criticizes it or the NDP that asks for something and then votes against it.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the majority of people who need help from EI cannot get it from the government. The Prime Minister should learn to count. We are talking about real people here.

[*Translation*]

People work hard. They follow the rules. They contribute to employment insurance, as do their employers. However, 60% of them do not qualify. This morning's announcement does nothing to address the fundamental problem. The minister is not offering anything new.

Is the Prime Minister aware that 60% of people do not qualify? Yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party asked for two additional weeks of employment insurance benefits. We offered five weeks, but the New Democratic Party voted against that.

[*English*]

The problem with members of the NDP is that they are anxious to be against everything and never have any responsibility for anything but they vote against everything. That is why, at times like this, the workers of Canada never entrust their future to the NDP.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today's employment insurance numbers highlight very serious job losses in Canada. They are, indeed, sobering and Canadians are hurting.

Some 24,000 new EI recipients were processed in January but over 100,000 Canadians lost their jobs in January alone. That means tens of thousands of unemployed Canadians either do not qualify for EI or, if they do, are experiencing unacceptable delays in having their claims processed.

What does the minister have to say specifically to the many thousands of Canadians who have paid into EI for years but are unable to get it when they need it and when they deserve it?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over 80% of those who pay into EI are able to collect the benefits. Our goal is to maintain the commitment we made in our economic action plan of ensuring that those individuals unfortunate enough to lose their jobs do receive their benefit in a timely manner.

I was pleased to announce this morning that we have committed over \$60 million to decreasing the processing time, to dedicating more staff and to hiring new staff. We want to ensure Canadians in need get the supports they deserve from EI.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has no sense of the urgency of this situation. Before Christmas, I raised this issue of unacceptable wait times with the minister. First, she ignored the problem. Then she denied it. Then she delayed it. Then she took baby steps. Now, the government is in full scramble mode.

If she takes months to address that single issue, what hope do those who are getting laid off now have? Excuses and promises do not feed families. They need action. How long will Canadians have to wait for the government to seriously address EI issues in our country?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that when we saw this global recession coming on, we immediately started bringing back retirees who specialized in EI. We recalled staff that had been on loan to other departments. We have been dedicating extra resources so we can meet our targets of delivering EI benefits to people on time. We have been doing that since last October.

Why have those members not even proposed any solutions? All they do is whine. We are delivering.

* * *

● (1435)

[*Translation*]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an important conference on Afghanistan is scheduled for next week.

I would like to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs a very simple question. What new initiatives will the Government of Canada be proposing at that very important conference?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that Canada was invited to attend that conference, to be held in The Hague next week, on March 31.

We are expecting the United States to unveil part of their revised strategy at that conference. Of course we intend to use the conference as an opportunity for Canada to confirm once again the position taken here in this House. We will also reiterate our priorities.

We will have to wait and see what happens as a result of the meeting, given its multi-regional dimension.

[*English*]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it sounds as if our country, which has sacrificed so much, is coming to this conference waiting for the United States to tell us where we are going to go. I think the people of Canada deserve better. They want a government that is going to lead, given the sacrifice that we have made as a country.

Oral Questions

What are the new initiatives that Canada is going to be proposing, showing the kind of leadership and the kind of voice that we should have in the world?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my hon. colleague has been over the last couple of months, but Canada has played an extremely important role in Afghanistan. Yes, we have lost Canadians. We are all sorry about that. However, our Canadian troops as well as our Canadian civil workers are getting the job done.

He knows full well we have six priorities. He knows that, on a quarterly basis, we are reporting back to the House. In fact, we are viewed by a lot of countries in the world, including the United States, for doing one heck of a job in Afghanistan.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of International Trade stated that “Export Development Canada is working with more than 90% of forestry companies.”

Will the minister explain what yesterday's statement really meant?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, more than 90% of forestry companies are working with Export Development Canada to obtain tax assistance in order to improve their position and be competitive in different situations, in a very competitive world where prices for forest products are not good. Export Development Canada will continue to support these companies.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, forestry companies are clamouring for loan guarantees to weather the crisis.

If EDC loan guarantees are legal for forestry companies that export, why are the same loan guarantees to help the forestry industry weather the crisis not legal?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Export Development Canada is working with forestry companies and will continue to do so.

The simple fact that the companies are encouraged by their involvement with Export Development Canada is an example that there is a great deal of assistance and many opportunities for improving things. The situation is very difficult overall for companies. However, we will continue to work with companies.

* * *

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' elimination of funding for not-for-profit economic organizations has hurt the economy in Quebec's regions. The Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec) reversed only somewhat the unjustified decision of his predecessor

when he said that a few of the organizations in Quebec eligible before November 2007 could apply.

By refusing to reinstate the total amount cut, does the minister realize that he will be continuing to harm Quebec's regions?

• (1440)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In 2007, my predecessor made a decision that was very courageous and necessary in the context. An analysis had to be done. Thanks to this decision, a complete evaluation was done of the support our department gives in the various files. Thanks to the work done previously, we were able to free up budget money.

What my colleague opposite has just said is totally false. We will continue to help economic development through all the organizations in the regions of Quebec.

Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I understand the minister correctly, it amounts to the same thing. As well as cutting many of the organizations funded previously, the measure is in effect for only two years, threatening their survival and undermining the ability to support businesses.

Will the minister acknowledge that his announcement is aimed solely to get through the next election and does not contribute to consolidating these organizations vital to regional development?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what amounts to the same thing is the attitude of the Bloc—whine, whine some more, find the angles, move nothing forward. That is all it can do. That is always amounting to the same thing.

There is a two year plan. There is funding for the not-for-profit organizations deemed essential by the stakeholders and subject to the financial capabilities of Canada Economic Development. The importance of the file has to be shown, and the objectives must translate into results. Funding is reduced or eliminated if there is no accountability. Accountability is rigorous, and there is no funding by default.

We are doing the work. We are not just whining.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's venture capital industry is in trouble. According to the Conservative government, the best way for a Canadian company to obtain venture capital is to become an American company.

Why are the Conservatives abandoning Canadian innovators and encouraging them to move to the United States?

[English]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if my hon. friend wants to try and make a point about the fact that we are in a tough situation, he should deal with facts and not dredge up fears that are not based on fact.

Oral Questions

EDC alone in this last year has done business with over 8,600 customers. It has facilitated \$85 billion worth of financial activity. That is a 22% increase over 2007. As of the end of February, it had already transacted with 400 new customers to the tune of \$9.4 billion.

The member should not frighten people with things that are not true.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, on March 18, DFAIT hosted a boot camp for Canadian entrepreneurs in Ottawa, where Canadian firms were told that the best way for them to access venture capital was to incorporate in Delaware and move to the United States.

Why is the government giving up on Canada's venture capital industry and telling Canadian innovators to move their intellectual property, jobs and innovation to the United States?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to raise his voice and look excited because he has lost the point, he can surely try and do that.

Also in our new economic comprehensive package are millions of dollars available in a program to allow for Canadians, who want to be involved in exportation and business across the border, to learn about the abilities and the programs that are available to them. That is one of a number of products.

The bottom line is this. There has been a huge increase in activity of Canadian businesses. They are being successful. It is through their involvement with EDC. The member should get his facts straight on that.

* * *

[Translation]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage does not know who the founder of Cirque du Soleil, Guy Laliberté, is. He knows almost no one in Canada's artistic community, although that community is getting to know him.

We have learned that a pile of funding applications submitted by dance groups last April—almost a year ago—are still sitting on his desk gathering dust.

Now that those groups have been forced to cancel their programming, is he proud of his actions?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing our job. We are investing \$2.3 billion in Canadian artists this year.

I know my colleague did his homework by reading this morning's *Globe and Mail*, but I can assure him that we are taking a very close look at all files on behalf of Canadian taxpayers. People will receive their money.

The Conservative government is investing more money than any government in the history of this country.

• (1445)

[English]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, Dancing on the Edge, New Dance Horizons and the Brian Webb Dance Company all submitted their applications for 2009-10 funding. Right now their applications are still gathering dust on the desk of the minister, a week from deadline. This is forcing many dance troupes to cancel their events.

Is the minister proud that he has once again succeeded in preventing Canadian culture from taking the stage?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he is entirely wrong. What we are doing is our due diligence on behalf of taxpayers. As I said, we are spending \$2.3 billion this year on arts and culture funding across the country. It is a record amount. Never before in the history of the country has a government put more support and more financing behind arts and culture than this Conservative government. With that level of spending, of course we have to do our due diligence.

All those groups that qualify for funding will get funding at a record level never seen before because Canadians elected a Conservative government.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are anxiously waiting for the money to flow from our government's economic action plan. Unemployed workers are waiting for assistance. Ordinary citizens are waiting for tax relief. Businesses are waiting for access to financing. Across the country, Canadians are worried about the security of their jobs.

Could the President of the Treasury Board tell the House when that money will start to flow so we can help Canadian families weather the economic storm?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking unprecedented and extraordinary action to stimulate the Canadian economy and combat the global recession. These measures are simply too important to risk being delayed by an opposition determined to play politics. Too many jobs, too many family mortgage payments and too many seniors' income security are at stake.

We have cut bureaucratic red tape only to have to the opposition replace it with political red tape. It is time that those members encourage their colleagues in the Senate to move things ahead, and that they pass the vote today.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CBC is on the verge of massive cuts to the service that it provides Canadians in every corner of our country, but these cuts are avoidable because the CBC has a reasonable plan for addressing this crisis through bridge financing.

Oral Questions

Now the minister claims he was never approached for bridge financing, but this is not true. He was asked directly and he said “no”. Jobs are on the chopping block in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Sydney and elsewhere across the country.

Why has the minister put the future of public broadcasting and local programming at risk by refusing CBC's request for bridge financing?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is the problem with the NDP's position on the CBC. In 2004-05, Parliament increased funding for the CBC and those members voted against it. In 2005-06, we increased funding for the CBC and they voted against it. In 2006-07, we increased funding for the CBC and they voted against it. In 2007-08, we increased funding for the CBC and they voted against it. In 2008-09, we increased funding for the CBC and they voted against it. In 2009-10, we have increased funding for the CBC and they voted against it.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is an example of the Pinocchio principle. He is sitting on \$60 million that is owed to the CBC and he is refusing to bring it forth.

[*Translation*]

Communities across Canada depend on the CBC.

But the minister refuses to work with the CBC to come up with a long-term plan to support the public broadcaster.

This will lead to job losses and the loss of local, regional and francophone services across Canada.

Why is this minister using the economic crisis as an excuse to attack the CBC?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not attacking the CBC. We are making record investments in the CBC.

[*English*]

Broadcasters in this country, in the private sector and the CBC, of course, are facing challenges with the drop in ad revenue that is being seen across the board, but the government has done its job.

We made a very specific promise in the campaign to maintain or increase support for the CBC. We have kept our promise even if the NDP continues to vote against the CBC.

• (1450)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation might be forced to sell assets and lay off between 600 and 1,200 employees—it is going to make the announcement tomorrow—in order to meet its financial obligations, and all this is happening under the disinterested watch of the Conservatives. The government is planning to help the private sector, but for ideological reasons it closes the door on the CBC. We have known for a long time that the Conservatives want to shut down the CBC and they are using the economic crisis as a pretext for doing so.

Will the minister stop hiding behind the economic crisis and stop refusing to help the CBC?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is totally false. I will give the Bloc the same answer I gave the NDP. In 2005-06, we increased the CBC's budget and the Bloc voted against it. In 2006-07, we increased the CBC's budget and the Bloc voted against it. In 2007-08, we increased the CBC's budget and the Bloc voted against it. In 2008-09, we increased the CBC's budget and the Bloc voted against it. In this budget, we again provided an increase for the CBC and the Bloc is still voting against it.

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious the minister does not even have his classics straight. Here too he is misleading the House.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages is trying to say that the CBC can deal with its problems within its current budget.

Will the minister acquiesce to the request from the CBC, which wants to have greater flexibility, such as a simple advance of funds from its 2009 budget envelope? It is hardly asking too much.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we made a clear promise in the election campaign to maintain or increase the CBC's budget. This year it will get more than \$1 billion. That is unprecedented in Canadian history. The Conservative government is delivering the goods and the Bloc Québécois just votes against.

* * *

[*English*]

HEALTH

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, fetal alcohol syndrome is a totally preventable birth defect. It affects over 300,000 Canadians and their families. Sadly, according to an internal review at the Public Health Agency of Canada, the fetal alcohol syndrome initiative is now receiving only a portion of the federal dollars that had been allocated toward it.

I believe the minister cares about this issue. Could she explain why her government is refusing to fund even the \$3.3 million it promised for these essential programs?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes FAS disorders as a serious issue. Our government is committed to making a strategic investment when it comes to FASD prevention, counselling and improved screening. We are taking action and will continue to work with all our partners on this very serious issue.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is taking action. She is cutting funding to FAS.

Fetal alcohol syndrome is incurable and totally preventable, and affects about 300,000 Canadians. For each afflicted child, it costs about \$24,000 annually in social services costs and additional health care costs.

Since 80% of these victims will never be able to live independently or to hold down a job, I ask the minister, why has the government turned its back on these Canadians in need by cutting FAS program spending by one-third since it took office?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's information is inaccurate. In fact, the government is committed to FASD prevention. We continue to invest in FASD research and will continue to do that.

* * *

CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of State for Sport.

Four shadowy third party groups bought ads endorsing the minister during the campaign. They had the same financial officer, linking them to each other. They had the same address at the office of a senior Conservative political activist, who is on the minister's riding executive, linking them to the minister. One group disclosed that it had obtained lawn signs from the minister's campaign manager, linking them to the minister's campaign. These links are too obvious to ignore.

Can the minister explain?

The Speaker: Order. Questions about elections generally are not the administrative responsibility of the government and question period is intended for that purpose.

I do not think the question that the hon. member posed is in order from what I could hear of it. The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas has a supplementary though if he wishes.

• (1455)

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, I will try again because it goes to upholding the law that all members of Parliament are required to do.

These are the facts: four unheard of third party groups linked to each other and linked to the minister, one with an explicit link to his campaign manager; advertising spending by the four groups of over \$12,000 to endorse the minister's candidacy; spending that if charged to his campaign would put him over the limit.

Does the minister deny these facts? Was this an attempt to circumvent spending—

The Speaker: Order. I do not think that is in order for the minister to answer, nor is the question in order because the question does not concern the administrative responsibilities of the government. That is the administrative responsibility of Elections Canada and the member may want to pose his question to the Chief Electoral Officer in due course.

The hon. member for Crowfoot.

Oral Questions

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recent reports have stated that Canada has changed its position regarding the disputed Kashmir region. Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please clarify Canada's position on this very important and sensitive issue?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed Canada's position on Kashmir has not changed. Canada has not deviated from its approach that supports efforts by both India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir and other issues through the composite dialogue process.

We want to see the Kashmir issue resolved through peaceful means. I was able today to reiterate that to the High Commissioner of India to Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSPORT

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question concerns the circumstances under which Patrice Pelletier left his position as CEO of the Port of Montreal. Media reports indicate that he really was dismissed. We also know that, even if theoretically the port is independent of the government, the Conservatives indicated their preference for another candidate back when Mr. Pelletier started there 18 months ago.

Will the minister tell us why Mr. Pelletier was really dismissed?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Montreal Port Authority operates at arm's length from the government. Neither I nor anyone in my office had anything to do with this independent decision made by the board of directors. If the member opposite has any information whatsoever that contradicts this, I invite her to table it immediately in the House.

* * *

[Translation]

GUN REGISTRY

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Saturday the Prime Minister called upon all hunters to lobby their MPs to vote in favour of a private member's bill which would considerably weaken the gun registry. This bill has angered everyone in Quebec. For example, the head of the Police Brotherhood has expressed his outrage at this desire to reduce the control over firearms.

Since the Conservatives do not want this registry, are they going to follow up on the request by the Government of Quebec and transfer to it the necessary powers and resources to enable it to maintain the registry within Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to the elimination of the long gun registry. This was our position in the previous election and we will continue to do that.

Oral Questions

Our belief is that in terms of combatting crime, our focus should not be on those who are lawful, law-abiding hunters and farmers in possession of long guns. We believe the focus should be on criminals who possess illegal handguns.

That is why we brought in legislation to deal with that issue. That is why we brought in, in this Parliament, tough anti-gang legislation. We hope that all parties will support the legislation so we can really combat crime.

* * *

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this government is failing the forestry industry. Yesterday, Tembec announced that it was laying off 500 workers at its Kapuskasing plant. This will have an immediate impact and will cut the heart out of the local economy.

[English]

The forestry sector has one common request: access to reasonable credit. Tembec could be processing multi-million dollar orders instead of shutting down but the credit risk is too high.

Will the government stop the bleeding by providing access to reasonable credit to protect the vital sector?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the hon. member has said, the government is actually taking action through the Canada economic action plan. We went across the country and spoke to those in the forestry industry and in the communities, and asked them what would be helpful.

We understand it has helped very much with innovation, marketing and indeed, financing, and that is what Canada's economic action plan delivers on. Furthermore, the government is about action, whereas the NDP is all about talk.

* * *

• (1500)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us in the House know the challenges many Canadians are facing with these uncertain economic times, particularly as unemployment rises. Our government has taken unprecedented steps to help Canadians by extending EI by an extra five weeks, increasing the maximum benefit period to 50 weeks, and by expanding the work-sharing program.

Would the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development share again with the House the steps our government is taking to help Canadians?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our economic action plan, we committed to Canadians that we would provide them with financial support through employment insurance and that we would deliver that to them as quickly as possible.

Today, I was pleased to announce \$60 million of additional funds dedicated to speeding up the process of payment, including hiring new personnel, so that Canadians get the help they need when they need it.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Katrin Meissner is an accomplished B.C. climate scientist, but now she is packing up and moving her family to Australia, where better opportunities await. Katrin is not alone. It does not take a scientist to realize Canada will lose many more talented researchers, thanks to the Conservatives' cuts to research.

How short-sighted. At a time when President Obama is investing billions, why has the Conservative government pulled the plug on research funding to create a disastrous brain drain from Canada?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the government has recently surpassed the \$10 billion a year number for our science and tech communities. We put 5.1 billion new dollars into science and technology. We have recently announced a \$2 billion knowledge infrastructure program, so those scientists have the best facilities with the best equipment.

The member fails to mention the number of scientists who are coming to Canada because of our policies.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, documents leaked recently from an on-campus Conservative Party workshop show that the government is actively encouraging the undermining of campus democracy with the establishment of front organizations to funnel student money to the party.

Through threats and attacks, the Conservative Party is attempting to manipulate the democratic control of student unions across Canada. This is unacceptable.

Does the government condone the overthrowing of democracy on campuses by the Conservative Party?

The Speaker: Order. Again, I am afraid the hon. member's question appears to have to do with party matters and nothing to do with government responsibilities, which question period is to be about, so we will move on to the next question.

The hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île.

[Translation]

OMAR KHADR

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the House adopted the report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development concerning Omar Khadr. Among the report's seven recommendations is one that the Government of Canada ask that Omar Khadr be released from Guantanamo and turned over to the Canadian authorities as soon as possible.

Does the government intend to abide by the will of this House?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to welcome back the hon. member. I think that everyone is very happy to have her back here with us.

The new American administration has put a process in place. The Government of Canada intends to follow that process, which basically consists in reviewing all the cases. We are well aware that the young man in question has been charged with very serious crimes, even terrorism. We are going to wait until the process has taken its course, and then we will make the appropriate decisions.

* * *

● (1505)

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Brooke Taylor, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal for Nova Scotia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order arising out of question period.

I was somewhat surprised that you ruled out of order the question from the member for Burnaby—Douglas, and then just a few moments ago the question from the member for Churchill involving financing around elections.

We have had many questions in this House. As one example, I would use the so-called in and out scheme that was raised numerous times, even by the Conservative Party. It was raised by members of the opposition, including ourselves. I am rather surprised that you have taken such a narrow view today, given the previous history and the questions that have been allowed in the House.

What I want to do is do a bit of work and look at the record and some of the questions that have been asked, because we believe that the questions that were asked today were permissible and certainly within the realm of asking legitimate questions of members and how they conduct themselves. They should be allowed in question period, particularly given what kinds of questions have been asked previously.

Business of Supply

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go away and do that research, but I wanted to raise the point of order right now so you would be aware that we have concerns about the ruling that you made during question period, in effect ruling our members out of order.

We will come back with more information, but I would ask if you would think about questions that have been asked before and why all of a sudden it has changed and these questions are no longer in order.

The Speaker: I will not get into a long discussion with the hon. member and I am sure her research will point out the difficulties that arose in the questions that were asked today, but virtually all the questions before asked if there was going to be a payment made based on claims that were there. Payments might possibly be the responsibility of the government since they do come out of the consolidated revenue fund of Canada.

The questions today had nothing to do with payments or reimbursement for any election expense. This was simply a discussion about various things that parties were doing, which is not the administrative responsibility of the government. Those are the key words for questions in question period. I think her research will indicate that to her. It was, to me, quite obvious. I did not have much doubt about the rulings today, but I thank the hon. member for raising the matter and I look forward to hearing from her further on this point in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1510)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—VOTE 35 IN MAIN ESTIMATES 2009-2010

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Before question period, the hon. member for Gatineau had the floor and had five minutes left for questions and comments after his speech.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General commented on the \$3 billion so-called slush fund. She said that \$3 billion is a fair bit of money and the government must have ideas, even broad strokes, of how that money will flow between April and June. She went on to say that the government could at least say where the money is going, whether it is to infrastructure or festivals.

This seems to be a matter of government integrity, honesty, openness and transparency. The government clearly cannot spend \$3 billion between April and June without already having most of the pre-work done in terms of identifying the particular projects, the regional distribution, the contracts, et cetera.

Business of Supply

It would appear that all the information Canadians would require to ensure that the government is being held accountable is available, and yet the government continues to skirt around the issue about whether or not it is even open to providing this disclosure on how it is going to spend this \$3 billion over the next three months.

Does the member think the government has some specific reason that it will not disclose to Canadians and to this House how it is going to spend the \$3 billion starting next week?

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We are indeed in a rather fuzzy, if not downright grey area. The government wants to get \$3 billion from the House of Commons—one billion equals one thousand million, so three billion equals three thousand million dollars—to spend on the so-called infrastructure programs, which have no criteria and no guidelines. This clearly smacks of patronage. The way the current government is trying to set aside a sum of money, supposedly to help jump-start the economy, is totally inadequate.

The Auditor General of Canada was the one who expressed these opinions. We are not making anything up. Hon. members just need to hearken back to the sponsorship scandal, which is still very clear in the Liberals' memories. Or the long dark period in Quebec under Maurice Duplessis, for example, when not everything about public funds was made public.

When the Conservative Party of Canada came to power in 2006, it introduced bill C-2 concerning government responsibility and accountability. It claimed that it wanted to avoid this situation, and we welcomed that with open arms.

Yet now it is doing exactly the opposite of what it proposed in that bill, by not setting any criteria for that \$3 billion. So the whole process is open to suspicion. This is no small matter, when we are well aware of how many Quebeckers and Canadians are desperately in need of money as they face the current economic crisis. On top of that, they have to put up with this totally unacceptable procedure being used by the Conservative government.

We cannot react to this situation in any way other than negatively. I hope that there is at least one Conservative who will be able to wake up the rest of them and let them know that this plan they have in mind to set aside \$3 billion with no guidelines is absolutely unacceptable. All the opposition agrees on this. All Quebeckers, all Canadians, all the people represented in this House of Commons support this principle. When the federal government spends money, we have to know where it is going to be spent, and what guidelines and rules have been set out.

This is the exact opposite of an accountability bill. It is the exact opposite of appropriate, honest and democratic government responsibility.

• (1515)

[English]

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to join this debate because this is Parliament doing something purposeful and necessary. In some ways, it is on its way to regaining some of the respect that it requires to do what the country needs it to do in these difficult times. It needs

to make clear the difference between governments that simply make announcements and that want arbitrary powers and governments that give effect to government programs so that they make a difference in the communities where people are losing jobs.

This debate today is nothing short of making sure that actual aid and support is delivered from this place to the place where Canadians live. Unfortunately, there is a group of people currently in the government who need to be persuaded of that, who need to be brought on board with the concept that they actually have that responsibility.

[Translation]

This is an opportunity for parliamentarians to defend their constituents at a time of economic crisis. We are asking Parliament to implement the budget so that it has the required effect: new jobs, fair allocation and high-quality projects and programs.

[English]

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee from the government. When the Conservatives were in opposition, and there are reams of quotes here, they encountered and embraced words like accountability and responsibility but we do not hear those words in any meaningful way today.

Incredibly, this debate is about a government that wants to have unfettered access to \$3 billion without the oversight of the House establishing, as is required in its own rules of order, the requirements for due diligence. Contrary to what some of the members opposite might think, it cannot arbitrarily sprinkle dollars out there in its role as government. Instead, the traditions of the House are different and significantly different in a minority government.

Those are the reasons that the government is on probation. It finds itself not only on probation but getting constructive instruction from the House, and that is the nature of the proposal today, and what is going to start to change hearts and minds in this country in terms of the question they have.

[Translation]

Is the government trustworthy?

[English]

Is it possible to trust this government to deliver? That is the question people are starting to ask.

The average person, and I am sure there were tens of thousands watching question period before, does not comprehend why it is that the Prime Minister cannot stand up for unemployed Canadians and answer the question about whether or not he would consider allocating more dollars to help them. Instead, it is more a game about him and his prerogatives.

The idea that the government will not accept normal standards of oversight when it is looking to have extraordinary dollars is simply part of a pattern. However, it is a pattern that we are out to break. We are out to put the government into a mode of acceptable levels of governing. It is something that is very difficult for the government to do, and the track record and the facts underscore that very emphatically.

Business of Supply

Let us rehearse what happened. The dilatory and obscurantist behaviour of the government, as some more eloquent speakers would say, is such that it actually got in the way of doing something on behalf of the country. The Conservatives pushed down the issues during the election and denied the recession was happening. They stalled for months.

However, there has been progress. The government has been compelled against its will to go from a \$5 billion cut in programs to an \$18 billion stimulus package. However, it only exists on paper until it is formed into programs that can reach people where they live, where people are losing jobs or need their jobs shored up by the investment that would actually touch them.

Whether it is in Summerside, Hamilton or any place in Canada, the government struggles on its own. All we are saying is that if the government is going to spend money, it needs to first say to the House where that money is going. The reason is that it has a track record of promising dollars and not delivering them. Only some 5% or 6% of the dollars have actually been delivered in the infrastructure programs in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that I will be splitting my time today with the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra. I know she will bring the perspective not just from that part of the country but from the same kind of place where Liberals have had to go to have oversight on the government and make it do its job.

In fact, in the government's own accountability report, of the over \$2 billion in 2007-08, only 5% of those funds found their way to Canadians. One has to draw a distinction from it.

Canadians have become very cynical. They saw the Prime Minister practising the old politics out there the other week where he went around and made the third or fourth announcement about a project that is not actually happening and not employing any Canadians, but is there for the benefit of the government to be seen to be doing something.

Although the government says that it needs to get the infrastructure dollars out, the reality is that it has a due diligence process in place that requires it to look at each and every application.

A couple of weeks ago, a motion was moved in the House and, for whatever reason, the members opposite did not think it was good enough for Hamilton-Wentworth or for the ridings they represented. The motion was simply to flow the money to the municipalities through the gas tax method.

● (1520)

The gas tax method is one for which the municipalities and the construction association expressed a preference as the way to get dollars out by April 1. The same government that is telling us that it wants \$3 billion to spend has said that it will not get infrastructure dollars out now until July and September because it will be too busy sorting out applications and trying to apply some kind of due diligence. However, there are warning flags that every member in the House should be paying attention to.

The government's record for the distribution of infrastructure dollars is about \$2 billion and its promise this year is for something over \$7 billion. It passes strange that members opposite are not

standing in their place and demanding to have a structure to ensure the \$7 billion will go to the communities. We must ask ourselves why they are so quiet. Why is there not one member on the government side expressing concern and qualms about getting all this money out there in a proper time and in a proper way?

It comes down to the temptations of governance. It seems as though the government and all its members will give into this. They do not want to give up their prerogatives. The gas tax method would distribute money on a per capita basis, which means that half of the money would go across the country, because every part of this country deserves to be protected from the downturn, and the other half could be used, as we will be suggesting, to address where the needs are the greatest.

Every member opposite voted against that method. They voted against the money going into their communities, such as the \$20 million for Hamilton, because they believe they will be in a special place. They think they can make deals behind the curtains and get projects assigned in some method that is not described here in Parliament and accountable. That anchor to the old way of politics will do in the government if it cannot relieve itself from it. There is no question in my mind that the government will find itself stumbling over its refusal to take constructive suggestions from this side of the House.

The public has the right to expect that each member in the House takes some of the responsibility of ensuring that dollars land. The record is sobering. Of the \$2.8 billion promised but not necessarily delivered, the Conservatives have skewed their promises to 70% of it landing in Conservative ridings. About 36% of the population voted Conservative but the Conservatives sense somehow that they might be able to turn this to their advantage.

I counsel the members opposite that that will not only disappoint their voters and let down the people who sent them here, but it also goes against the grain of what is happening. If it is \$3 billion that will be spent, it is being borrowed from their children and grandchildren because the Conservatives put us into deficit to do it. If there has to be another standard, then those should be dollars that are treated in a much more thorough way and we should at least have this ordinary requirement to know where this money is spent.

The government will be revealed very shortly in terms of whether it can genuinely change. Some of the members opposite in other parties say that Conservatives cannot be changed. We are not worried about their moral character. It will be shown in time. We are worried about helping Canadians and this—

● (1525)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member's time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess we finally discovered the difference between the Liberals and Conservatives. It is the approach on administration. Basically what we have here is a requirement to send a memo throughout the course of the spring. That is the Liberal opposition day memo.

Business of Supply

Essentially what we have seen over the last few months is a gutting of pay equity by the Conservatives, rubber-stamped by the Liberals; a complete refusal to any reform of EI, even though 55% of Canadians who are unemployed do not have access to it, rubber-stamped by the Liberals; cutting back and repudiation of collective agreements, rubber-stamped by the Liberals; and a complete gutting of environmental regulations on smaller scale projects, rubber-stamped by the Liberals.

What we have seen so far in this Parliament, 63 times now if we go back to the previous Parliament, is the Liberals rubber-stamping of every Conservative decision. Today we have a motion that rubber-stamps it but asks the Conservatives to send a memo every time the rubber-stamping from the Liberals takes place.

Could the hon. member tell me why the Liberals rubber-stamp everything the Conservatives do?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what to say about the rigidity of the member's question in terms of actually delivering for Canadians. It is what matters. There are Canadians out there going hungry today because extra help is not being made available to them. There are Canadians out there who could lose their job and we could prevent that. The member opposite, however, would rather be self-righteous in being against. That is a luxury the members of this House cannot afford and keep their credibility.

We have a choice. We can fix the many things that are wrong in this budget but we cannot do it in a way that delays the main part of the budget that could get out. The thrust of what is happening today is to ensure that the money gets out the door and lands effectively where unemployed and other people at risk of losing their jobs can benefit.

The Conservatives are not persuaded. The NDP would hold things up. The Liberals are focused. We have found new ways to do opposition because that is what this new situation and the new economic challenge requires. I would heartily recommend that the member who made the comment find his own way to make a contribution to helping people out because it is high time.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my hon. colleague has been doing a lot of work listening to and meeting with members from FCM. I, myself, have spent some time at FCM on FCM boards. I know that they know best what will work and what will distribute infrastructure funding better, quicker and more equitably.

I ask the hon. member whether it is enough for him that the big city mayors, which include the mayors of Kitchener, Calgary, Vancouver, Surrey, Winnipeg, St. John's, Halifax, London, Hamilton, Brampton, Windsor, Mississauga, Toronto, Ottawa, Gatineau, Longueuil, Montreal, Saskatoon and Edmonton, all signed a letter saying that the best way to flow the money to the municipalities was under the gas tax transfer model. Does he have any indication that they are wrong and that the government is correct in doing it backwards, slow and possibly a parochially crooked way?

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Mr. Speaker, a pattern is starting to emerge with the government that it cannot resist the temptation. The municipalities have told the government clearly to get them the money and they will pull the projects in and make them happen.

Sixty-five percent of infrastructure is in municipal hands and only 11% in federal hands.

The government should stand aside for a program that has audits, that assures incremental spending and that municipalities are prepared to play their part to help get stimulus happening. It is the only way. Even the government has admitted that there will be delays of three and six and who knows how many more months.

The record is two years. We wait for the government to get dollars out the door but it does not seem to be able to resist the prerogative that it feels it must have. I would enjoin the members opposite to step down and let go of that, to actually allow the dollars go to the municipalities, let the dollars be seen to be doing some good for Canadians, and actually employing them and not exercise that prerogative.

● (1530)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member raised a good point. Much of the funding will be undertaken by the municipal levels of government. As he knows, this stimulus funding that we are asking for, which will go to build bridges, roads and other projects in municipalities across Ontario and Canada, part of the accountability measures will be that the municipalities and the provinces will be working with us to identify important projects across Canada.

I am wondering why he is so concerned about accountability measures that do include the provinces and municipalities.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Mr. Speaker, there are no accountability measures for the method mentioned by the hon. member. There is no publication, no certain audit and no looking at applications ahead of time.

Audits are in place. The municipalities do not need to match but they often do. The Province of Ontario says that it will match. However, that member wants to stop \$45 million from coming into York region. He should explain to his electors why he wants to designate the projects or have some political control over it. Why does he not just let it go to the municipalities and let it do some good? Let us get Canadians back to work. He should let go of that old way of doing politics.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate. We are having a very critical discussion for several reasons. One reason is that the stimulus package coming out quickly and efficiently is very important to Canadians. It is very important to changing the climate of concern and fear about what the economic future holds.

So is accountability very important to Canadians. We are spending tax dollars that are harder and harder to find at a time of economic downturn. Each of those dollars is precious. These are not government dollars, they are not Conservative dollars, they are taxpayer dollars. They need to be respected and treated as such. There needs to be accountability and reporting on these funds. That is the intent of the Liberal Party motion.

Business of Supply

The motion calls on the government to provide information about the departments and programs which are likely to require access to this extraordinary authority of an additional \$3 billion and to report on how and where these dollars are being spent.

This is a very reasonable motion. As the critic for finance mentioned a number of times in his speech, the motion calls on government to take actions that will not delay the spending and will not cost additional dollars. In fact, the Obama administration is doing just this kind of transparency.

The Obama administration has set up a website, www.recovery.gov, that will track every dollar of federal economic stimulus spending. Approximately \$27 billion in infrastructure spending has been announced. The website breaks down how much will be available to the various states, which projects, et cetera. This is possible to do and I am mystified by the resistance that has been put up by the Conservative government.

Three billion dollars is a vast sum of money. It would build 12,000 affordable housing units even in an expensive area like metro Vancouver. That is a huge program and taxpayers deserve to know what is being planned for these funds.

There is really no policy or practical reason to reject this motion. The President of the Treasury Board claims that there is no reason to support the motion because “the economic action plan initiatives is what this money will be spent on”. In fact, that is not necessarily correct.

In the language of vote 35, which outlines how these funds would be used, it says that they would be used to enact programs announced in the budget, but also gives the government flexibility to supplement other appropriations outside of budget 2009. Further, no list of programs was given in this vote to outline how this money would be spent. In fact, it is the blank cheque that it is accused of being, and the defence is inaccurate.

I will read a quote about the importance of accountability from a practical and policy perspective. It states, “To instill confidence, the government must be open and it must be more accountable. It must ensure that Canadians and parliamentarians have the right controls in place and it must provide them with the information they need to judge its performance”. That is what the Liberal motion calls for: no more, no less. That quote is by the former president of the Treasury Board, on April 25, 2006. We are calling on our Conservative colleagues to act on their very own rhetoric in this matter.

The motion will not slow down the provision of stimulus funds and it will not cost more. The list exists that we have asked be provided to Canadians. That list has been seen by the Liberal critic for finance and it should be made available. There is no reason why it should not be provided.

●(1535)

On March 3, the Prime Minister claimed that he had consulted the Auditor General on this matter. I have a little advice for our Prime Minister. Consultation actually involves listening to what the person has to say and incorporating her advice. The Auditor General has said that it is not unreasonable that there be accountability for these funds. Three billion dollars is a fair bit of money and the government must have ideas, even in broad strokes, about how that money will

flow between April and June. I do not buy the argument that it cannot tell the opposition members something.

The Prime Minister has claimed to have consulted the Auditor General and then completely ignoring her advice and response on the matter. That leads to this question. Why not support this motion and provide this transparency? Why hide rather than provide the transparency that their own members have called for?

I can only think there must be one of two reasons. Either there is a hidden agenda that the Conservative government would like to obscure from the Canadian public and opposition, or its record of fiscal and financial incompetence has been so stunning and consistently incompetent that it feels the need to hide and obscure this spending from the public and opposition for fear of a continuation of that incompetence.

Let us test out the hypothesis of which of those two it is. Is it a hidden agenda, or is it a fear of the government's own incompetence? When it comes to incompetence, there has been an unbroken track record of failure on the economic front by the Conservative government.

This is a government that, despite all its claims to fiscal prudence, cut the Liberal surpluses that were provided to it, during a time when the economy was just fine, with record spending and ill-advised GST cuts. It essentially spent the cupboard bare so that when the difficult times came, we were already in recession.

This is a government that in September claimed that Canada was effectively immune from the downturn and denied the reality that we saw all around us, from the United States to countries right around the globe. This is a Prime Minister who, in fact, when the downturn did come and the stock markets crashed in Canada, advised investors that it was a good time to invest. I presume he did not take his own advice because that would have been very costly to his own portfolio.

This is a government that projected ongoing surpluses as recently as the end of November, at a time when the government was already well into deficit. What could the Conservative government do in the face of all of this failure and economic mismanagement? It shut down Parliament for almost two months, leaving Canadians hung out to dry for any action, stimulus and spending. There is a record of incompetence, so that could be why the government is resisting the motion.

However, perhaps it could be because of the hidden agenda. Perhaps it could be that there is an agenda of partisan advantage. Again, we have seen that throughout the government's record and time in office. The Conservative record of secrecy has been quite stunning. Here is a report from the privacy commissioner, Mr. Marleau. In his recent summary of the previous year's activity, he asserts:

Our analysis has confirmed what Canadians have been hearing and experiencing for a while now, when trying to obtain government-held information...There are major delays, particularly with extensions, with some institutions routinely taking months to respond to information requests. Canadians expect and deserve far greater efficiency and accountability from their government.

That is what we are calling for: efficiency and accountability. Mr. Marleau goes on to say:

Business of Supply

The poor performance shown by institutions is symptomatic of a major information management crisis throughout government.

These gaps are clearly indicative of a lack of leadership at the highest levels of government...As the organisation responsible for ensuring policy compliance, the Treasury Board Secretariat has yet to exercise the high-profile and forceful leadership which is required in the area of access to information.

● (1540)

Essentially, in his diplomatic way, the Information Commissioner is saying that from the Prime Minister on down there is an absence of transparency and a lack of provision of information.

This supports my hypothesis that it could be the hidden agenda, as opposed to the incompetence, which is leading the government members to resist the simple provision of information being asked of them. This is a group playing politics with the money of the taxpayers of Canada. The members need to stop that now. They need to provide information on their spending and not ask for a blank cheque when they have no credibility and—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, this government is doing all that it can to address the economic downturn. We are pouring billions of dollars into keeping Canadians working, improving our infrastructure, building roads and bridges in my riding, new roads projects across York region, new funding for GO train stations.

One thing that is so important is that we continue to work closely with our provincial and municipal partners to get the money out the door.

I know the hon. member was a member of a provincial Liberal government, a cabinet minister nonetheless. Could she comment on how she would have felt if the federal government made a unilateral decision with respect to infrastructure in her province and if it asked her and the municipalities to pay two-thirds of the cost, but did not ask their opinion on what was important?

The member knows that the stimulus funding we are asking for includes a number of accountability measures, not the least of which is, as she mentioned, that it has to be in the economic action plan, that there must be a request for Treasury Board approval and that reporting will be done through supplementary estimates.

More important, why is she so frightened that municipal and provincial governments cannot make the decisions necessary to see that funding gets done and gets brought into the right places for roads, bridges, sewers in their communities?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, it is a very interesting question coming from a member of the Conservative Party that voted against the very motion put forward by the Liberals, which would have enabled municipalities to have access to these funds and to make the decisions as to how to spend them. It is unbelievable that he has asked me how I would justify that.

The Liberals are saying, yes, that half of the infrastructure money should go out as a gas tax directly to the municipalities so they would not need to come to the federal government, so they would not need to get matching funding and so they could go ahead and invest. When I hear a question like that, it makes me think of the

number of times the members opposite have talked about shovel-ready, but I wonder what they are shovelling.

Furthermore, the member started out by talking about the infrastructure grants in his riding. That is exactly the point. That is exactly why those members want to hide what they are doing. That is why the secrecy. The money is all going into Conservative ridings.

● (1545)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about an awful lot of money, \$3 billion in special funds that the government has asked us to deal with. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the resolution before the House. I have listened to the government speakers all day and it is as if not one of them has even read the resolution.

We are talking about a list of departments and programs which are likely to require access to the extraordinary authority. Specifically, we are asking the government to disclose the name and location of each project to which funding is being provided.

What does the member think the government members are hiding?

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, that is a difficult question to answer. If the member were to ask me why I think the government members are hiding something, my answer would be that they have a consistent track record of hiding things from the Canadian public and from opposition members.

Whether it is the Conservatives' response to being involved in bribing a dying member of Parliament for his vote or whether it is suing Elections Canada for having identified them as cheating on election spending, it is a government that apparently has a lot to hide. According to the commissioner, the government is very good at secrecy and covering up what it is doing while delivering very high-minded rhetoric.

This motion is about putting on the record what the money is for so that we are not vulnerable to it being spent on pork-barrel projects all across Conservative territory, as with the New Horizons for Seniors grants, where one out of thirty-two goes to Conservative ridings.

I am concerned about that because their record is clear—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Kitchener Centre. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on this motion.

We are in extraordinary times. We have not gone through a recessionary period like this one since the second world war. It is obvious that Canadians from coast to coast are feeling the effects of this recession. They are concerned about their jobs, their savings and about the impact on their families, their businesses, their homes and their communities.

Business of Supply

Leading up to the budget we did consult Canadians. We launched the largest national consultation in Canadian history, leading to what many have described as the earliest budget in Canadian history. Canadians told us that we must do what it takes to keep our economy going and to do what we can to protect them during this extraordinary time.

That is why our government introduced Canada's economic action plan in January. This is the plan to protect Canadians during the global recession, to create new good jobs for the future and to equip people in our country for success in the years to come. It is designed to stimulate economic growth, restore confidence and support Canadians and their families during this global recession.

It takes action to build infrastructure, to stimulate housing construction and to support businesses and communities. It also reduces taxes, freezes EI rates, and helps Canadians through the Canada skills and transition strategy. It approves access to financing, certainly the one thing mentioned to me and many others in the finance committee by businesses across this country in terms of strengthening our financial system.

The preparation and the announcement of the budget gets us only halfway down the road to economic recovery. To get the rest of the way, we need to implement these measures. We are not the only ones who think so. In a recent report, the International Monetary Fund called our economic action plan "large, timely and well targeted" and said our immediate focus should be on implementing the budget to mobilize spending. We need to get the money into the hands of Canadian individuals, families, communities and businesses.

To assist the hon. member who introduced this motion in understanding why this House needs to pass the main estimates as quickly as possible, I would like to explain the budget implementation process.

The implementation of budget spending measures typically requires two types of approval. The first is what is called policy approval and refers to the requirement that certain measures be approved by the appropriate cabinet policy committee and Treasury Board. That is why we are streamlining the review and approval of policies and programs while ensuring appropriate controls. This means, for example, using simplified or omnibus Treasury Board submissions for straightforward extensions or top-ups. The second type of approval is parliamentary authority over appropriations.

Typically, the earliest opportunity for budget measures to receive such funding is through the supplementary estimates (A), which Parliament votes on in June. However, if we are to help Canadian families, communities and businesses weather the current economic storm, we need to deliver stimulus funding as rapidly as possible. That is why we introduced the recently passed Budget Implementation Act, to make payments totalling \$7.6 billion. These payments will be used to fund large priority initiatives as specifically identified in the Budget Implementation Act. This act includes statutory authority for ministers to spend money on these initiatives directly from the consolidated revenue fund. I would refer members to the budget document to see exactly what the government will be spending on.

We have also created a special time-limited budget implementation vote in the main estimates. With Parliament's approval of the main estimates, this vote will give departments money to spend on key budget initiatives as early as April 1. This vote will only be available between April 1 and June 30, until supplementary estimates (A) are in place. This vote is limited to \$3 billion and will be used to provide initial funding for ready-to-go projects and initiatives identified in our economic action plan. This funding will get the ball rolling until departments and agencies can receive funding through future supplementary estimates following the normal supply process.

The allocation of funds from this vote must be approved by Treasury Board. Members opposite say they are concerned about accountability, and it is appropriate to raise accountability. In fact our government, certainly in the past session with the introduction of the Federal Accountability Act, through this measure is being accountable to Parliament and to Canadians.

• (1550)

All moneys distributed under this time-limited vote will be reported in upcoming supplementary estimates, as well as through regular reporting to Parliament. Parliamentarians will be able to review all of this.

The government will be tabling regular whole of government reports on the status of economic action plan initiatives. The first of these was recently tabled by the Minister of Finance. Tomorrow at the finance committee the Parliamentary Budget Officer will comment on the first of these tabled documents.

Furthermore, a committee of deputy ministers and chief financial officers is providing departmental oversight. Finally, the Auditor General will audit the spending.

We believe it is absolutely critical to strike the right balance between appropriate due diligence and transparency and rapid delivery of stimulus measures. I would like to emphasize that point. These extraordinary times require fast action. That is why we are moving so quickly with the economic action plan, but at the same time, with these measures we are ensuring that we will be accountable to Canadians and to Parliament. That is an important point we must emphasize.

It is obvious that Canadians who unfortunately are losing their jobs are looking for action in terms of employment insurance. Canadians in terms of small businesses are looking for action with respect to access to credit and financing that was in the budget. Canadians in terms of small businesses are looking forward to the tax reductions we have put in place. Canadians at the lower end of the income scale are looking forward to the tax reduction measures we have put in place.

The businesses, families and Canadians across this country are looking for action from the government. They have demanded action. We have acted in terms of our budget which was adopted by Parliament before the break. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to act upon that action plan and get the money flowing out the door to the families, the individuals and the Canadians who need it.

Business of Supply

I am asking members of the House to therefore oppose this motion and to support the government's action plan, not only in terms of its passage, but in terms of its full implementation, so that Canadians can truly see the benefit of that action plan.

• (1555)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member closed off his speech by calling on the House to vote against the motion, a motion regarding accountability. I do not think the member actually read the motion. It just says that after the government has spent the money, the day after, it simply provide the information about what it was spent on, and the member is saying to vote against that. We should think about that. He wants members to vote against letting Parliament and Canadians know on what the government spent some of the \$3 billion. The motion does not say let us approve or not approve the \$3 billion unless the government tells us what it is for. This is after the fact.

I know the member, and he is a good member, but if the motion simply asks to disclose information after the fact, is the member telling Canadians that Parliament should be opposed to that and that he would rather be unaccountable to the people of Canada?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I know the member takes the issue of parliamentary review very seriously, and I appreciate that. I appreciate his comments as well.

The fact of the matter is the whole point of my speech was to argue that there are measures in place already through Treasury Board, through Parliament, in terms of reviewing what will be spent of the \$3 billion. They are in place already. We do not need additional measures put in place, as prescribed in the motion. In my view and in the view of the government, this would simply delay the funding getting out the door.

The official opposition supported the budget. The official opposition should therefore support the money getting out the door to ensure that the budget is implemented.

The main point of my speech was that there are enough measures in place to ensure that our government will be accountable to Parliament and to Canadians for all of the money that will be spent of the \$3 billion fund.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to compliment the member for Edmonton—Leduc on his speech. He is doing a great job on behalf of the government as the chair of the finance committee.

One of the points raised by the member for Mississauga South was the issue of accountability, which I think is a great issue to raise in the House and to want to ensure. The member for Mississauga South seems to want to ensure that there are accountability measures, which I believe are ensured.

The Liberal Party called on the government to move as quickly as possible on the budget. Then there was a call from the Liberal Party not to move on the budget and not to produce the \$3 billion in stimulus that we are trying to move out.

I would like to get some clarification from the member. Exactly what are those measures that build in the accountability necessary to get this expenditure out the door?

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I certainly thank my colleague from St. Catharines for his question and all his work here in the House of Commons.

I would say quite honestly the actions of the Liberal Party with respect to the budget and with respect to the implementation are somewhat contradictory.

The Liberals were supportive of the budget, which I certainly appreciated, but the fact of the matter is they have to support the implementation of the budget as well if they want to see the measures in the budget take effect and have a positive effect.

My colleague asked about the accountability measures. This was the main point I was trying to make.

In terms of any money from the \$3 billion fund, first of all, programs or projects must be economic action plan initiatives included in budget 2009 and passed by Parliament.

Second, funds can only be allocated between April 1 and June 30, 2009.

Third, appropriate checks and balances are in place. Every initiative funded from this vote requires Treasury Board approval. Existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met.

Fourth, reporting on the use of funds will be done in supplementary estimates and in quarterly reports to Parliament on the economic action plan, something that the official opposition asked for specifically in its amendments to the budget.

The accountability measures are in place to deal with the special fund, and I encourage members on the opposition side to recognize this and vote against the motion.

• (1600)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to speak to the hon. member's motion before us.

I must admit, though, that while I am typically very pleased to have an opportunity to speak in the chamber, today is quite a different story.

Today I rise with sadness at the hon. member's resolve to do his utmost to prevent the government from getting stimulus money to those who need it most.

While he continues to throw up roadblocks, I have to wonder if the hon. member is really not aware of the effect of his efforts on Canadians, Canadians who are trying to pull together enough money to make their monthly mortgage payments so they do not lose their homes, Canadians who may have to go to food banks because they do not have enough money to put food on the table themselves, Canadians who have asked their elected representatives to stop their political posturing and to protect them in their time of need.

Our government consulted widely with Canadians on what action to take. The result is an economic action plan to inject \$40 billion into the economy over the next two years. This plan, tabled as part of the earliest budget in history, is designed to jump-start growth, to sustain the recovery, and to help Canadians in these difficult times.

Business of Supply

In fact, it has been praised by the International Monetary Fund. In a recent report, they called it “large, timely, and well targeted”. They said our immediate focus should be on implementing the budget to mobilize spending.

We are acting through all available means to protect our economy and to protect Canadians affected by the downturn. That includes the tax system, the employment insurance program, direct spending by federal and provincial governments, lending by crown corporations, and partnerships with the private sector.

Only 42 days after the plan was presented, we had done all we could to make the plan fully operational by April 1. This is six to twelve months ahead of the usual budget timeframe.

Why are we so focused on putting this plan to work so quickly? It is because our plan is designed to boost the economy when it is needed the most: now and over the next 24 months.

What have we done to lay the foundation for the implementation of this plan? Virtually all cabinet policy approvals are expected to be in place by the end of this month. We are ready to roll out \$12 billion in spending on roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. We introduced the recently passed Budget Implementation Act, which includes \$7.6 billion in spending authorities and seeks parliamentary approval of \$2.4 billion in tax reductions for 2009-10.

We have tabled the 2009-10 main estimates, which include a new central vote. This vote will enable Treasury Board ministers to allocate up to \$3 billion in funding directly to departments. These funds are for immediate cash requirements directly related to measures in the economic action plan. Every single eligible program or project must be approved by the Treasury Board. This funding is only until formal supplementary estimates for these initiatives have received the usual parliamentary approval.

This vote will be used to fund specific economic action plan measures such as building roads, fixing bridges, and providing skills training for those Canadians hit hardest by this global recession.

As a result of this approach, by April 1, we would have authority to proceed with providing about \$20 billion in budget measures. This would represent close to 90% of the stimulus contained in the economic action plan for 2009-10.

Therefore, it saddens me to know that much of this work will be for naught if the hon. member has his way.

•(1605)

It also saddens me to know that despite the fact that our non-partisan public service has been working non-stop, day and night, to get this money flowing quickly, the hon. member continues to play partisan politics.

My constituents have made it clear that they want politicians to stop playing political games and get to work on their behalf. I suspect that all hon. members are hearing the same refrain from residents in their ridings. I suspect that is why the leader of the official opposition instructed his colleagues in the other House to pass the Budget Implementation Act after his party dragged its feet as long as it could.

Members know too well that none of the spending measures contained in the economic action plan can proceed without parliamentary approval. The Budget Implementation Act has finally been passed. To move forward with more stimulus measures, we must now pass the estimates. So what does the hon. member do? He throws up roadblocks to getting this money out to support Canadians hardest hit by the economic downturn. He throws up roadblocks to helping communities and businesses to adjust and grow in these extraordinary times. Instead, as we are cutting bureaucratic red tape, he wants to add more in the name of accountability.

We are the government that introduced the Federal Accountability Act as its first piece of legislation coming into office. The hon. member refers to the Auditor General. It was our Federal Accountability Act that strengthened the power of the Auditor General so she can more effectively hold the government to account for its use of taxpayer dollars.

Canadians want to be confident that the Government of Canada is working in their best interests. They expect elected officials and public servants to manage their tax dollars wisely, and they expect us to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct.

Is the hon. member really telling Canadians that our hard-working civil servants operate without any or the right controls in place? Does the hon. member think that Canadians want to have daily reports of every penny spent by their government?

We had no problem when the Liberal Party suggested reports every three months, so we said yes, but the hon. member cannot take yes for an answer. Now he is not satisfied with reports every three months. Now he wants daily reports.

Does the hon. member think the reports he wants just spring out of thin air? Does he not realize what a paper burden that will be?

Why does he want to divert our civil servants from examining projects, making sure of matching funds, getting the paperwork done and cutting the cheques? That is what Canadians want. They surely do not want our civil servants bogged down in redundant daily reports simply because the hon. member cannot wait until June.

One moment the hon. member says he knows the importance of speedy stimulus spending. The next moment he wants to bog down the process with extra paperwork. How shameless. How sad.

Our Federal Accountability Act provided Canadians with the open and honest government they deserve, one that acts responsibly, rewards integrity, and demonstrates accountability. That is the approach we live every day. It is the same approach that we are taking to these economic stimulus measures.

I stand today in this House and ask my hon. colleagues to reject this motion, and I call upon them to stop serving partisan interests and instead start serving those who elected us to this place.

Business of Supply

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the word might be “hubris”. The word might be “arrogance”. Whatever it is, the member opposite gets up in his place and says it is shameless and sad that members of the opposition want to know how the Government of Canada is going to spend \$3 billion. I do not think it is shameless and sad to want to know that. I think the people of Canada, in his riding and in my riding and all the ridings, want to know how that money is to be spent.

First, the Conservatives hide behind the skirt that it will all have to go through Treasury Board. All money spent by governments in Canada have to comply with Treasury Board guidelines. Big deal. That is defence number one gone.

Second, he says that it is a burden for the civil servants. We are not attacking the civil servants; we are attacking the hidden agenda of the Conservative government that will spend \$3 billion on friendly projects and have the audacity not to tell the opposition parties and the Canadian public what it is spending the money on.

Finally, by way of a question, if it is as simple as looking in the economic action plan and saying everything must come out of that plan, why can the member over there not stand in his place and tell us what specific expenditures in the economic action plan the \$3 billion is made up of? Will he do it now, or will he be shameless and sad and avoid the question?

• (1610)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I read today that some Liberals are calling their April 30 convention the Seinfeld convention because there is no leadership contest, no presidential election, and limited policy debate. It is a convention about nothing.

Today, courtesy of the Liberals, we are being treated to the Seinfeld motion. There is no substance, point, and content to it. It is a motion about nothing.

Of course, we cannot list the stimulus programs before they have been arranged. Once these projects have been funded, they will be reported in the June supplementary estimates in just three short months. This is sensibly doing first things first.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the members opposite are probably reflecting on the horrible sponsorship scandal of the previous Liberal government, which saw hundreds of millions of Canadian taxpayers' dollars stolen and put toward Liberal Party use.

With respect to this particular motion, I wonder if the hon. member might once again reflect on some of the accountability measures already put into the stimulus funding.

Is the hon. member prepared, as I am, to work with the Liberal provincial government in Ontario and his municipal counterparts to make sure the stimulus funding goes out the door, and meets local, provincial, as well as federal needs to get people back to work, to build bridges and roads and maintain sewer systems? I wonder if the hon. member may comment on that.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct that it is critical to strike the right balance between delivering economic stimulus measures quickly and having appropriate due diligence.

Canadians will have ample opportunity to learn about how this money is spent. First, there will be regular reporting to Parliament. Second, there will be reports from the Auditor General, who will audit the spending. Third, every initiative requires Treasury Board approval. Fourth, every existing policy requirement on accountability in reporting must be met.

Each department has independent audit committees and chief financial officers looking at these things. There will be reporting of the funds used in the supplementary estimates and quarterly reports to Parliament on the economic action plan.

We have also launched a comprehensive new website, www.actionplan.gc.ca, which details our plans and gives information about specific initiatives and projects as they are announced.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the entire budget were presented to the House as a dollar figure, but the government could not quite tell members what it would be spent on, Parliament could not discharge its responsibilities at all. This is an extraordinary amount of money. The motion asks for disclosure of the spending as it happens. It is a very simple request, so that at least Parliament can have some discretion to review.

I ask the hon. member this. Why is the Conservative Party opposed to accountability?

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I have made it abundantly clear that the only issue we are spending a day talking about is when the accountability and reporting is going to occur, whether it has to be instantaneous or can occur in the usual course with the supplementary estimates. Quite frankly, I think that process is more than adequate.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Mississauga South.

The government, and more specifically the Prime Minister, is providing Canadians with a great example of how opinions can so easily change, depending on which side of the House we sit. Let me share with my fellow members what I discovered in doing a little digging into the Prime Minister's past positions. This is a quote from October 6, 2004, when the Prime Minister served as leader of the opposition:

We will remind the government at every turn that the money of Canadians is not the government's money to...hide. What it did before the election, what it did during the election and what it has done since the election will be exposed by the official opposition because that is our job and responsibility.

He also stated:

—collaboration is a two way street and all opposition parties expect the government to be more forthcoming than it has been up to now.

Business of Supply

Today, as he sits in government, however, the Prime Minister has dramatically changed his tune. Just a few weeks ago, he told *The Canadian Press*:

Rather than trying to throw up roadblocks, they [referring to the opposition] need to get out of the way and let that money flow.

I have one simple question for the Prime Minister, and the government as a whole. How can the principles of transparency, openness and co-operation be so important back then when today the same positions are considered obstacles?

We understand how important it is to get moneys out to communities. In my riding of Newton—North Delta, I am well aware of many projects that have been forwarded for funding consideration from both the city of Surrey and the corporation of Delta.

It is federal funds that will spur great economic opportunity and activity, and provide much needed stimulus to the local economy. And at the end of the day, creating jobs is what this whole debate is all about.

I get it. In fact, we all get it. Every member of this House, regardless of what party they belong to, knows of people who are losing their incomes, who are having their savings and retirement nest eggs decimated, and who are very scared for the future of their families and their businesses.

However, at the same time, we have an obligation to spend taxpayers' hard-earned dollars in the most effective and responsible way possible.

In fact, this has supposedly been one of the core beliefs of the government. It was not that long ago when it campaigned on that old forgotten ideal: accountability.

We have seen the government's hypocrisy in action on this front. The latest outrage is the allocation of funding through the new horizons for seniors program. Out of 32 ridings where this money has gone, 31 are Conservative ridings. And now the government wonders why we are so insistent on checking the books.

We can clearly see how a \$3 billion slush fund can be used for the Conservatives' political purposes, though of course the government does not see the benefit in the opposition asking questions. The government would rather us sit here silently and vote in favour of spending, with absolutely no plan in place or any principles of accountability to Canadians.

Well, I am here today to say that this is not acceptable.

Does the government feel as though it can use the excuse of tough economic times to justify unilateral action on spending?

•(1615)

Canadians have a right to know where their tax dollars are going. It does not matter what the circumstances are. If the government is unwilling to provide a detailed account of what is happening with taxpayers' money, something is wrong.

Which departments will have access to these funds? What are the criteria for the projects receiving these funds? What kind of information will the public receive both before and after these

moneys go out the door? Finally, what does the government have to hide?

If the Prime Minister can assure the House that this \$3 billion will not be used to fund Conservative MPs' pet projects or applied to the ridings that the Conservative Party is attempting to target in the next election, then why can Canadians not be given full disclosure? Like I said, something just does not add up.

Either one supports accountability and transparency or one does not. That position should never change whether one sits on the government side of the House or on the opposition side. Either one is going to use the funds responsibly or try to hide the real purpose, which amounts to political payoffs.

These are not complicated questions and like the Prime Minister used to say when he actually cared about providing Canadians with real answers, government expenditures must be "exposed" by the official opposition because that is our job and responsibility". Those are the Prime Minister's words and either he was sincere back in 2004 or he is showing his true colours now. However, one thing is for sure, the two positions are opposite to each other and cannot go together.

To conclude, I want to appeal to the common sense of the government. It should realize that no matter what part of the country one represents and no matter how bad economic times get, there is one thing that remains constant throughout. That is that taxpayers' hard-earned money is not ours to spend freely and that basic reporting principles that include a plan and rationale are fundamental principles of a democratic society.

The Conservative Party's website identifies the following as two of its founding principles: fiscal accountability and a belief that a responsible government must be fiscally prudent. I challenge my counterparts in the government to live up to these basic expectations not only because it is what their party is founded upon but also because it is what Canadians deserve.

•(1620)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would agree with me that getting money out the door to provinces and municipalities so that they can attack the infrastructure needs and deficits they have had over many years of ineffective Liberal governments is now a priority.

I wonder if he might also comment on some of the differences between the accountability measures built into the stimulus funding and the lack of accountability that was built into the Liberal sponsorship scandal that saw hundreds of millions of dollars redirected from Canadian taxpayers to help fund Liberal Party policies.

I wonder if he might specifically inform the House on his actions with respect to accountability in that time period and help me understand some of the differences between our accountability measures, which were elegantly talked about by the member for Kitchener Centre, and some of the measures that were in place during the sponsorship scandal.

Business of Supply

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, the member for Oak Ridges—Markham and I both were not here when this unfortunate situation with the sponsorship funds occurred. There is not a single Canadian or member of Parliament in the House who supports that kind of accountability, but I can comment on the accountability of the Prime Minister and the government.

When it comes to their record, we simply cannot trust the Prime Minister and the hon. member's party to spend money effectively without proper oversight. They probably want to flow these \$3 billion to Conservative ridings because if we look at the past record, money went to 31 out of 32 Conservative ridings.

• (1625)

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague and seat mate from Newton—North Delta is a trained engineer and very hard working man.

Does it make sense if we are to build a bridge, that we do not show people the plans? Does it make sense that if we to put together a great big meal, that we not have a recipe or show anyone who cooks the meal the recipe? Therefore, does it make any sense to the good people of Newton—North Delta, to the people of downtown Surrey, who want projects done and completed, to say that we will spend \$3 billion, but we will not tell them how we will spend it and that we will keep it and give favours to our friends? Does that make any sense to the member? Is that the proper way to administer \$3 billion of taxpayer money?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, my seat mate, who has always been of great help when there have been issues. He played a key role in Mulroney and Schreiber issue, when all of sudden \$300,000 were gone. That is the Conservative record. The hon. member is well aware how the money is hidden by the Conservative members.

The member is absolutely right. The way the Conservatives are handling the \$3 billion is for one hidden purpose only. It is to help their Conservative friends get re-elected or elected. That is why they are shirking away from the accountability and transparency principle in which they so-call believe.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to let the hon. member know that I announced a project, along with the Liberal member of the provincial parliament, in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. She explained how excited she was to work with the federal government to bring forward a project that was desperately needed in the riding.

The member talked about some of the New Horizons funding. Which one of the programs, seniors for seniors, or memories to music, or senior social support services, or Mississauga Chinese elder abuse prevention program, or the Gateway JOY (Just Older Youth) Seniors Volunteer Network, or the Happy Seniors for a Happy Community, or Seniors Kitchen and Social Club and so on spread throughout Mississauga in particular, does he not approve of and which one would he like to get rid of, because he obviously does not support seniors in Ontario?

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal: Mr. Speaker, my record on supporting seniors is very clear. In fact, when it comes to the member reading off his BlackBerry, I can tell the House that I do not have a problem supporting any of those projects. I have a problem—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Culture; the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, The Economy.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have spent the day listening to the debate and I am disappointed to hear that the government will not support a motion which calls for openness, transparency and accountability for all Canadians. That is very telling. A number of government members talked about things other than the motion before the House only because they did not want to give their opinion on whether what was asked in the motion was not only reasonable, but whether it was the responsibility and in fact the duty of parliamentarians to exercise due diligence and scrutinize proposed spending of taxpayer dollars. It is our job.

In this instance we have a \$3 billion amount which is labelled “unmarked funds” proposed to be used for a variety of purposes. In the section that describes this amount of money in Treasury Board vote 35, it refers to budget implementation initiatives subject to approval by the Treasury Board between the period of April 1 and June 30”. In other words, Treasury Board will authorize the expenditure of certain moneys, \$3 billion, in the first quarter of the upcoming fiscal year.

It goes on to say “to supplement other appropriations and to provide any appropriate Ministers with appropriations for initiatives announced in the Budget of January 27, 2009”. It basically says that it can be spent on anything, whether it is in the budget and announced to Canadians what the intent was, or some other purpose to which the government may decide to apply it.

What the vote is really saying is “trust us”. The government wants \$3 billion and at some point in time it will disclose where it was spent, but it will not tell us right now. How can Parliament exercise its responsibilities and its duties to scrutinize the proposed spending of taxpayer dollars if it does not know what it is? However, we understand there will be some matters that come up that may very well not be able to be identified specifically as to the precise location, the name of the project, the size of the project and other details.

The motion does not ask for pre-disclosure. It simply asks for disclosure when the funds are being used. That is when all is known. It is simply asks the government to publish a report which advises parliamentarians and Canadians on what the moneys were spent. That is the gist of the motion. When the money is spent, we would like to know what it is because the government did not tell us during the process of the estimates or identified it in the budget. This could be almost anything.

Business of Supply

The Conservatives are going to vote against this. Why? Because Conservatives have to do it anyway when the supplementary estimates come in next June. However, that is after all the money has been spent. If Parliament has a problem, or concern or question about expenditures of some of the \$3 billion, when will members get a chance to do this? They will not get a chance until June and even then, depending on what goes on in the House, the House may rise for the summer by the time other things are done and all of a sudden it will be next fall. Therefore, the motion asks for accountability, openness and transparency.

The Treasury Board officials commented on vote 35. They indicated that it ran contrary to the principles of accountability and responsibilities of parliamentarians. In fact, House of Commons Standing Order 80(1) clearly states:

• (1630)

All aids and supplies granted to the Sovereign by the Parliament of Canada are the sole gift of the House of Commons, and all bills for granting such aids and supplies ought to begin with the House, as it is the undoubted right of the House to direct, limit, and appoint in all such bills, the ends, purposes, considerations, conditions, limitations and qualifications of such grants, which are not alterable by the Senate.

Even in our own Standing Orders, it says that if Parliament is to discharge its responsibilities, it needs to have this information. The government has moved forward with this \$3 billion in unmarked funds and it will tell us sometime three months down the road what it was for. There has to be a compromise here and this motion proposes that compromise. It says that as the money flows out, we want to know what it was spent on, what the project name was, the amount and the department or program under which it was operated.

If the motion is simply asking for openness, transparency and accountability, why is the government saying that it is going to vote against it? It is bizarre. If someone gets a bee in his or her bonnet and all of a sudden another party decides to vote no along with the government, what happens? All of a sudden we do not have any money flowing because we are going to an election. That is what it really means. Ultimately, it is like playing chicken.

The government showed us that side of its strategy in the budget. The budget did not just have budget information in it; it had a number of other non-budgetary items in it. Why? Why did it include the Competition Act? Why did it attack pay equity for women? Why did it attack the Navigable Waters Act? It took a lot of time to do that and the government threw that in there. Why? Because if members objected to those things, they would defeat the whole budget and they would not defeat the whole budget because Canadians needed the stimulus.

Therefore, the government has us. We have to pass the things it wants without the normal parliamentary scrutiny.

The government's economic statement last November, in which it forecasted four years of surplus and no recession, was disastrous. All of a sudden, between the first week of November and when it tabled the budget in January, there was an international economic crisis that was not seen in November. It happened instantaneously in each one of those countries. It was not gradual. There were not any signs. It was as if somebody flipped the switch and all of a sudden we had a crisis.

Something is wrong here. It is a matter of trust. When the former Treasury Board president, who is now responsible for infrastructure, was pressed for an explanation as to why the government continued to refuse to give Parliament the specifics, he told the opposition members that the matter fundamentally amounted to trust. He was honest with us and he was honest with the committee. He said that they either had confidence in the government or they did not.

This response has lead us to conclude that neither the minister nor the government appear to have a clue as to where the money will go. Instead, they suggest that the government is getting set to improvise with billions of taxpayer dollars. It is flying by the seat of its pants with \$3 billion of taxpayer money. This motion says that we need to have some accountability. We will give the authority to go ahead and pass the estimates, but we want to know what the money is spent on as it goes out. We do not want to wait until June. It is our responsibility and our duty, and the government should support the motion.

• (1635)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion we are speaking to today in the House of Commons is important because one of the things we know over the last several years is that Canadians have lost trust in their government.

Many of us know about the Gomery inquiry and the corporate sponsorship scandal. Subsequently, we have had other issues that have certainly raised concerns around whether Canadians can trust how money is spent in this country.

I want to point out to the House that the motion tabled today is very similar to the one the member for Outremont had proposed over a week ago. It speaks to the fact that members, certainly on this side of the House, have some serious concerns about the government having access to a \$3 billion slush fund that it can distribute, although it claims that there is an accountability measure attached to it.

The sad fact is that often it will come to light many months after the money is out the door. It is like closing the barn door after the horse has already escaped.

The motion before the House is simply putting into place some measures. When we look at the wording, it says, "...the programs which are likely to require access to this extraordinary authority". What the House is asking for is some oversight, which seems to be a perfectly reasonable request, in my view.

One of our responsibilities as parliamentarians, which we should never abdicate, is that money cannot be spent before it is approved by Parliament. As parliamentarians, we need to be able to go back to our communities with some assurance that the money the Canadian government is putting out will actually be spent in a way that Canadians can track and can see the deliverables on it. That just seems like a reasonable plan.

Business of Supply

I am sure most Canadians have tuned into why we are discussing an economic stimulus package and why we are discussing accountability but I want to put a couple of things on record.

Every day in many of our communities we hear stories from people who have lost their jobs. In my riding, it is forestry workers. When I was in my riding last week doing my constituency work, I ran into a number of forestry workers who told me that their employment insurance was running out or that they did not qualify for employment insurance or the kinds of training programs being offered. One forestry worker said that he was offered retraining as a long distance truck driver. He is in his fifties and does not have the experience. He wondered where he would find work as a long distance truck driver.

We are seeing the direct and immediate impact of the loss of employment in our communities, whether it is forestry, manufacturing or shipbuilding. We are hearing those stories from our community members each day we are in our ridings.

Much of this is not new information. We have seen deep-rooted problems with poverty in this country for a long time. I want to point to Campaign 2000. Many members in the House are aware that in 1989 Ed Broadbent proposed a motion, which was passed by Parliament, to end child poverty by the year 2000.

In November 2008, before the Conservatives acknowledged that we actually had an economic problem in this country, when Campaign 2000 tabled its latest report card on progress, it reported that one in nine children in Canada still lived in poverty when measured after income taxes. That amounts to 760,000 children and their families who are currently living in poverty.

B.C. continues to report the highest provincial child poverty rate in Canada. If we listen to the current B.C. Liberal government, it says that up until recently the economy was doing very well, thanks very much, and so were people from B.C., but we know that whether it is health care workers, forestry workers, shipyard workers or children and their families, people in British Columbia have been suffering for a lengthy period of time and it has only been made worse by this current economic downturn.

I want to talk about housing. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development said that there was some money for housing in this current budget but none of us should think that will actually amount to a national housing strategy.

● (1640)

I often hear the Conservatives say that New Democrats are always criticizing but do not propose anything. That is absolutely false. We have been calling for a national housing strategy ever since I was elected to this House in 2004.

Ms. Dawn Black: And before.

Ms. Jean Crowder: And before. I am very proud to say that New Democrats rewrote the Liberal budget in 2005 and made sure there was money specifically earmarked for housing.

I want to briefly refer to the United Nations special rapporteur on adequate housing, Miloon Kothari, in a report he wrote in 2007. Lest we think that this current housing crisis is manufactured as a result of

the economic downturn, he pointed out that in his visits across his country he was hearing about hundreds of people who had died because they were homeless. He went on to talk about the fact that in its most recent periodic review of Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the United Nations uses strong language to label housing, homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency. This was in 2007 when we were supposedly in these booming economic times. We can only imagine what is happening in our communities now.

As people lose their jobs, as people are one paycheque away from poverty and as income-assisted rolls soar, people are losing their houses right now as I speak in this House. This economic stimulus package was an opportunity to do some innovative, creative things and actually contribute to a national housing strategy. What we could have seen were some green retrofits. What we could have seen was taking some existing housing and retrofitting it so it was suitable for people who needed access to affordable housing. There were many opportunities lost in this current package. I know that New Democrats had positive solutions to propose to address some of these issues.

One of the reasons we are having this discussion about accountability is that we have seen over recent history any number of good reasons not to trust the Conservatives in terms of being able to track the money and talk about the results.

During a recent internal audit of the post-secondary education program by Indian and Northern Affairs, it became clear that the government did not know where the money was going or what results it was getting from it. These are not figures that came from outside of the government itself.

One of the objectives of the audit was to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the management control of the program. It seems like a good goal. I will not read the whole report, but when it came to conclusions, it gave some recommendations for the government. It stated:

Re-assess, in conjunction with the Transfer Payments and Financial Policy Directorate, the funding authorities in use and the reporting needs of the Program, taking into consideration the department's obligation to account for the use of Program funds and the intended purposes of these funding authorities.

It goes on to say that the government needs to improve the relevance and integrity of performance data being captured.

When we start looking at some of that information, I becomes clear that the government actually has difficulty in accounting for how some money is being spent. There are many other examples.

Canadians want to know that their government and parliamentarians are acting on behalf of all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, not just Canadians in Conservative ridings.

An article in today's *National Post* regarding a program called the new horizons for seniors program, states:

Business of Supply

The government has announced 32 grants for seniors' groups since Feb. 17, and only one went to an organization located in a riding not held by a Conservative MP.

We have a minority Conservative government that received less than half the votes in Canada. The Conservatives and all members in this House must ensure that all Canadians have access to these funds, not just people in Conservative ridings. That is a fundamental piece of fairness.

I come from a province that, sadly, about eight years ago had an opposition that was reduced to two members. There were 77 Liberal members and 2 New Democrats but, of course, New Democrats have recovered that ground. However, what we saw in that case was a government that had just over 50% of the vote and yet took 90-odd per cent of the seats. What happened in that case was an undermining of the democratic process. Decisions were made that rolled back collective agreements, increased class sizes and made cuts to health care.

● (1645)

I would argue that no matter if one is in a government with the bulk of the seats or, as in this case, a minority government, one has a responsibility to all Canadians, not just to one's own Conservative riding.

When Parliament asks for a list of the likely projects, it seems to be a fair and reasonable oversight process to ensure that all Canadians have access to these very important projects that could provide economic stimulus.

The Minister of the Environment has said that the government will circumvent some of the environmental assessment projects. I am sure Canadians will be very interested to see the kinds of projects that are likely to come forward. If the government is going to abdicate its responsibility around environmental assessment, at least community members can start looking at where there may be impacts.

In an article in the *Globe and Mail* on March 21 it refers to the fact that effective immediately and for the next two years numerous types of projects will not require federal environmental assessments in certain circumstances. These include the construction and remodeling of community buildings, water treatment and distribution systems, transit, road construction and waste management projects.

I do not know about other areas of the country but when we start talking about road construction, we know there are all kinds of potential impacts on watersheds. In my own community of Somenos Marsh, which is on a major highway, any major development that happens in the area will directly impact on the health and viability of Somenos Marsh. We would expect there to be a full environmental assessment. It is a valuable, fragile ecosystem. Despite the serious economic downturn we are in, we know that Canadians still care about where they live, the air they breathe and the quality of their water. They do not want to see the environmental assessment process stripped away. However, when we talk about the transparency and accountability of these projects, it is no wonder Canadians are questioning whether they can trust the government to spend the money on behalf of all Canadians.

I, as a grandmother, do not want to see my grandchildren inherit an unhealthy planet because we failed to do the right things in times of economic downturns.

The Caledon Institute put together a paper called "The Red-Ink Budget" in February 2009 which raised a couple of points about wise decisions on how money could be spent. The report states:

With respect to leveraging of funds from other levels of government, it is not reasonable to include the full 'leverage' effect as part of the Budget's overall fiscal stimulus because it is not at all clear that the provinces and territories can and will actually spend more than they had intended.

When the government put together the stimulus package, it made some claims about the impact of the stimulus and yet we have independent institutes questioning the premise of some of its logic. This is under the economic and fiscal policy part of the report.

Later on in the report, it refers to some additional skepticism. It reads:

We are also skeptical about the capacity of the federal government to get much of the infrastructure and housing money out the door.... This requirement is especially problematic due to the demand for cost-sharing and the assumed federal engagement in picking and choosing projects. This will require negotiation and creative paper work (for provinces and territories to make up stories about incremental spending). Moreover the rush to spend will not necessarily encourage great wisdom in the choice of projects... Both the present and the previous governments failed to undertake adequate or, more accurately, any, contingency planning for the 'lean years' during the 'fat years' – a failure which will now impede our capacity to recover from the current recession and to spend our infrastructure funds wisely.

I think we would be hard-pressed to find any Canadian who would say that we should shovel the money out the door, that they do not care what the project is or what the consequences will be for their community and the environment.

This is an opportunity to ensure that projects will contribute to the overall health and well-being of our country and communities, both now and in the future. It is an opportunity to ensure the environment is protected, that jobs are created for the future and that we are doing some of the green initiatives that the New Democrats have proposed.

The Caledon Institute's report refers to spending money wisely. I have heard members say that we do not want to see a road built to nowhere or a bridge that goes halfway across a body of water. We want to ensure those projects are integrated into the plans of the community and make sense in terms of job creation, education, and the environment.

● (1650)

I know a couple of people have mentioned the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I want to touch on a couple of points the FCM has raised. This has certainly been mentioned in the House. It talks about use of the gas tax model, that it is fast, tested and accountable.

Of course, New Democrats have said that consistently, that the gas tax model is already in place, it works well, and we know that we can get money out through that process.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, in this particular publication, states that:

The most efficient and effective federal funding program is the [gas tax fund], which empowers communities to start work quickly on clearly established infrastructure priorities.

Business of Supply

Members will notice that it says “clearly established infrastructure priorities”.

It says:

The GTF flows money to cities and communities on a per capita basis. Municipalities must then invest these dollars in accordance with clear eligibility criteria, guided by established, federally-approved capital investment plans.

It goes on also to talk about what is of particular interest in my riding, and I know other members here have small communities, the fact that smaller communities must not be ignored and that there must be funding set aside for smaller communities, and communities must be protected.

So in terms of tabling a list of likely projects, it would enable us in the House to see if there is that good balance between large urban centres and smaller communities.

I know there has been some work done around this, but for smaller communities, if we just simply look at per capita funding, the city of Duncan, for example, has 5,000 people, yet it has some major road infrastructure that has an impact on every other community in the area. So there must be some sort of set-aside that recognizes the integration of these communities, but they also must have access to the funding to recognize the fact that simply a per capita formula will not do it. Again, tabling of the likely projects will allow us as parliamentarians to assess that and will allow the Canadian public to assess it.

I know other members have raised this, but our neighbours to the south have somehow or other figured out that accountability and transparency is a good thing. In a memo written on February 9 that went out to the heads of departments and agencies, there are a couple of key points that talk specifically about that accountability and transparency.

It stated:

We are asking the American people to trust their government with an unprecedented level of funding to address the economic emergency. In return, we must prove to them that their dollars are being invested in initiatives and strategies that make a difference in their communities and across the country.

It seems to me that the Americans have it. They understand that there is a partnership around this.

We as parliamentarians can approve spending, or not, but then there must be a partnership with the public around how that money is spent.

The Americans have a website, which I am sure others have spoken about, but I want to re-emphasize this because there are a couple of really key goals. On the website, www.recovery.gov, they say the funding “must be subject to unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability”.

We are actually asking Canadians to shoulder a debt. We are asking Canadians, to some extent, to do it in good faith, because although we may have talked about the potential economic stimulus and how it is going to benefit our communities, we are really asking them to take it on faith that the money that is being spent will actually make a difference in our communities.

The other part of that partnership then must be these unprecedented levels of transparency and accountability. It must go above

and beyond anything we normally have asked of our government, and it would seem to me that the principles outlined in www.recovery.gov seem reasonable. These principles are that:

Recovery funds are awarded and distributed in a prompt, fair, and reasonable manner;

The recipients and uses of all recovery funds are transparent to the public, and that the public benefits of these funds are reported clearly, accurately, and in a timely manner;

Recovery funds are used for authorized purposes and every step is taken to prevent instances of fraud, waste, error, and abuse;

It states further:

Programs meet specific goals and targets, and contribute to improved performance on broad economic indicators.

If the United States, which has a significantly larger population than Canada, can do this, surely we in Canada can figure this out.

• (1655)

I would urge members of this House to support this motion, and I would urge the government to take some lessons from what has happened with the Obama government and some of the initiatives it has proposed.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just went to great lengths to compare what she believes the United States is doing right, and she somehow seems to indicate that we should be replicating that particular process.

I wonder if the hon. member has been watching the United States news over the last number of weeks. Certainly we have seen this whole discussion about the debacle that the United States found itself in, having permitted through the processes these things that she calls unprecedented levels of accountability and transparency. Under this program that she has talked about all the merits of, through this program that the Obama administration put forward to the American people, these huge compensation packages were given to AIG.

While she talks about accountability, while she talks about transparency, she likens it to the program that we see south of the border, yet we see the most ridiculous, unprecedented, problematic process the United States has seen in a long time with these multi-million dollar compensation packages given to some of the people who caused what we are seeing as one of the biggest financial disasters in world history.

• (1700)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, there are two separate issues we are talking about here. One is the accountability for Canadian parliamentarians, to be able to say to the Canadian public that this money has been spent in an accountable, transparent process, that money can be tracked, that it is going to contribute to the overall good and health and welfare of our communities, that the projects fall in line with the community priorities and targets, have been well thought out and well planned, and are strategic in nature.

I would argue that some of what I talked about in this recovery is accountability initiatives that I am asking the Government of Canada, the parliamentarians, to take on.

Business of Supply

When we talk about AIG and the outrageous compensation that went to executives, I would argue that in part there are some mechanisms in Canada with our banking system and our financial sector that have prevented that kind of process from happening, but we have not been immune.

The member talked about AIG, but I did not hear him talking about the hidden sub-prime mortgages in Canada and the impact of that on people losing their homes right now. I think we need to look at the mistakes that have been made, like AIG, and learn from them so that we do not repeat those kinds of initiatives in Canada.

Again, what I am saying is that www.recovery.gov has some good principles that would be helpful in terms of us setting up some mechanisms in Canada to ensure that the public can engage in this process.

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following on the question from the member for Peace River, I wonder if the member agrees with me or thinks it is possible that this really is about three initials, whether it is AIG or CPC.

Giving money, \$3 billion in this case, without strings is very much like a bailout given to a company and having it do what it will with it, which we are now seeing with approbation by the United States and by all the world, the bailout of AIG resulting in bonuses to their executives.

Does she see an analogy here that we are letting the CPC, that is the government, spend \$3 billion without any conditions whatsoever? Who will it bail out? Who will it compensate, unjustly perhaps, all the members who hold CPC ridings?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, I think the issue with AIG is that Canadians, because they have been paying attention to what is happening in the States, do not want to see that kind of thing happen in Canada. Earlier in my speech I talked about the new horizons program and the fact that all but one of those announcements have been in Conservative ridings.

Canadians in this particularly difficult economic time want to see a fair, just, accountable, transparent process. It has to benefit Canadians from coast to coast to coast, not just people who live in Conservative ridings.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to support the special vote that is found in the main estimates known as vote 35.

As we have heard today, vote 35 is a \$3 billion appropriation requested by the government for the Treasury Board to provide funding for initiatives set out in the economic action plan starting April 1. This is an extraordinary step taken to provide funding for departments that have projects that are ready to go right now. Many such initiatives are construction projects, which need to be started at the beginning of the season if Canadians are going to feel the positive effects in this given year.

There has been some confusion among the hon. members on the other side about the role of this \$3 billion vote. I would like to shed some light on how this process would work.

Of course, there will always be those who prefer to muddy the waters so that Canadians and their members of Parliament are not

clear about what the choices are, but I should think the hon. members opposite would appreciate my efforts in bringing clarity to this particular issue.

There are several challenges that need to be addressed with the economic action plan. These measures need to be dealt with by moneys that are put into place by this measure. One of them is the Budget Implementation Act, which provides funding for some of the economic action plan initiatives.

With this act receiving royal assent on March 12, the most important task at hand for hon. members is the passage of the main estimates. This is necessary to ensure that the measures provided for in the economic action plan, such as building roads and bridges, reducing taxes, supporting Canadians hardest hit by the economic downturn, and helping communities and businesses adjust and grow, will move forward now when they are needed the most.

Anyone who has ever invested money knows that the sooner one puts that money to work, the better it is. It is better to invest sooner, because the returns for that investment start flowing sooner and last longer.

When it comes to investing, time truly is of the essence. That is why we need vote 35 in the main estimates. It provides funding for a broad range of economic action plan measures that are not funded through the Budget Implementation Act but need access to money between the dates of April 1 and June 30. These include community recreational infrastructure projects, investments in first nations infrastructure, and investments in aboriginal skills and employment partnerships, just to name a few.

To ensure that departments can start funding these initiatives before this summer, we have requested the authority to make payments on these projects up to \$3 billion.

This approach has been applauded by the International Monetary Fund. In a recent report, the IMF said that Canada's immediate focus should be on implementing the budget to mobilize spending.

This vote is necessary because the short time period between tabling the economic action plan on January 27 and the main estimates, which were brought forward on February 26, did not allow enough time for departments and agencies to seek funding for budget initiatives through the main estimates. Vote 35 allows the government to provide initial funding for ready-to-go initiatives until departments and agencies can receive funding through the normal parliamentary supply processes.

This really is bridge financing. It is simply a way of advancing the funding that would otherwise have to wait until supplementary estimates in June or even later.

However, make no mistake, we are accountable for this \$3 billion. That is why we will table reports in Parliament on the status of the economic action plan initiatives, three more in this particular year: one in June, one in September, and one in December. The first report has already been tabled in the House.

Business of Supply

●(1705)

In addition, the government will report on all allocations for the central vote as is the case for all central votes in subsequent supplementary estimate documents.

Finally, the Auditor General has indicated that she will be reviewing this process as well, and no one wants the Auditor General saying that money was not spent on what it was supposed to be spent.

This government has made accountability and transparency the cornerstones of its mandate and at this point we are not going to change our stripes. Our first piece of legislation was the Federal Accountability Act. Since tabling the economic action plan, we have cut red tape, taken extraordinary and unprecedented actions to ensure critical investments are not delayed—

●(1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am going to interrupt the hon. member. The chief government whip is rising on a point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study of the lobster fishery, 12 members of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans be authorized to travel to the Magdalen Islands, Quebec; Montague, Prince Edward Island; Alma, New Brunswick; and Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, from March 29 to April 2, 2009 and that the necessary staff accompany the Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy 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)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—VOTE 35 IN MAIN ESTIMATES 2009-10

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this process we will not compromise accountability. We believe it is critical to strike the right balance between the rapid delivery of stimulus measures and the appropriate due diligence and transpar-

ency. We have established clear conditions for the use of this vote to ensure the appropriate checks and balances are in place.

This fund can only be used for economic action plan initiatives announced in budget 2009, which has been passed by this Parliament. Every initiative funded from this vote requires approval of Treasury Board. Existing policy requirements on accountability and reporting must be met. For example, grants and contribution payments are subject to the transfer payment policy. The use of this vote is time limited as well. Funds can only be allocated between the dates of April 1 and June 30, 2009.

This economic crisis is an example of why government needs the ability to quickly and prudently respond to events that we see developing. Today because of the government's drive for more efficient and effective management within the public service, departments are better equipped than ever before to manage this process.

Over the past three years we have improved financial management standards across government. Departments now have independent internal audit committees that include members from outside the government. There are chief financial officers in every department. In addition, under the management accountability framework, the state of financial management and control within departments is assessed annually by the Treasury Board Secretariat.

Based on these assessments, large departments and agencies representing more than 90% of government spending have improved in areas of financial management and controls. Recent financial management and control indicators rated “acceptable” and “strong” are now up to 90% from 59% in the 2006-07 fiscal year. This government believes that responsiveness and responsibility should define the public service. This is the vision that has guided the transformations we have put into place here in Ottawa. This is truly the way forward.

This economic crisis is not of our making, but it is a true test. This is truly where the rubber meets the road. This is why we have shown Canadians that we are managing the economy and society in a new way to ensure that ongoing competitiveness and prosperity is given to every Canadian.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m. and the final allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 2009, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith all questions necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[English]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 32*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Arthur
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brison	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Casey	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Faillie	Folco
Foote	Fry
Gagnon	Gameau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Harris (St. John's East)
Holland	Hughes
Hyer	Ignatieff
Jennings	Julian
Kania	Karygiannis
Kennedy	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Olipphant
Pacetti	Paillé
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx

Rae
Ratansi
Rodriguez
Russell
Savoie
Sgro
Silva
Simon
Stoffler
Thi Lac
Tonks
Valeriotte
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Business of Supply

Rafferty
Regan
Roy
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Siksay
Simms
St-Cyr
Szabo
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NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Glover
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoepfner	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
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayer
McColeman	McLeod
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Paradis
Payne	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Uppal	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace

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Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country
 Weston (Saint John)
 Woodworth
 Young— 139

Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Yelich

PAIRED

Members

Crête
 Holder

Hoback
 Ouellet— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

• (1745)

[English]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2008-09

The Speaker: The next question is on supplementary estimates (C).

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That the supplementary estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2009, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1750)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 33)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Ashfield
 Bains
 Bélangier
 Benoit
 Bevilacqua
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 Arthur
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bennett
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge

Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casey
 Chong
 Clement
 Crombie
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dhalla
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Fast
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Galipeau
 Gameau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hill
 Holland
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Prentice
 Proulx
 Raitt
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott

Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Casson
 Clarke
 Coderre
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dhaliwal
 Dion
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Folco
 Fry
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Ignatieff
 Jennings
 Kania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Verner

Business of Supply

Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
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Warawa
Watson
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faillie	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Hughes
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	Julian
Harris (St. John's East)	Laframboise
Hyer	Lavallée
Laforest	Lemay
Lalonde	Lessard
Layton	Malo
Leslie	Marston
Lévesque	Masse
Maloway	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Mourani
Mathysen	Nadeau
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Mulcair	Pomerleau
Paillé	Roy
Plamondon	Siksay
Rafferty	Stoffer
Savoie	Thibeault
St-Cyr	Wasylycia-Leis— 82
Thi Lac	
Vincent	

PAIRED

Members

Crête
Holder
Hoback
Ouellet— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-21, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2009, be read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

Some hon. members: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

[*English*]

The Speaker: The hon. chief government whip is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find agreement to apply the results of the vote on the previous motion to the motion currently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 34*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Alblonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coderre
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fletcher	Folco
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guamieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

Business of Supply

Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoepfner
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rae
Raitt	Rajotte
Ratansi	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Rodriguez	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shiplay
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 211	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille

Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faillie	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nadeau
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Rafferty	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylcia-Leis — 82

PAIRED

Members

Crête	Hoback
Holder	Ouellet — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*Translation*]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair.)

• (1755)

The Chair: The House is now in committee of the whole on Bill C-22.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board whether the bill is presented in its usual form, yes or no?

[*English*]

(On Clause 2)

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, I can advise the member and others that the form of this bill is the same as that passed in the previous supply period.

The Chair: Shall Clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall Clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Bill reported)

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the motion currently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 35)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Coderre
Crombie	Cummins
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeschen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fletcher	Folco
Foote	Fry

Business of Supply

Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoepfner
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kennedy	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Malhi	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Proulx	Rae
Raitt	Rajotte
Ratansi	Rathgeber
Regan	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Rodriguez	Russell
Savage	Saxton
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Sgro
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac— 211	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant

Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hughes
Hyer	Julian
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mourani
Mulcair	Nadeau
Paillé	Paquette
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Neville	Roy
Savoie	Siksay
St-Cyr	Stoffer
Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis— 82

PAIRED

Members

Crête	Hoback
Holder	Ouellet— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some Hon members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you were to seek it, you would find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the motion currently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 36)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Ashfield
 Bains
 Bélanger
 Benoit
 Bevilacqua
 Blackburn
 Block
 Boughen
 Bretkreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casey
 Chong
 Clement
 Crombie
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dhalla
 Dosaanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Fast
 Fletcher
 Foote
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hill
 Holland
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Prentice
 Proulx

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 Arthur
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bennett
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blaney
 Boucher
 Braid
 Brison
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooog
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Casson
 Clarke
 Coderre
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dhaliwal
 Dion
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Folco
 Fry
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoepfner
 Ignatieff
 Jennings
 Jania
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 LeBlanc
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Merrifield
 Minna
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae

Business of Supply

Raitt
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rodriguez
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 211

Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Ritz
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Sgro
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warawa
 Watson
 Wong
 Wrzesnewsjy
 Young

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bellavance
 Bigras
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brunelle
 Carrier
 Chow
 Comartin
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Demers
 Desnoyers
 Dorion
 Dufour
 Faillie
 Gaudet
 Gravelle
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Laforest
 Lalonde
 Layton
 Leslie
 Lévesque
 Maloway
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Mulcair
 Paillé
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Savoie
 St-Cyr
 Thi Lac
 Vincent

André
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Beaudin
 Bevington
 Black
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Crowder
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dewar
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Gagnon
 Godin
 Guay
 Hughes
 Julian
 Laframboise
 Lavallée
 Lemay
 Lessard
 Malo
 Marston
 Masse
 Ménard (Hochelaga)
 Mourani
 Nadeau
 Paquette
 Pomerleau
 Roy
 Siksay
 Stoffer
 Thibeault
 Wasylycia-Leis — 82

PAIRED

Members

Crête
 Holder
 Hoback
 Ouellet — 4

Business of Supply

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That this House do concur in Interim Supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding \$26,760,237,896.42 being composed of:

(1) three twelfths (\$15,448,846,331.75) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Proposed Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010 which were laid upon the Table Thursday, February 26, 2009, except for those items below:

(2) eleven twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Grain Commission Vote 40, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited Vote 10, Treasury Board Vote 5 and Treasury Board Vote 35 (Schedule 1.1), of the said Estimates, \$3,541,493,083.34;

(3) seven twelfths of the total of the amount of Canada Council for the Arts Vote 10, Public Service Staffing Tribunal Vote 105, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Vote 25 and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission Vote 15 (Schedule 1.2) of the said Estimates, \$132,330,310.00;

(4) six twelfths of the total of the amount of National Battlefields Commission Vote 60, Public Service Labour Relations Board Vote 100, Finance Vote 5, Fisheries and Oceans Vote 10, Human Resources and Skills Development Vote 5, Justice Vote 1, Library of Parliament Vote 10 and Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Vote 20 (Schedule 1.3) of the said Estimates, \$1,227,462,510.00;

(5) five twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Vote 15, National Arts Centre Corporation Vote 55, Public Health Agency of Canada Vote 50, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Vote 10, Registry of the Specific Claims Tribunal Vote 55, Canadian Space Agency Vote 35, Statistics Canada Vote 95, Marine Atlantic Inc. Vote 35 and Veterans Affairs Vote 5 (Schedule 1.4), of the said Estimates, \$3,107,973,675.00;

(6) four twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Museum for Human Rights Vote 30, Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women Vote 85, Public Service Commission Vote 95, Citizenship and Immigration Vote 5, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Vote 15, Health Vote 10, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Vote 1, Industry Vote 1, Public Works and Government Services Vote 1, Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote 55 and Treasury Board Secretariat Vote 1 (Schedule 1.5), of the said Estimates, \$3,302,131,986.33;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2010.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1805)

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

(Division No. 37)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Canniss
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Finley	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoepfner	Holland
Ignatieff	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi

Business of Supply

Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Ritz
Russell
Saxton
Scheer
Sgro
Shipley
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rodriguez
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wiltfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bigras
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dorion
Dufour
Faille
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hyer
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Leslie
Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathyszen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Vincent

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Gagnon
Godin
Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hyer
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Leslie
Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathyszen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Vincent

PAIRED

Members

Crête
Holder

Hoback
Ouellet— 4

Le Président: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-22, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2010, be read a first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

[Translation]

Hon. Vic Toews moved that Bill C-22, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2010, be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

[English]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you were to seek it, I believe you would find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the motion currently before the House.

[Translation]

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(The House divided on the amendment which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 38)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bains
Bélanger
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinoooge
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis

Business of Supply

Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Finley	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Garneau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoeppner	Holland
Ignatieff	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MackKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wiltfert

Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Deweppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Gravelle	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	Hughes
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	Julian
Harris (St. John's East)	Laframboise
Hyer	Lavallée
Laforest	Lemay
Lalonde	Lessard
Layton	Malo
Leslie	Marston
Lévesque	Masse
Maloway	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Mourani
Mathysen	Nadeau
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Mulcair	Pomerleau
Paillé	Roy
Plamondon	Siksay
Rafferty	Stoffer
Savoie	Thibeault
St-Cyr	Wasylcia-Leis— 82
Thi Lac	
Vincent	

PAIRED

Members

Crête	Hoback
Holder	Ouellet— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Accordingly the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole.

[*Translation*]

I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the House went into committee thereon, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

[*English*]

(On clause 2)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to make it absolutely clear, and I want assurance from the President of the Treasury Board, without any equivocation or prevarication, that he can tell us that the bill is in its usual form.

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, I could even give a lengthier reply not only to the hon. member for Pickering—Scarborough East, but to the hon. member for Beauséjour as well.

I can advise the House that the proportions requested in the bill are intended to provide for all necessary requirements of the Public Service of Canada up to the second supply period in fiscal year 2009-10.

In no instance is the total amount of an item being released by the bill. The form of the bill is the same as that passed in the previous supply period. The passing of the bill will not prejudice the rights and privileges of members to criticize any item in the estimates when they come up for consideration in committee. The usual undertaking is hereby given that such rights and privileges will be respected and will not be curtailed or restricted in any way as a result of the passing of this measure.

• (1810)

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 7 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

An hon. member: On division.
(Schedule 1.1 agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1.2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1.3 agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Schedule 1.4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 1.5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Schedule 1.5 agreed to)

[Translation]

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

[English]

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

Business of Supply

(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Bill reported)

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be concurred in.

[*Translation*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Speaker: The hon. chief government whip.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the motion currently before the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, we agree to applying the results of the vote just taken.

I would like to inform you that the members for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and Beauharnois—Salaberry have had to leave the chamber.

The Speaker: With that change, is there unanimous consent in the House to apply the vote?

Some hon. members: Yes.

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

(*Division No. 39*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Arthur
Ashfield	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Bélanger	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson

Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coderre	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Dreeshen	Dryden
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dykstra	Easter
Eyking	Fast
Finley	Fletcher
Folco	Foote
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Gameau
Glover	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hall Findlay	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hill
Hoepfner	Holland
Ignatieff	Jean
Jennings	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kania	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raïtt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shiple	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriote	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott

Business of Supply

Verner
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Asselin
Bachand
Bellavance
Bigras
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Chow
Comartin
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Deschamps
Dewar
Duceppe
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Gagnon
Godin
Guay
Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lemay
Lessard
Malo
Marston
Masse
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Mourani
Nadeau
Paquette
Pomerleau
Roy
Siksay
Stoffer
Vincent

André
Ashton
Atamanenko
Beaudin
Bevington
Black
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Charlton
Christopherson
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Demers
Desnoyers
Dorion
Dufour
Faille
Gaudet
Gravelle
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les

Hyer
Laforest
Lalonde
Layton
Leslie
Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thibeault
Wasylycia-Leis— 80

PAIRED

Members

Crête
Holder

Hoback
Ouellet— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

The hon. chief government whip.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you will find agreement to apply the vote on the previous motion to the current motion.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 40*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Ashfield
Bains
Bélanger
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Block
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Clarke
Coderre
Cummins
D'Amours
Day
Del Mastro
Dhaliwal
Dion
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Finley
Folco
Fry
Gallant
Glover
Goodale
Gourde
Guarnieri
Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoepfner
Ignatieff
Jennings
Kania
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Braid
Brison
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Crombie
Cuzner
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fast
Fletcher
Foote
Galipeau
Gameau
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Holland
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kennedy
Kent
Komaricki
Lake
Lebel
Lee
Lobb
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Mayes

Private Members' Business

McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	McTeague
Mendes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai
Oda	Oliphant
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Pearson	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Ritz	Rodriguez
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriotte	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Verner	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilfert
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac — 210

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dorion
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Faille
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Gravelle
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)

Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Paillé
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thibeault
Vincent	Wasylycia-Leis — 80

PAIRED

Members

Crête	Hoback
Holder	Ouellet — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

The Speaker: It being 6:15 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1815)

[*English*]

ITALIAN-CANADIAN RECOGNITION AND RESTITUTION ACT

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.) moved that Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present my private member's bill, Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history.

[*Translation*]

The historical context of this bill is broad and complex, but I will try nevertheless to explain briefly, despite the little time I have, the importance of passing this bill.

Needless to say with a surname like Pacetti and a first name like Massimo, my Italian origins are no secret.

[*English*]

This bill is not just about Italians; it is about making a wrong into a right for all Canadians. The purpose of this bill is to demonstrate that Canada's history is not much different from one era to another, including the stories of one immigrant group versus another.

Canada was and continues to be the promise of a land that offers opportunity, where the principles of peace, order and good government triumph over the chaos of war, corruption and poverty. Ours is a country that offers hope, freedom, prosperity, or simply a better life to thousands of people who just need to be given a fair chance to succeed.

Without history we have no future, and to ignore our history is even worse in that we deny our existence.

[*Translation*]

My bill, this bill, claims, simply, recognition of the injustices committed in the 1940s and the restoration of justice.

• (1820)

[*English*]

On June 10, 1940 Italy declared war on the free world. Though it was painful for some Italian Canadians to think of Italy as the enemy because of the family they left behind, their loyalty was to Canada, but to the Government of Canada this did not matter. Italian Canadians were still designated as enemy aliens in spite of the fact that a year earlier a report by Norman Robertson to justice minister Ernest Lapointe in 1939, the year before the internment of Italian Canadians commenced, made several recommendations against internment claiming that a large majority of Italian Canadians were not disloyal to this country. Robertson felt that it would not be in the public interest to recommend their immediate arrest at the outbreak of an eventual war between Canada and Italy and that any arrest on the grounds of disloyalty must be based on evidence and must be corroborated with proof that the individual in question was likely to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety. However, it has become clear over the years that individuals were in fact arrested on speculation alone.

What happened next was that the prime minister of the day, W. L. Mackenzie King, invoked the War Measures Act and took to the airwaves to issue the following statement: "The Minister of Justice has authorized the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to take steps to intern all residents of Italian origin, whose activities have given ground for the belief or reasonable suspicion that they might, in time of war, endanger the safety of the state".

It was with these words that the nightmare began for many. Imagine, Canadians, some of Italian origin, others whose names sounded Italian, or just because they had Italian friends were designated as enemy aliens. They were forced by the RCMP to register their names and report to the RCMP on a monthly basis. In some cases travel restrictions were imposed upon them. Others had their assets seized by the state, while various Italian organizations were declared illegal, as was the teaching of the Italian language.

It was common for police forces to arrest and detain individuals they deemed to be security risks for no reason. These actions were enforced randomly based solely on ethnicity and affected anyone whose name ended in a vowel. This meant that Italians and non-Italians alike had to spend nights in jail.

These measures caused severe damage to the psyche of Italian communities in Canada. Within the Italian community there was a tremendous respect for authority and therefore a tendency to defer to authority figures, even in incidents where there were abuses. This was compounded by the fact that Italians simply wanted to fit in to their new homeland and be viewed as good Canadians by their compatriots. While there was a certain degree of indignation within the community, they mostly felt shame, so they suffered in silence.

But this bill does not only speak to those individuals. This bill speaks to the most tragic part of the story. It is the story of over 1,000

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persons of Italian origin. I speak of those who were subjected to internment in prison camps, mainly in Petawawa, picked up in the middle of the night, put on a train and sent to prison camps. To those who were never charged, just detained and harassed, the toll that internment took on those individuals and their families is too great to do justice in such a limited amount of time, but their story must be told.

One may ask, what are a few hundred or a thousand people?

First, it is the untold story of an entire community that suffered, a story where many professionals of Italian origin at that time were too embarrassed or scared to be seen as they were, which is Italian, causing many of them to change their names. This dealt a crippling blow to the burgeoning Italian community as a generation of leaders was lost to them.

Second, let us remember the time in history that we are dealing with. During the internment most of those arrested were males, many of whom were the head of their household and the sole breadwinner for their family, which in the late 1930s and early 1940s was far more crippling to a family than it would be today. They were taken away from their families without reason. Mothers and children were left behind to fend for themselves in a land they were still trying to comprehend. They were left on their own with no social programs, no community based organizations, no charter of rights. There was a language barrier. Many were illiterate. There was no government to turn to. Such a dire situation befalling Canadian residents is unthinkable to Canadians today, but this was not the worst of it.

While the detainees were put to work on forced labour projects, such as the construction of roads and the clearing of land, many of their families, already stigmatized by the broader community, isolated themselves from other people of Italian origin as well. In order not to be viewed as a family in dire straits, many families turned inward to avoid further shame. The burden they bore was the heaviest of all, and I ask this chamber, for what reason?

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Why? That the government of the day was shaken by the war is understandable, but it cannot justify the fact that people like James Franceschini were taken from their family. When Mr. Franceschini arrived in Canada in 1906, at the age of 15, he was penniless and spoke no English. He found work and saved what it took to set up his own excavation firm. He became Canada's largest road contractor.

When Canada went to war, Mr. Franceschini founded Dufferin Shipbuilding Company in order to build for the government what was probably the least expensive minesweepers in the country. When Italy declared war with Canada, the government seized the business, arrested James Franceschini and interned him in a camp as the subject of an enemy country.

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Like Mr. Franceschini, most of the internees were people who were important in their community. Their arrest was to serve as an example to other Italian Canadians. The government's action also led ordinary citizens to attack Italians. Italian Canadian businesses were boycotted and employees were ostracized by their colleagues and fired by their employer. Even Italian gravestones were vandalized.

However, despite the blows to Italian Canadians during the war, there is no doubt as to their loyalty to Canada. The community made a significant contribution to the war effort. Many young men volunteered for combat in the Canadian armed forces, and young Italian women supported the war effort through their work for the Canadian Red Cross.

[*English*]

Since World War II, and in the decades after the internment, Italian Canadians continued to embrace Canada just as they had prior. The dream of integrating into their new homeland was pursued anew and the contributions they have made to Canadian society in fields such as arts, politics, business, sports, science, the humanities and any other sector one could think of has been of great benefit to Canada.

It is also true that Canadians have become aware of issues pertaining to human rights and cultural diversity over the years and, as a result, the inherent injustice of the actions taken against people of Italian origin as a result of being designated "enemy aliens" is evident to all Canadians who are aware of this issue.

As we are more enlightened now than we once were, I think that resistance to addressing this issue is nothing short of ridiculous. We know what happened and we know that what happened was wrong, so I have one question. Since 1940, why has a Canadian prime minister not stood in this chamber and apologized?

The Government of Canada has issued official apologies through the prime minister and this House of Commons to groups such as Chinese Canadians, Indian Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians and Japanese Canadians who were also interned during World War II, and our country has been strengthened in each instance because we did the right thing. Why will we not do the same for Italian Canadians? Why does the government continue to pit groups against each other for justice and recognition? Is there a moratorium on doing the right thing that I am not aware of or does the government believe that the injustice visited upon Italian Canadians during World War II was too insignificant to warrant a proper apology?

This is an apology for Canadians by Canadians. It is time for the Government of Canada to do the right thing and offer an apology in the House of Commons for the internment of persons of Italian origin during World War II.

[*Translation*]

This is why, in essence, we must pass this bill. As the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, a riding that has the highest concentration of people of Italian extraction in the country, I can assure you that my electors and my community feel the situation has gone on long enough and must be resolved once and for all.

[*English*]

The Italian community is united on this issue. They have been patient, and perhaps too patient as there are very few, if any,

individuals alive out there today who were interned, but many of their children who also bore the brunt of this injustice and experienced this firsthand are still with us. Any action taken to address the suffering caused by the internment of their parents would be more meaningful if we could look them in the eye when that action is taken.

It would be tragic if we continued to allow a generation of Canadians to remain unaware of their own history. For better or for worse, it is our history and we must claim ownership of it. The longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to reclaim it. Soon it will be lost to us forever and with this the opportunity to better ourselves. Time is not on our side in this instance.

Again, this would not only be for the benefit of one ethnic community but for our entire country. If history has taught us anything, it is that those who forget the mistakes of the past are doomed to repeat them.

One wonderful thing about Canada is that it is a brave country. We have always had enough courage to look at ourselves objectively, recognize our flaws, own up to our mistakes and take up difficult challenges before they become too immense to handle. Every time we have done so, our country has benefited immensely.

This is why my bill proposes that the Government of Canada officially recognizes, apologizes and provides restitution that should be based on the agreement in place, signed on November 12, 2005 between the Government of Canada and the Italian Canadian community of which the signatories were the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, the National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association, the Order Sons of Italy of Canada and La Fondation communautaire canadienne italienne du Québec which called for the Government of Canada to pay \$12.5 million in restitution to the Italian Canadian community for the internment of Italian Canadians during World War II.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

I am sure we can correct the error that the internment of Italian Canadians represents. To this end, I propose the production of educational materials relating to Italian-Canadian history and promoting ethnic and racial harmony and also providing an account of internments during the second world war and of the contributions Italian Canadians made to the advancement of Canada.

I propose as well that a stamp or series of stamps be issued by Canada Post. This would be the ideal way to make this story known across the country, since the process is simple, established and requires no additional investment.

[*English*]

I will close on a more personal note. My personal story is but a footnote in the ever-growing book of Canadian history but it is indicative of the progress Canadians of Italian origin have made over the years as a result of living in such a wonderful country.

This story does have a dark chapter that stands starkly in contrast with all the others. I say it is time to write a new ending to this chapter. Even if it is 69 years after the fact, we must acknowledge, apologize and redress the wrongs of the past so we can turn the page once and for all on this dark chapter in Canadian history.

I am a proud Canadian, born and bred, but I do not see this as being my battle but my country's battle to win the war against the most insidious enemy there is, and that is apathy. It is what stops a good person from being moved to fight against what they know is wrong. I have the honour of going to work every day and serving my country while honouring my heritage. My constituents and community have put their faith in me and I must always be willing to stand up against what I know is wrong to justify their trust.

All I am doing here today is standing up against what I know is wrong and I hope the good people who fill this chamber choose to stand with me.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while I was the president of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians, I spent a great deal of time trying to get the Government of Canada, at the time and subsequently, to address these issues.

I must say that when the previous government decided to apologize to the Japanese community, and then the current government to the Chinese-Canadian community, I was angry and hurt. When I asked a member why, on the day when the government chose to apologize to the people on the ship, *Komagata Maru*, and others, that it did not include the Italian Canadians and the member looked blank.

I want to ask my colleague a question. Last week the government announced that it would be setting up an advisory committee with members of the Italian community for historical recognition and to set up some projects. It has chosen three members of the community and so on but none of it has to do with apologies. Is this belated action on the part of the government as a result of his private member's bill, which I think it is? Also, what good does it do when—

• (1835)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, in terms of the announcement that was made last week it was in typical Conservative fashion. One of the members chosen to be on the advisory board is the president of the Conservative Party association in my riding. The government was supposed to name seven people but it was not able to find seven people so it named three.

I have a press release put out by the National Congress of Italian-Canadians which reads, "A shameful attempt to divide and conquer". That explains everything.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1990, then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney actually apologized to Italian Canadians on behalf of the government. He further pledged that we would not go down that road again and he accepted the principle of redress.

I also note that it was a Liberal prime minister who actually identified Italian Canadians as enemies—

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Mr. Massimo Pacetti: You're full of shit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The member may continue.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the hon. member would withdraw his comments and I will give him an opportunity to do that.

I wonder if the hon. member could outline for me the progress that was made during the St. Laurent government, the Pearson government, the Trudeau government, the Chrétien government and the Martin government. I know that hon. gentleman was elected in 2000. I wonder what initiatives he brought forward and what initiatives previous Liberal governments brought forward with respect to redress.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I will take back the comment I made. I just cannot handle this partisanship.

This apology is long overdue. There have been Liberal governments and Conservative governments. An injustice was done in the past. The Italian community has not been up to par in handling the situation. We are now asking for redress.

I must correct the member. I was elected in 2002 and tabled a private member's bill on this subject in 2002.

In fact, I will give him credit. Forty-five years later, Brian Mulroney said that it was legally wrong and immoral and he was asked to repeat that in a public place. He said that in a private meeting. I have an excerpt of that speech, but nothing has been done. I do not understand why I need to table this bill when there was recognition made by the previous Liberal government, but an election was called.

All I am asking is for the Conservatives to continue doing that work. That member, who is of Italian origin, should be ashamed of himself for making partisanship an issue on this.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know this is a passionate issue for the member who has moved the bill. The government has shown over the last few years, in terms of redress, apology, and acknowledgement of where we as a country. In some dark moments, we have made some mistakes and we have acknowledged those mistakes. I would ask him only the same that he has asked of everyone in this House, and that is to treat this as an issue that is not partisan but as an issue that is a private member's bill.

I will note that in his speech he did certainly point out a number of issues that were critical of the government, so while he did respond in his answers in a way that suggests non-partisanship, it may do him a bit of good to have a look at his speech, reread it, and have a clear understanding that it too holds facts regarding partisanship. If we are going to work through this issue, it has to be the same on all sides.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill C-302, an act to recognize the historic injustice done to Italian Canadians who were interned during World War II.

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Let me begin by saying that, with over 1.4 million members, the Italian Canadian community has made an enormous contribution to the building of our nation. In the trades, in the professions and through their rich and colourful culture, Italian Canadians have made an indelible mark on our vibrant, ethnically diverse society.

The internment of 632 people of Italian origin as enemy aliens during the second world war was unquestionably a dark moment in our country's history. Families were separated and civil liberties were denied. Even those not interned were required to register with the local police.

Measures have already been taken to recognize the historical experiences of this community related to the second world war internment. We have chosen to take a comprehensive, forward-looking approach to recognizing the historical experiences of communities affected by wartime measures, including the Italian Canadian community.

That is why on June 22, 2006, our government announced that it would create the community historical recognition program and the national historical recognition program. This government is taking an inclusive approach. We have created a program that will provide funding to all groups that were subject to unjust wartime detention or immigration restrictions.

Formally established in 2008, the community historical recognition program is a grants and contributions program, funded by \$29 million over a period of four years. It supports projects, for example, that acknowledge and commemorate the experience of ethnocultural communities affected by wartime measures and immigration restrictions or prohibitions that were applied in Canada; increase awareness and educate Canadians about the experiences of these communities; and finally, highlight the contributions the affected communities made to the building of our country. Projects eligible for funding include: monuments, commemorative plaques, educational materials and exhibits.

The national historical recognition program is a \$5 million program that funds federal initiatives focused on increasing awareness and educating all Canadians, especially our youth, to educate them about Canada's history linked to wartime measures and immigration restrictions or prohibitions. This is twice the amount the previous government agreed to in the agreement in principle signed in the final days of that government.

Our government is focused on working with members of all communities that were affected by discriminatory measures. We welcome input from everyone and we are happy to work with our community partners. Since elected, this government has become more open and inclusive. Everything from our measures to increase accountability and transparency to our active outreach to members of cultural communities has shown that all of us in this House are committed to working with Canadians from all backgrounds.

Many years ago, when my parents immigrated to this country, they were accepted by the Canadian people and they had the opportunity to work hard, build their lives, and raise their children in a welcoming environment. Native-born Canadians respected the culture of our newcomers.

● (1840)

To this day, in my region of Niagara we celebrate our cultural diversity during the annual folk arts festival, which our government has contributed to generously. Indeed, last year it gave it the largest federal contribution it has ever received. With the help of this government, all of the people of the Niagara region have the opportunity to celebrate their diverse cultures, from Dutch to Scottish, from Polish to Somalian, to Italian, representing the mosaic that is my community.

On the national level, our government has been solidly committed to celebrating Canada's multicultural heritage. Whether native cultures, settler cultures or those who immigrated later, our government is committed to celebrating the accomplishments of everyone who has helped to build our country.

We are also committed to recognizing instances when in fact we did not live up to our high ideals and treated people poorly based on their ancestry or culture. That is why we launched the community historical recognition program and are committed to recognizing past instances of concern, and working with members of affected communities to give appropriate recognition to these instances.

Since the announcement of this program in 2006, representatives of this government have met and been in discussions with the Italian Canadian community. For instance, the former minister of Canadian heritage met with representatives of the community in November 2006, provided an overview of the community historical recognition program, and gave the community an opportunity to express its views on historical recognition.

The current Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, in his previous capacity as secretary of state for multiculturalism, has also had several discussions with Italian Canadian representatives and through the community historical recognition program this government has made available over \$5 million in grants and contributions over four years to fund projects that commemorate and recognize the experience and experiences of Italian Canadians in relation to the second world war internment in our country.

This \$5 million is twice as much as was in the agreement in principle of the previous government. This program is currently accepting funding applications. In fact, the deadline for submitting an application is May 22 of this year and I would encourage any interested groups to submit their applications in terms of their requests.

One more important component of this program is the establishment of individual advisory committees composed of community representatives. These committees ensure that the program is responsive to the sensitivities of communities and that their views are reflected in the types of projects that are selected for funding.

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I am pleased to observe that the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has appointed an advisory committee of Italian Canadian community representatives to provide advice to him on the merits of the projects. I heard from the member and if there are concerns or if there is work to be done on this committee, I offer it to him today. I extend my hand to try to work with him to make that advisory a strong functioning entity. I am certainly prepared to meet with him on that issue.

Through programs such as the community historical recognition program and the national historical recognition program, we are working to ensure that our nation's history is reflective of the valuable contribution that all ethnocultural communities, including Italian Canadians, have made to the building of our country.

It is important and imperative that at the end of the day we are an inclusive government and whether we sit on the government side or in opposition, that we work together to ensure that we are an inclusive group that leads our country from Ottawa.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their “enemy alien” designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history. Bill C-302 is intended to right the wrongs that were done through the internment of Canadians of Italian origin during the second world war. The Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-302 and will also support the necessary restitution.

Italians started to migrate to Canada around 1880 and settled all over the country. Many came to Montreal and that is why Our Lady of Defense parish was established in 1910 to serve the community in its own language.

Our Lady of Defense church is located in the heart of Little Italy in my riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and is considered the oldest church still standing that was built expressly for the Italian community in Montreal. More than 2,000 Quebecers of Italian origin still live in the riding of Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and their community has made many contributions to it over the years.

The RCMP began to investigate Italians living in Canada in 1935 when Mussolini invaded and occupied Ethiopia. At the time, there were as many as 3,000 members of the Italian fascist party in Canada.

On June 10, 1940, Italy declared war on Canada. Immediately thereafter, Prime Minister MacKenzie King ordered the internment of many Italians living in Canada, using the War Measures Act. This legislation allowed the government to take all measures necessary to ensure Canada's national security against enemies within our borders. The Minister of Justice could therefore detain anyone who posed any kind of threat to national security. This decision by the federal government enabled the Canadian authorities to intern all nationals or immigrants from enemy countries.

After Canada entered the war against Italy, the RCMP quickly took steps to restrict the liberties and activities of Italians in Canada. All persons born in Italy had to register with the authorities. Some

were forced to report monthly. They could not move about freely within Canada and had to carry identity cards with them at all times. All Italian associations were closed. As many as 700 Italian Canadians were interned in camps for the duration of the war. Most of these internees came from towns in Ontario and Quebec. Some spent two or three months there, others several years.

It is important to remember our history. In addition, there was a general boycott of Italian businesses all across Canada.

The Italian Canadians affected by these measures were never accused of anything or found guilty of anything. They were greatly penalized even though they were innocent. The measures taken by the government of the time were an injustice to Italian Canadians. I want to say that today.

● (1850)

This is why the Bloc Québécois feels that this community deserves apologies. What is more, there is already a precedent for it: the Canadians of Japanese origin who were interned during World War II.

The internment of Italian Canadians is similar to the treatment of Canadian citizens of Japanese origin during the second world war. Like the Italians, their first waves of immigration date back to the 19th century. These immigrants were often poor, and spoke neither French nor English. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the Canadian government's immediate reaction was to confiscate the fishing boats of the Japanese Canadian residents of British Columbia.

On February 26, 1942, the Canadian Department of Defence declared that all Canadians of Japanese origin, regardless of whether they were or were not recent arrivals, were considered enemy aliens. People of Japanese origin were relocated to detention camps in the B.C. interior, in Alberta and in Manitoba.

Because of this injustice, in September 1988, the federal government decided to offer its apologies to Canadians of Japanese origin who had been interned in the detention camps.

Of course there were far more Japanese Canadian internees than Italian Canadians. Nonetheless we feel that what is good for the one has to be good for the other. The Japanese precedent leads us believe that apologies must in fact be made to Italian Canadians. What is more, that case can serve as an example for the compensation to be offered to a foundation for commemoration purposes.

The Bloc Québécois is therefore in favour of Bill C-302 in principle. We recognize the wrong done to Italian Canadians during the second world war. The war measures legislation sent numerous innocent people to the internment camps. We therefore support the principle of an apology and some compensation for Italian Canadians.

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However, on November 12, 2005, the Government of Canada and the Italian community in Canada reached an agreement in principle.

That agreement in principle was drafted jointly by the Canadian government and the Italian community, and acknowledged that there would be no apology or compensation. According to that agreement, the government set aside \$25 million over three years for the Canadian Heritage multiculturalism program. The purpose of that program is to encourage the recognition and commemoration of ethnocultural communities affected by wartime measures.

In addition, the government planned to provide the National Congress of Italian Canadians Foundation with \$2.5 million under the acknowledgement, commemoration and education program

Bill C-302 does not specify the amounts of compensation to be paid. This is why we would like to see this bill studied in committee in order to determine the amount to be paid, taking into consideration what the Canadian government has already paid out.

Our party is very pleased today to support Bill C-302. We are anxious to have an opportunity to debate it in parliamentary committee.

• (1855)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak tonight to Bill C-302, An Act to recognize the injustice that was done to persons of Italian origin through their "enemy alien" designation and internment during the Second World War, and to provide for restitution and promote education on Italian-Canadian history.

The New Democrats are pleased to support this bill and to help move this through Parliament.

On September 3, 1939, the Government of Canada issued regulations that empowered the minister of justice with the full authority to act as he chose to destroy any sign of subdivision during a time of war. This allowed him to detain, without trial, any person and created a class of aliens who were not foreign nationals but were Canadian citizens.

On June 10, 1940, Italy declared war on Canada. That very evening Prime Minister Mackenzie King announced that he had ordered the internment of hundreds of Italian Canadians identified by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police as enemy aliens. That order was applied to Italians who became British subjects after September 1, 1922.

The government also established a judicial mechanism to administer internment proceedings. It passed an order in council which ensured the registration of all people of Italian birth. Furthermore the office of the custodian of alien property was authorized to confiscate the property of enemy aliens.

Like the internment of Japanese Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, German Canadians and others, the forced registration and internment of Italian Canadians is a sad chapter in our history.

The RCMP rounded up approximately 700 Italian Canadians, often separating fathers from their children and husbands from their

families. Seventeen thousand people were designated as enemy aliens in our country for no reason other than their birth.

There was no reason to suspect that those interned posed any threat to Canada or Canadians. In fact, many of them were first world war veterans who had fought for their adopted country. It was not uncommon for instance for men in uniform to come back home only to find that family members were interned.

The round-up of Italian Canadians was virtually completed by October 1940. Most of them were sent to Camp Petawawa situated in the Ottawa River Valley. It is difficult to establish exactly how many Italian Canadians were interned, although estimates range from 600 to 700.

Although the majority of those interned were from the areas of highest concentrations of Italian Canadians at that time, Montreal, Toronto and other centres in Ontario, there were also documented cases from western Canada.

Internment was brutal. Families could not visit or write interned people for the first year. Italian Canadians were penalized financially. A spontaneous boycott of Italian businesses whipped up by the prejudices of the times took place throughout Canada and provincial governments ordered municipalities to terminate relief payments to non-naturalized Italians. Travel restrictions were imposed on Italian Canadians. Their ability to occupy certain jobs was prohibited. Italian Canadians were forced to report on a monthly basis to the RCMP. Activities such as the teaching of the Italian language and meetings of the Roma Society were declared illegal.

Internment was for up to three years and the average interned person was held for almost sixteen months. To put some feelings to this, these are not just numbers. The people interned were doctors, lawyers, carpenters, bakers, contractors and priests. For families, of course, it was just as bad if not worse. These actions added to the psychological scars inflicted by constant harassment and ridicule from neighbours and co-workers and the fearmongering being perpetrated by elected officials.

The federal government went further. It froze bank accounts. It forced Italian Canadian families to subsist on \$12 a month. Many Italian families were forced to sell homes, businesses and valuable assets.

• (1900)

Despite this, a number of Italian Canadians enlisted in the Canadian armed forces, some in an attempt to remove the stigma associated with the term "illegal alien". Not one person was ever charged with sabotage or any act of disloyalty. We must acknowledge and make amends for that black chapter in Canadian history.

In 1990 the National Congress of Italian-Canadians outlined these injustices in a brief sent to then Prime Minister Mulroney. It wanted the injustice acknowledged, compensation paid and an apology.

Various steps have been taken to acknowledge and make amends for this disgraceful treatment. Former Prime Minister Mulroney did indeed apologize in 1990. He spoke about reparations. Former Prime Minister Paul Martin also promised reparations. Sadly, many of these commitments were simply empty promises. Despite these words, money has never really flown.

Money was announced with great fanfare and media attention, but successive governments did not think it was worthwhile to dedicate the time and energy to follow up on honouring their pledges and ensuring that Italian Canadians could access these funds.

In June 2008, just prior to the election I might add, the minister of Canadian heritage announced \$5 million through a community historical recognition program that was specifically targeted to the Italian community for monuments, plaques, and community recognition projects around this issue.

I have spoken to members in the Italian Canadian community and to the National Congress of Italian-Canadians. Many did not even know about this fund; even fewer have applied for access to it. I cannot locate anybody who has received \$1 from this fund, despite the fact that it was announced.

New Democrats support the bill because it seeks to raise awareness, educate our young people, and ensure that we never forget the terrible steps that we took in the name of national security. We must remember our actions during times of war because we face similar issues today.

It is not very long ago that we saw the actions of former President George Bush in the United States, in fact, actions that were copied by the previous Conservative and Liberal governments. We are well advised to guard our civil liberties today and in times of war or apprehended insurrection, because those are the times when our civil liberties are at risk.

These Italian victims would want this and their descendants today want this. We have a new term today for what happened in 1940, it is called racial profiling. People were rounded up simply because of their ethnicity. There is a lesson in that, when racial profiling is going on in 2009 in this country. We had better be vigilant to make sure that we stop it here today.

I would like to mention a few people who have done a great amount of work in this area. Mr. Elio Quattrocchi is a tireless and respected member of the Italian Canadian community in Vancouver. I want to speak about the people who work at Casa Serena, a home for seniors who come together in culture and recreation. I want to mention the thriving businesses on Commercial Drive, run by the same Italian entrepreneurs who were rounded up in 1940. I would like to mention the tireless efforts of the National Congress of Italian-Canadians.

There are other people, too. I would like to mention Mr. Victor Wong from the Chinese Canadian National Council, who has fought for redress and is still fighting for redress for full and adequate compensation for the families of Chinese head tax payers.

I was not in the last Parliament, but I understand the power of apology, redress and acknowledgment. I am told that during the

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residential schools apology, this was one of the most moving moments ever felt by members of Parliament.

● (1905)

The New Democrats and the CCF have stood alone in this country over the decades against internment and the War Measures Act and in favour of civil liberties. We New Democrats will do so again today and are proud to do it. We will stand and support this bill to ensure that Italian Canadians—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will start by saying that the major issue is not about money but it is about recognition, acknowledging what has happened and apologizing to the community.

Some members on the government side earlier pointed out the fact that there was nothing done when the Liberals were in government. That is true.

● (1910)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: That's right.

Hon. Maria Minna: Mr. Speaker, it is true that over the years Mr. Caccia and some of us tried but it did not happen because the government at the time agreed with the legal advice that this would cause problems. However, on November 12, 2005, under Mr. Martin's government, there was an agreement with all of the communities, not just one but all of them, for retribution, acknowledgement and an apology.

That is not what the Conservative government has done. It has chosen one group over another. When it decided to apologize to the Chinese Canadian community, I was pleased but also very hurt and disheartened that the Italian community was left out. When it apologized to the people who had been on the *Komagata Maru* ship that was moored off the shores of Vancouver, I was pleased but again, the Italian community was left out.

This is not a new issue. The CBC has done a major documentary on this. As the president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians, I held this file for quite some time. Everyone knows some of the facts. Men lost businesses. I know an individual whose business was taken away from him. He was arrested and the business was sold for \$1 to someone else, obviously not of Italian background, and he was never ever convicted of anything. People were never charged for anything. In fact, men were brought in front of a judge who eventually resigned. He thought the whole thing was a sham because there was never any evidence of any kind against any of these people.

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Canadian citizens, people who were born here, were held. One whom I knew personally was a professor at the University of Toronto. People were fingerprinted. The women and children who were left in the city and declared enemy aliens were fingerprinted, treated like enemies of the state. They were spat on. They were treated horribly. They could not get jobs. Think of the shame and humiliation they felt. When I came to this country in 1957, Italians who were here before me would not talk about themselves or their past.

Canadian-born children were held because they had parents of Italian origin. I remember one child in the documentary who was maybe 15 years old when he was taken to Petawawa. Illiterate people were accused of being spies. Imagine that. Families would receive mail stamped "POW", prisoners of war. The stories continued even after the war was over. The charade continued for a long time. The names of these people were kept in archives as if they were criminals.

I worked on this file for a very long time. For the information of hon. members across the way, I worked with the German community, the Ukrainian community, and the Chinese Canadian community. After the Japanese Canadian community received its apology, we decided that we would work together to try to get the Mulroney government to do the same for the rest of the communities as he had done with the Japanese Canadian community. That was not done.

As a member of the Italian Canadian community, I spent 20 years working as a volunteer for immigrant rights in the city of Toronto. A large part of that work was with Italian Canadians. There was extreme shame felt by those people. Most Italian Canadian kids did not know their heritage. Their parents would not tell them because of the shame they felt. I did not know about that until I became the president of the congress. I was in my thirties.

This is not about money. It is about apologies. It is about taking away the shame and acknowledging the people who were born here. They were all Canadian citizens. They were not foreigners. They were citizens of this country. This is about Canadians apologizing to Canadians. What happened should never have happened and it is high time we did that.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am quite honoured to rise to speak on Bill C-302, which was introduced in the House by my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel. As an Italian citizen, I am proud that a member of my caucus has introduced this piece of legislation.

I would like to read a statement that was issued yesterday, March 23, 2009, in Montreal, by the National Congress of Italian Canadians, responding to the Conservative government's announcement regarding the community historical recognition program. It is entitled, "A Shameful Attempt to Divide and Conquer".

The National Congress of Italian Canadians (NCIC) deploras the manner in which the minister of immigration, citizenship and multiculturalism...has chosen to bypass the legitimate community organizations who have been negotiating with the Government in good faith to arrive at a fair and equitable resolution on the issue of redress for the internment of Italian Canadians during World War II. The establishment of an advisory committee within the Community Historical Recognition program is an attempt to create division within the Italian Canadian community.

"The NCIC does not in any way consider that this program and the establishment of an advisory committee settle the community's historical claims on the issue of internment," said Michael Stante, President of the National Congress of Italian Canadians.

The Agreement in principle of November 12, 2005, between the Government of Canada and the Italian Canadian Community, as represented by the National Congress of Italian Canadians, the National Federation of Canadian Italian Business and Professional Associations, the Order Sons of Italy and the Fondation communautaire canadienne-italienne, did answer the concerns of our community. That agreement, reached within the parameters of the ACE program, provided a settlement in the sum of \$12.5 million to be administered by the community through the NCIC Foundation. This would be in keeping with the administrative process which has been put in place for the Ukrainian-Canadian community. Unfortunately, the current Canadian Government unilaterally breached the Agreement without notice nor consultation and introduced a new program which is totally unacceptable to our community.

Mr. Speaker, you have told me my time is virtually up. In the next part, where I am able to complete my time, I will finish reading this statement. However, I would like to take five seconds to underline the contribution of the Liberal member for Etobicoke Centre, who worked on the development of the ACE program.

• (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The member will have two minutes remaining when this matter comes before the House again.

The time provided for the consideration of private member's business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this evening's adjournment debate concerns a question I asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage on February 3, to which I did not receive a satisfactory answer.

I asked about cultural programs that were cut, such as Trade Routes and PromArt, which helped our artists travel abroad.

In his budget, the minister chose to spend \$25 million on the so-called Canada prizes for the arts and creativity to bring foreign artists here and give them bursaries. The whole idea struck us as completely absurd and illogical seeing as our own artists have just had their funding for essential cultural activities cut by \$45 million. I will come back to that later.

Now this government is spending \$25 million on bursaries—some of them worth six figures, that is, between \$100,000 and \$200,000—for foreign artists. That money is earmarked for foreign artists, while our own artists struggle with poor working conditions and low incomes. On average, our artists earn \$22,000 per year.

What is more, these Canada prizes for the arts and creativity are the brainchild of two Toronto lobbyists who have had a great deal of influence on the government. In fact, the Conservative government's budget contains a complete word for word copy of the Luminato promotion from last summer. It is pretty amazing that the government's budget would be written by lobbyists. This government claims to be transparent, but we can see that it is not. Its first step when first elected in 2006 was to pass Bill C-2 in order to distance itself from lobbyists.

What is more, the Canada prizes project is a sham. It includes a list of so-called partners prepared to support this project and help Luminato to carry it out. Obviously, two lobbyists working down in their garage cannot set up a \$25 million project by themselves. The partners, some of them as well known as the Grands Ballets Canadiens and Cirque de Soleil, had never heard of this project, or had heard very little. They were, in fact, not partners at all.

I am asking the minister to explain his logic to us. Before funding foreign artists to come here to Canada, should he not be funding artists from here so that they can go abroad? Now, and there is no denying it, there is a huge hole in this department's funding, so huge that performing artists can no longer tour outside the country.

• (1920)

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak to this question. The Bloc Québécois has no legitimacy on this issue at all. In fact, it has no legitimacy on any arts and culture issue because it continues to vote against arts and culture in Canada.

No matter how much money we put in, and our government has invested more money in arts and culture than any government in Canadian history, the Bloc has chosen to vote against artists. It has no interest in talking about the truth. It does not even have any interest in listening to the Canada Council for the Arts on the money that it is investing in promoting arts abroad.

This is really about that. It should be about truth, but it is not. In fact, it is about manipulation. It is about trying to get a partisan gain, trying to cut things up, pit people against people. That is the Bloc's game on this. Our government is investing more money in arts and culture, into artists, into festivals, into the support of artists and into the generation of new artists in our country than any government in history.

I cannot understand why the member continues to stand every day and spin the tales that she weaves. It is clearly not true.

I listened to what she had to say with respect to the Canada Prize. She said that why not just spend all the money sending our artists abroad, that why would we want to bring any artists here and that why would any artists come to Canada and be capable of winning a prize or earning any money.

Is that not the essence of trade? Is that not the essence of exporting our arts, that we might actually open our ears, our eyes, our hearts and our minds to international artists as well? Is that not something worth promoting in our country? Is it not worth promoting

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excellence? Is it not worth promoting that type of culture right here in Canada, that we are centre of excellence?

That is my Canada. It is not the Bloc's Canada. I do not know what the Bloc is really after. It is really just about divide and conquer. For me it is about building, it is about uniting and it is about supporting arts. Our government is about that.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc has full legitimacy when it comes to defending Quebec artists. It was a Conservative member who publicly stated that, in Quebec, the Bloc Québécois defends culture and artists, and that this government was not buddy-buddy with the artists. It continues to prove it by making unjustified, vicious cuts to funding for artists.

This is not a fiction. We heard this at committee hearings held in recent weeks. CINARS, which represents 300 performing arts organizations throughout Canada, told the committee just how desperate the situation is. The Grands ballets canadiens will be forced to cancel important tours. INIS and Regroupement québécois de la danse also testified. This is not a fiction but a tragedy and we have to fix it.

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, of course arts and culture is not exempt from the challenges that we see in other places in the economy. However, one thing I can say and one thing the Bloc member will never say, because she has no interest in saying this but it is the truth, is no government has ever provided more support to arts and culture in this country than the one of which I am a part.

If the Bloc brought forward its budget, although it will never bring forward a budget because it will never be in government, and if it actually saw something behind arts and culture that it would support, I would be surprised. It voted against a budget to put more support into arts and culture than any budget in history.

It is indefensible. I hope artists rise up and vote largely against the Bloc because it does not support them.

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some time ago I rose in the House during question period and asked a question of the Conservative government, given the history of a Prime Minister stating that there is no recession, given that if there were going to be a recession we would already be in a recession, and given that the Minister of Finance was coming out in November with a disastrous and completely unrealistic economic and fiscal update. And it goes on and on. My question was, how can Canadians believe the Conservative government when its numbers are always contradicted by experts?

The answer I received from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance was basically that there are lots of experts in here. Some have projected high; some have projected low. Then he quoted from Dale Orr, a very respected economist from Global Insight who said, "The budget overall was a pretty reasonable compromise. The best thing to do is to pass it and get on with it and get things moving as quickly as possible".

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In the 2009 budget the Conservative economic action plan claimed that it would create or maintain close to 100,000 net Canadian jobs and yet there has been no mention of that job figure since. What are economists saying to date on the rosy forecasts that were predicted and are still being predicted by the Conservative Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance?

David Dodge is calling the Prime Minister's prediction that Ottawa will be back in surplus by 2013 "totally unrealistic". David Dodge also says the economic recovery "is not going to be as quick as everybody thinks". He says, "I think anybody would be dreaming in Technicolor to think that you're going to get through this by the third quarter of this year". He also says, "And the rest of the world, including the United States, is probably not going to recover as quickly coming out of this recession as it did coming out of 1982 or coming out of 1990-91 recession".

Don Drummond of the TD Bank calculates that Canada's federal debt will swell by \$81.5 billion over the next two years, which is more than the Conservative government has calculated it will increase. In fact, when the Conservative Minister of Finance tabled his budget 2009, he predicted that the debt would grow by \$63 billion.

Don Drummond of the TD Bank says the government will produce an "all-time high deficit of \$39.2 billion in fiscal 2009-10 and \$42.3 billion in fiscal 2010-11, well above the red ink of \$33.7 billion and \$29.8 billion shown in the budget".

Experts have spoken and what they are saying is that the forecasts and predictions of the Conservative government are not realistic. In fact, Canada is shedding jobs 50% faster than the United States over the same period of time. Canadians are going to want real accountability from the government with its economic action plan.

●(1925)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is disappointing that the member opposite does not understand the problem at hand. It is also disappointing that she does not truly acknowledge that this is a global recession, one that started beyond our borders.

As RBC chief economist, Craig Wright, has noted, this was not a made in Canada recession.

Or, to quote her own leader speaking at the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce just last week, "I have never blamed the Prime Minister for causing this recession. I'm partisan, but I'm not stupid".

What is more disappointing is that the member will not admit that Canada entered this downturn in a very strong position, something that will ensure we exit it in a stronger than most position.

If the member does not believe me, maybe she should listen to the overwhelming majority of experts, experts like BMO Capital Markets chief economist, Douglas Porter, who recently declared, "Canada did go into this downturn with almost pristine fundamentals and...I think that those pristine fundamentals do suggest that Canada will hold up a little bit better than other economies and probably will emerge a little bit stronger than other economies".

However, we must also recognize that, despite our strengths, Canada has not been immune from the global downturn and will continue to be affected.

This will be an extremely difficult year for many Canadians. We regrettably have seen and will continue to see sizeable job losses.

While we sympathize with Canadians, we believe Canadians want more from their government than merely sympathy. They want action.

Clearly, a recovery in the global economy, especially the United States, is a necessary requirement for a sustained recovery, which is why we are working with our international partners to help facilitate that.

The finance minister was in London recently with his G20 counterparts for that very reason, and the Prime Minister will continue that work at the upcoming G20 leaders' meeting.

In the interim, we will do everything necessary to help the Canadian economy. After the most exhaustive prebudget consultation with Canadians ever, we introduced the earliest budget ever: Canada's economic action plan, a plan to support job creation now while laying down the groundwork for long term prosperity by: first, reducing personal income taxes permanently; second, supporting businesses through targeted tax measures and investments; and, third, investing in major job creating projects that will improve our roads, highways, bridges and public transit, as well as improving access to financing for Canadian individuals and businesses, investing in electronic health records that will reduce errors and save lives and providing new support and skills training for the unemployed, including five extra weeks of EI.

This is a real plan. Canadian businesses, premiers and public interest groups have all supported our plan, as well as Parliament endorsing it.

It was also endorsed by the IMF, which called it "large, timely, and well-targeted fiscal stimulus...appropriately sized—well above the Fund's benchmark of 2 percent of GDP".

●(1930)

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, once again the government makes a statement, makes a commitment, makes a promise and then, all of a sudden, it drops off the radar screen.

In Canada's economic action plan, in budget 2009, and I have a copy of the overview pamphlet, it states, "Budget 2009 will create or maintain up to 190,000 jobs for Canadians by the end of 2010". A little further down, it states, "Over the next two years, Canada's economic action plan will produce a net increase of 190,000 jobs".

We have not heard anything since then about the 190,000 jobs. Every time we ask the question during question period, the Conservatives hide from it.

Over the last two months, Canada has lost 212,000 jobs. Montreal alone lost 16,000 jobs in February.

I fail to see what the laughing matter is when I hear members of the government laughing when I make that statement. I would like to know what the government intends to do on those—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, sadly, the Liberals have no plan to deal with the current global downturn. Criticizing our plan and talking down Canada's economy is not a plan. Canadians deserve better. Canadians deserve a Parliament that understands that we are in this together and we need to work together. We have faced economic challenges before and we have always come out stronger. I am confident with our Conservative government's economic leadership, Canada will again.

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To quote *Forbes'* annual best countries for business survey just released:

Some countries are in a much better position than others to rebound from the current malaise by attracting entrepreneurs, investors and workers.

Who are they?...Topping the list for 2009:...Canada is up four spots to No. 3,

And that is a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:34 p.m.)

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