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(HANSARD)

Monday, May 31, 2010

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 31, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)
[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should:

(a) recognize that improved competitiveness will continue to stimulate economic growth and create jobs for Canadians; and

(b) continue to diversify and expand markets for Canadian goods and services by encouraging investment in Canada through lower corporate tax rates, maintaining a stable economy and the signing of free trade agreements.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in support of this motion I would like to highlight a number of the government's initiatives to support a competitive, innovative economy as set out in "Advantage Canada" and as supported by Canada's economic action plan and budget 2010.

The government is committed to improving competitiveness, stimulating economic growth, creating jobs for Canadians, and diversifying and expanding markets for Canadian goods and services particularly in difficult times. It is the right thing to do. It is not enough to have the right idea or the right strategy, it is about implementation, getting it done, and in this regard Canada has made remarkable progress.

Even before the recession, the government laid the foundation for future prosperity through "Advantage Canada", a strategic long-term economic plan designed to improve our economic prosperity. "Advantage Canada" focused on reducing taxes, paying down debt, fostering skills development, investing in roads, bridges, waterways and other vital infrastructure. The government also improved business conditions by implementing corporate tax reductions that are making Canada a more competitive country in which to do business.

In response to the global recession, the government acted quickly to support Canada's economy by introducing new measures under Canada's economic action plan; a comprehensive stimulus package to spur growth, create jobs and contribute to Canada's long-term competitiveness. Our opposition screamed "it's taking too long,

you're not spending enough". Now members are saying we spent too much.

It is important to find the right balance and it appear we have, better than other country because the long-term implication of too much state intervention is renewed inflation, rising interest rates, crowding out of investments, and prolonged sluggish economic performance. Our approach is working, demonstrated by the creation of 12,000 infrastructure programs begun or completed and nearly 285,000 jobs created in Canada in the last 10 months.

Budget 2010 follows through on the economic action plan and introduces new measures to create an environment that promotes investment and innovation, and contributes to enhanced competitiveness. Combined, the economic action plan and budget 2010 support measures to ensure that the conditions are in place for sustained growth. We will continue to deliver results for business. We have enhanced our access to finance through additional resources for the Export Development Corporation and the Business Development Bank of Canada. We have reduced the cost of doing business by eliminating all remaining tariffs on manufactured inputs, machinery and equipment by moving to cut red tape for businesses.

We are also on track to have the lowest statutory corporate income tax in the G7 by 2012. Through budget 2010 and previously introduced measures, we are also striving to improve Canada's appeal as a place for foreign investment. We are also conscious of the need to create the best educated, highest skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world. We are doing so by supporting skills development training and by helping to prepare our citizens for the labour market of today and for the future.

Our plan is the right plan and it is having the desired effect.

Our stimulus plan helped slow the decline in Canada's real GDP in the second quarter of 2009, after two consecutive quarters in recession. In the last quarter of 2009 we had 5% real GDP growth and today Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew 6.1% in the first quarter of 2010. This represents the strongest quarterly rate of growth in a decade.

I am happy to report that our growth forecasts are better than many other countries. Since the worst days of the crisis, we have managed a turnaround.

Private Members' Business

That turnaround was aided in part by the strength of our financial sector. The World Economic Forum says that Canada has the soundest banking system in the world. In contrast to many other countries, none of Canada's banks required any bailout or any taxpayers' money. Even during the worst days of the credit crisis, the health of our financial institutions allowed them to continue to raise equity capital. Our top five banks are among the top 50 in the world. Using capitalization numbers, our three largest insurance companies are among the top 10 in the world. So we should not be glib about the importance of the strength of our financial sector in Canada which is increasingly recognized around the world.

A number of leaders, including President Obama, have praised the Canadian financial system for others to emulate. What is more, the OECD recently singled out our country for praise saying, "Canada looks good—it shines, actually" as did a major CIBC report stating that, "stronger long-term fundamentals of Canada's economy could see the second decade of the 21st century be this country's time to shine".

Our government understands that a competitive Canadian economy depends on enhanced competitiveness, investing in skills and innovation, and getting the domestic framework right. But, it also requires reaching out to partners around the world, as we always have.

When it comes to creating the economy of tomorrow one thing is clear, we are not going to beat China, India or Brazil on wages. We are going to do it through raising productivity standards and through the development of higher-end products and services. In other words, through innovation and by opening new markets for Canadian companies. That is why the government has introduced new measures to diversify and expand markets for Canadian goods and services.

As outlined in the global commerce strategy and the recent Speech from the Throne, the government is pursuing an ambitious international trade agenda aimed at creating jobs and promoting investment for the economy of tomorrow by attracting foreign direct investment from key markets by focusing on priority sectors where Canada has competitive advantages.

When we talk about free trade and expanding markets, we do so because opening doors to trade is in the best interest of Canadians. It is also in the best interest because Canadian businesses, firms and investors are the engines that drive our economy. When businesses succeed, Canadians succeed through jobs, prosperity and a quality of life upon which we all depend.

In addition to improving the climate for business and investing in innovation, the government is expanding market opportunities to move Canada's economy forward. We are doing so by implementing free trade agreements with Peru, the European Free Trade Association, Colombia, Jordan, and Panama, despite some obstructionist opposition and delay tactics of the socialist parties. The isolationist policies of the Bloc and the NDP are the policies of failed economies. Growth in global trade has been largely responsible for the creation of wealth worldwide. Enhancing trade and resisting protectionism are both essential to the new world economy.

We are also doing so by continuing trade negotiations with the European Union, the Republic of Korea, the Caribbean community and other countries of the Americas, while also building our position in Canada's most important market, the United States; by launching free trade negotiations with the Ukraine; by launching a joint study with India to explore the parameters of a possible comprehensive economic partnership; by seeking to become a member of the trans-Pacific partnership negotiations; by pursuing additional air service agreements to achieve more competition, more choice for Canadians and more economic growth; by working to conclude foreign direct investment promotion and protection agreements with a number of countries beyond the existing 23 agreements; by building upon the recent agreement reached on regarding buy American that gives Canadian companies permanent access to state and government procurement in the United States and by tackling remaining impediments to trade such as border delays and regulatory differences; and by opening new offices and adding personnel abroad in key emerging markets, as well as domestically within our own borders.

To put it in straightforward terms, by bringing down barriers to trade and investment, the government will help Canadian businesses compete in an increasingly competitive world while also providing stimulus to the Canadian economy.

This will allow us to innovate and to compete globally. These measures will continue to fuel our economy from the global recession, forge a competitive advantage, support growth and prosperity, and help create the economy of tomorrow.

The next 30 days are going to be remarkable for our country. It is a great time to be a Canadian. The Olympics in Vancouver earlier this year were spectacular and noticed around the world. In June we will host the G8 summit in Muskoka and the G20 summit in Toronto. To quote the Prime Minister from March 2009:

Notwithstanding all the troubles around us, Canada has real advantages, real assets, and we should not hesitate to remind investors, partners and leaders around the world of the comparative strengths of our country.

In this regard, we have been and will continue to implement the strategies to ensure economic recovery and sustainable growth.

•(1110)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his motion. Certainly, there are perspectives in there that I support. I think it would be great if the current government put more effort into improved competitiveness in the renewable and energy efficiency sector. If the government would stop playing favouritism for one narrow sector, we could move forward and join the rest of the world in ensuring a cleaner, more sustainable planet.

Would the member please respond to the recommendations also apparently made by the environment minister to the finance minister on removing the perverse incentives for the oil and gas sector and shifting over toward encouraging a cleaner, more sustainable energy future?

Private Members' Business

Mr. Lee Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member who is always supportive of industries in Alberta. I agree with her that we have improved competitiveness. The general strategy of the government is clearly working. I am delighted with her support. I wish she could convince other members of her caucus to support our free trade initiatives.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for my colleague.

Does he not think that the current economic situation we are in right now is, in large part, due to the fact that bank mergers were not allowed to go ahead by the Liberal government and, second, that the Liberals gave the current Conservative government very good fiscal footing having surplus budgets?

On the issue of moving toward green technologies and modernizing our economy, does he agree with the flowthrough tariff system, that is occurring in Germany as well as in Ontario under Premier McGuinty, that will enable us to incentivize the private sector in moving toward adopting new innovative green technologies?

• (1115)

Mr. Lee Richardson: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, I agree that it has been a large part of Canada's success to have the foundation going into the recession, as I mentioned in my speech, not only the strength of the banks but Canadian regulation regarding banks, that unfortunately, many parts of the world did not have, including our largest trading partner. Canadian banks were, as I said, among the only ones in the world that did not need a bailout or taxpayers' money to get them through this.

There was that foundation but also the foundation of building infrastructure. The hon. member noted the balance in the budgets at the time. Unfortunately, due to the previous Liberal government they were draining the provinces of money for infrastructure, education and other policies that needed to be back-filled by this government when it was elected.

One of the good things about it was the tremendous infrastructure program that we had in a strong fiscal budget back in 2007. We led the recession in infrastructure programs, which set us up not only with the strength of the banks, as the hon. member mentioned, but with the infrastructure that we implemented to really fill in for the loss of infrastructure across the country that had been suffered under the previous Liberal administration.

It turned out to be fortunate for Canada. We brought in that program in order to have that kind of stimulus, \$60 billion in the 2007 budget, to get us through the recession before it began. This was done in a fiscally responsible way.

All of those things combined, yes, I will agree with the member, set Canada up very well and will continue in the future.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to the motion tabled by the member for Calgary Centre.

Much of this motion contains material with which the Liberal Party can agree. We agree with the nice pleasantries about the importance of free trade agreements. It also speaks to the need to diversify our markets, and we agree with that. I would go further to

say that one of the markets into which we have the greatest need for diversification and growth is China. We would be a whole lot further ahead today had the government not taken every opportunity to poke China in the eye.

The problem is the part about the corporate tax cuts, calling for corporate tax cuts at a time of deep deficit. If the motion had read "lower corporate tax rates once Canada could afford them", then I would be happy to vote for it, but that is not what it says.

Similarly, I could have supported this motion a few years ago when Canada was running surpluses and paying down its debt. In fact, a few years ago the Liberal Party was urging the Conservatives to cut the corporate tax rate.

However, as it stands today, the Conservatives are running one of the largest deficits in our country's history. When a situation changes that dramatically, going from surplus to the largest deficit in Canadian history, it is incumbent upon any legislator to re-evaluate what the federal government can afford to do.

Today, unlike four years ago, the Government of Canada will have to borrow more and more money in order to proceed with these corporate tax cuts. In that sense, the motion itself is a little bit contradictory. It calls for maintaining a stable economy while simultaneously calling for more and more government debt. As we have seen in Europe, governments that cannot get a handle on their debt quickly discover that the effects of that debt on the economy are quite real.

The smart move today would be to make the tough choices, balance the budget and then cut the corporate tax rate. That is how the Liberals have done it in the past. In the mid-1990s, as Jean Chrétien's Liberals were reducing the previous Conservative deficit, pressure began to mount for the government to cut taxes before the books were balanced. In fact, at that time the Reform Party was urging tax cuts first and balanced books later. It did not understand how important it was to balance the budget.

Liberals believed that priority number one was getting Canada's fiscal house in order. Once the books were balanced and some of the debt had been paid down, Liberals began cutting the general corporate income tax rate. In fact, between 2000 and 2005 we took the general corporate income tax rate from 28% down to 21%. More important, the Liberal government also provided Canadian taxpayers with the largest personal income tax cut in history, and we did it all without adding a penny to Canada's national debt. Indeed, as I just said, we were paying down that debt over that period of tax cuts.

While the Liberal road to balanced budgets followed by tax cuts has proved successful in Canada, there have been other paths tried in other parts of the world. The idea that tax cuts should come first, that has been tried elsewhere and yet most of these attempts have been tremendously unsuccessful.

Private Members' Business

I will give an example. Ronald Reagan, a hero on the Conservative side no doubt, used to tell Americans that he would eliminate the deficit by cutting taxes. Cut taxes, he did, but when his eight years in office came to a close, America's national debt was three times bigger than the day he took office.

Former U.S. treasury secretary, Paul O'Neill, is said to have recounted how he tried to warn the George W. Bush administration of the dangers of rising debt levels in 2002. The response, he is reported to have gotten from Dick Cheney was "You know, Paul, Reagan proved deficits don't matter".

That is the exact same economic mentality that now runs rampant in the Conservative Party of Canada. To a Conservative, deficits do not matter. That is why, just like Ronald Reagan, they want to cut the corporate tax rate while, at the same time, running the biggest deficit in our country's history.

• (1120)

It may just be arrogance. The Conservatives may feel that their base is so dedicated to the party that they can run never-ending deficits and not lose any support. It may be delusional. They might really believe, as Dick Cheney and Ronald Reagan did, that deficits do not matter. Maybe they do not see the effects of the sovereign debt crisis rippling through Europe today. Maybe they are just wilfully blind to it.

The rationale as to why Conservative MPs do not mind running up Canada's debt does not really matter that much for the purpose of this debate. What matters most is that their indifference to sovereign debt is dangerous and, if left unchecked for several years, will pose an economic threat to Canadian prosperity.

That indifference is why we did not hear a single Conservative member of Parliament raise his or her voice in concern about their government increasing the size of the federal government by 13% during its first years in office. It is because they were not worried about deficits.

That is why, in the third year of Conservative government, Canada's record string of uninterrupted balanced budgets came to an end, even well before the recession started. That is why it is currently running its third straight deficit and have no discernible plan to get out of it. That is why the Conservatives are insisting on borrowing even more money today to pay for corporate tax cuts.

Do members know who will have to pay back those billions of dollars in interest that will accumulate on the new debt? It will be Canadian families. Personal income taxes and the GST will account for 75% of all government tax revenues by 2014 and hard-working, middle-class Canadians will contribute the lion's share to that. They are the ones who will be called upon to pay back this new debt.

If only the government would balance the books first, it could cut those corporate taxes without having to ask Canadian families to give up more of their money down the road to pay servicing fees on this new debt. However, the Conservatives seem eager to foist these costs on to the middle-class.

There is another strange aspect to these tax cuts. The Conservatives only want to cut the corporate income tax rate for our largest companies. Small businesses, which are the backbone of

our economy, will not get any tax break at all under the Conservative plan.

What small companies do get from the Conservatives is a tax hike in the form of higher employment insurance premiums. A small company of about 10 employees will have to pay over \$9,000 more in tax over the next few years just for the privilege of keeping those people on its payroll. Business organizations are saying that this will kill more than 200,000 jobs across Canada. These job-killing Conservative EI premium hikes will kill more than 200,000 jobs.

Finally, I would like to touch on Canada's competitiveness in the world when it comes to taxation. Taxes are a moving target in almost every jurisdiction. We certainly never want to be caught up on the high end of the tax spectre. Let us look at some facts regarding Canada's tax competitiveness.

A few weeks ago, KPMG released a report showing that Canada had the lowest tax costs for business of all G7 countries and, out of all the countries studied by KPMG, only Mexico had a lower tax cost to operate a business.

My point is that, given we are already the most favourable tax environment, there is no need to go further into debt through a further cut in corporate taxes at a time when this country cannot afford it.

It is not as though we are in danger of becoming highly uncompetitive by delaying these tax cuts. Some of our competitor countries, such as Germany, have already come to the conclusion that they cannot cut their corporate tax rates at this time because of their high deficit.

In summary, I cannot support this motion because it calls for Canada to take on more debt to cut corporate taxes. I cannot ignore the results of this kind of recklessness achieved elsewhere, places like the United States where Ronald Reagan's premature tax cuts helped to triple the national debt in eight short years. This is not a good recipe for Canada.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion moved by the member for Calgary Centre regarding competitiveness. We did exactly the same thing all members will have done before commenting on this issue: we weighed the pros and cons. Unfortunately for the member who moved motion M-518, there are considerably more cons than pros, and the Bloc will therefore be voting against this motion.

There are two parts to this motion. We have no problem with the first part, which talks about recognizing "that improved competitiveness will continue to stimulate economic growth and create jobs for Canadians". No one can be against that. The part we have a hard time with is the part that talks about continuing "to diversify and expand markets for Canadian goods and services by encouraging investment in Canada through lower corporate tax rates...". This is wishful thinking on the part of the Conservatives.

Private Members' Business

We are not against tax cuts for certain companies, but businesses in the forestry sector, for example, are not even earning a profit. Even though they are being told that the government will lower their taxes to help them be more competitive, they are already not paying any taxes, since they are not earning any money. For many businesses, this solution is completely ridiculous under the circumstances.

In his motion, the member also suggests maintaining a stable economy and signing free trade agreements. The Bloc Québécois has made its position on bilateral agreements clear: we do not support them. We support multilateral agreements and we think that the Conservative government should focus on that rather than on signing agreements like the one with Colombia, a country that does not respect workers' rights, the right to freedom of expression or the environment. That is the kind of agreement this government wants to sign, but we think it is a bad idea.

Everyone knows that the economic future of Quebec and Canada depends on making our industries more competitive. The Conservative government's strategy, which focuses almost exclusively on corporate tax cuts and signing more bilateral free trade agreements, is not the right one.

Many sectors are going through such a difficult financial period that tax cuts are of absolutely no use in helping them develop new business plans. At the beginning of my remarks, I mentioned forestry companies. In Quebec, these companies are in dire need of access to cash so they can refinance, invest in modernizing their production equipment and start making money again. Once again, companies that do not make a profit do not pay taxes.

To deal with future economic challenges and compete with foreign companies that often benefit from significant advantages with respect to the cost of labour and weak environmental regulations, we have to focus on cutting-edge economic sectors, such as aerospace, green energy and high value-added products.

To support the development of these sectors and make the economies of Quebec and Canada more competitive, we recommend major investment in research and development and adequate financial assistance for industry stakeholders to help them modernize their facilities and develop new products. Unfortunately, none of that appears in the motion from the member for Calgary Centre.

We also recognize the key role that small and medium-sized businesses play in Quebec's economic development. I come from a region, a city, where there has been a proliferation of small and medium-sized businesses over the years. We have done relatively well, touch wood. These small and medium-sized businesses have given us the economic diversity needed to weather economic crises. However, this does not mean that we can sit on our laurels. We believe it is imperative that the federal government invest enough money to promote development and innovation when it comes to small and medium-sized businesses.

We do not agree with the increasing number of bilateral trade agreements. We believe that the government should instead be making an effort to restart multilateral negotiations, which are really the only way to encourage truly fair globalization.

● (1130)

The Bloc Québécois calls this globalization with a human face. It respects workers' rights, environmental rights and the general public, which is so often affected by development. In some countries we could even talk about reckless development, which requires limits to be set before a free trade agreement can be signed. Then they will realize that we will not accept things being done any way they please.

If we dissect the member's motion, we see those infamous tax cuts. Lower corporate taxes make sense when the economy is strong and exporters are looking for a comparative advantage. But they are practically useless during a crisis, and economists agree on that.

While it gave no less than \$10 billion to save Ontario's automotive industry, the Conservative government is promising a mere \$100 million over four years in its 2010 budget to help the forestry industry get through the worst crisis in its history. I will not dwell on the inequity created by the last budget, which was supported by the Conservative members from Quebec. Many of them come from forestry regions and yet they accepted the last budget's serious bias in favour of the automotive industry over forestry.

This funding for the forestry industry, which is going through a cash crisis, is not nearly enough to allow it to invest in the tools and production equipment needed to boost its productivity and competitiveness and make it profitable again. The Conservatives think that this industry should be happy to pay less tax. For the third time: if a business is not making a profit, it is not paying taxes either. This is not good news. It is not news at all. It is not a solution for the forestry industry. It is utterly ridiculous.

What is more, the money the Conservatives are investing in innovation in SMEs is totally ridiculous. The March 2010 budget allocates a measly \$40 million over two years to just 20 projects across Canada. Needless to say that this is nothing but smoke and mirrors. These measures will simply not cut it when the time comes to modernize SMEs to make them more competitive.

As far as investment in research and development is concerned, after ending Technology Partnerships Canada, the main federal support program for research and development, on December 31, 2006, the Conservatives only partially reinstated it in May 2007. They simply changed the name to the strategic aerospace and defence initiative.

This new program is less generous than the previous one and is geared only to aerospace and the defence industry. As for other leading-edge sectors, such as pharmaceuticals, production technologies, environmental technologies or new materials, there is nothing left for them in this program. We were led to believe that the government was reinstating a program to help during the economic crisis, but in fact, it made cuts to some of the technologies that could have benefited from this type of research and development program.

Private Members' Business

In his motion, the hon. member could very well have called for reinvestment in research and development, but he did not. In other words, in the government's economic policies on the crisis, it made Quebec pay the price.

Given the nature of Quebec's industrial base, it is Quebec that is suffering the most from the Conservative's laissez-faire attitude.

In order to get the Bloc Québécois' support, the hon. member should have thought about adding policies to help not just the forestry industry, as I was just mentioning, but also SMEs and manufacturing industries, which were completely left out of the last budget. Such a motion could have paved the way to improving this situation.

That is not the case, and the Bloc Québécois is therefore opposed to Motion M-518.

• (1135)

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Motion No. 518. The motion gives us an opportunity to debate competing visions for the economy, jobs and fair taxation systems in our country.

The New Democrat vision for the economy is very different from the government's. In the view of the New Democrats, we need to focus on job creation. We need to focus on creating and building a strong domestic economy. We need to develop an industrial strategy that will build a sustainable economy for the future, one that fuels economic growth by investing in green technology, green jobs and renewable energy and one that is built on a commitment to the principle of fair trade and a fair, just distribution of the wealth of our nation.

The New Democrats believe that the path to economic prosperity is built on creating a strong working class, a strong middle class. In that respect, we will create a truly strong economy. The bottom line is New Democrats believe the true measure of any functioning economy is to ask whether it benefits the majority of the people who take part in that economy. In this respect, New Democrats believe that any sound economic policy must benefit hard-working Canadian families.

We also believe in an economy where no one is left behind. That is why we always analyze every economic proposal, by looking at how it will affect the most vulnerable among us, our seniors, our children, our disabled. We know that the strongest chain is built on ensuring we take care of the weakest link.

The Conservative vision for the economy is very different. The Conservative government believes in shifting taxes from corporations to individuals and families. The Conservatives have continued the Liberal corporate tax cuts that began in the 1990s, which the Liberal speaker already highlighted. In the last budget, \$6 billion were allocated for banks and oil companies in our country, and \$6 billion has been given by the government to British Columbia and Ontario in incentives for those provinces to bring in the HST, which results in a huge tax shift from corporations to every family in those two provinces.

The Conservative government believes in more competition, but less co-operation, in more taxes like HST on families and less taxes on corporations and in more environmental degradation and less regulation in the environmental sector.

I want to talk for a minute on deregulation. The government in the budget before the House has move to exempt federal projects from environmental assessments. Right now we probably have the worst environmental disaster, perhaps in the world's history, going on in the Gulf of Mexico. Everybody knows that this is caused in large part by a failure to regulate the economic development of offshore drilling companies. What does the government want to do? At the very time that is going on, the government wants to take environmental assessments away from the Environmental Assessment Board and give it to whom? The National Energy Board. That is exactly the kind of misplaced, misguided policy that resulted in hundreds of thousands of barrels of oil being spewed into the Gulf every day of every week for the last three weeks.

The government has refused to support important measures to prevent another global meltdown in the financial services sector, touring the world to protect the banks of our country instead of touring the world to ensure there is not another financial disaster.

Before expanding further on these competing visions, I want to talk a bit about credibility. I was struck by the Liberal speaker who criticized the government for its corporate tax cuts. In the 2008 campaign and for the last two years the Liberal Party has been in favour of the corporate tax cuts proposed by the government. The ability of the Liberals to flip-flop, engage in crass opportunism and to say whatever they think is popular continues to shock all Canadians, I think.

I am glad to see the Liberals are finally supporting what the New Democrats have been saying for the last two years, which is in this economy, further corporate tax cuts are absolutely the wrong way to go.

• (1140)

Since the last election, every New Democrat member of Parliament has risen numerous times in the House to talk about building an economy that works for Canadians. We have talked about our plan to create jobs, to build an economy to emerge from the recession based on ensuring every Canadian who wants to contribute can have a well-paying, productive job. The economy is built on employment.

We have talked about our plan to build a green economy. The member for Edmonton—Strathcona has stood in the House time and time again and said that we do not have to choose between the economy and the environment. That is flawed thinking by members opposite that falsely tells Canadians there is a dichotomy between those two things. All thinking Canadians know that the environment is our economy. Without clean water, land or air, without raw natural capital, there is no economic activity. New Democrats understand that, but the government does not.

Private Members' Business

We have talked about our plan to foster an educated, skilled workforce to increase our competitiveness. I note the motion talks about improved competitiveness. I can tell everyone what we can do to be competitive in the decades ahead. We can ensure that every child, teenager and young adult has access to an affordable education so we build a country with skilled, educated people. That is how to build a modern economy in the world of today.

New Democrats have spoken about our plan to tackle poverty and help the unemployed.

I am looking at page 281 of the Conservative government's budget, where it estimates the stimulative effects of various ways to invest a government dollar. It says that for every \$1 invested in housing, it returns \$1.40 to the economy. Every dollar invested in low-income households and the unemployed returns \$1.50 to the economy. Every \$1 invested in reducing EI premiums adds a factor of 50¢. What has the government done? It has increased EI premiums.

Here is the kicker. For every \$1 invested in corporate income tax cuts, it returns 20¢. The government spends \$1 in corporate income tax cuts and gets back 20¢. That is from its budget document. What does this motion call for? Encouraging investment in Canada through lower corporate tax rates. That is what it wants to do. For every \$1 it takes from hard-working Canadians, it wants to give it to corporations and turn that \$1 paid by Canadians into 20¢. That is not sound economic management. That is foolishness.

We have risen to engage in a constructive and rational debate on the economy because Canadians want the government to engage in a respectful debate to fix our economy. Instead, the Conservatives respond with insulting and overblown rhetoric to dismiss any other idea or perspective on the economy.

I heard the hon. member for Calgary Centre call the New Democrats socialists. He called us isolationists. Invective is the lowest form of argument. It is name calling. Calling New Democrats isolationists is simply a straw man argument. Opposing free trade with countries like Colombia does not mean Canadians and the New Democrats do not believe we should engage in trade. Of course we do. It is nonsense for the government to suggest otherwise. What we do believe in is fair trade.

I want to point out that the government wants to sign free trade agreements, build an economic plan on free trade and have a trade agreement with Colombia, a narco state that has the dubious distinction of murdering the highest number of trade unionists in the world. The government wants to trade with that country. That is the best country it can find? That is the cornerstone of its economic trade policy? It should go back to the bargaining table.

New Democrats believe we can build country of fiscal prudence that has social justice. Tommy Douglas balanced his budget 10 years in a row. Allan Blakeney left a surplus when he left government in Saskatchewan. New Democrats have balanced their budgets the highest percentage of time for every year of government in the history of Canada. It was the Department of Finance that studied this. The highest deficits in Canadian history have been Conservative deficits, Brian Mulroney and the current finance minister.

In terms lecturing any party in the House about sound policy, the Conservatives should take a lesson from the New Democrats.

• (1145)

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a member of the international trade committee and part of this government, it is a privilege to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Motion No. 518 regarding expanding Canada's free trade agenda.

This government is committed to improving Canada's competitiveness and creating the economy of tomorrow as outlined in Canada's economic action plan and the Speech from the Throne. To do this Canada must open up as many foreign markets as possible for our producers, exporters and investors. I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of hon. members to some of the government's initiatives for expanding our network of trade agreements.

This government is committed to building on Canada's existing regional and bilateral free trade agreements. It is committed to increasing access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses, committed to helping Canadians compete with the best in the global economy and committed to an aggressive free trade agenda to support our goals.

Of course the World Trade Organization, otherwise known as the WTO, remains the foundation of our approach and Canada continues to be an active supporter of the Doha round of negotiations. A strong multilateral trading system has a critical role to play in the global economic recovery. We are working hard to achieve the best possible outcome from the round, and Canadian agricultural producers, manufacturers and service providers stand to benefit from the expanded access to global markets that an ambitious outcome would provide.

Canada is ready to do its part, but success in the round will depend upon the meaningful engagement and contributions of all members. With the uncertainty surrounding such a broad and ambitious process, we cannot rely exclusively on these negotiations to deliver the new opportunities that our traders need in order to grow and prosper. For that reason we also recognize the importance of bilateral and regional agreements.

Canada already has free trade agreements in force with the United States and Mexico through NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, 1994, as well as agreements with Israel in 1997, Chile in 1997 and Costa Rica in 2002. Last year we implemented a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association with the countries of Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein and Switzerland on July 1, and with Peru on August 1.

Private Members' Business

The agreement with the European Free Trade Association is Canada's first free trade agreement with European countries. Thanks to this deal, Canadian companies are better positioned to expand commercial ties with the countries of the European Free Trade Association in particular and other European countries more broadly.

The Canada-European Free Trade Association Free Trade Agreement establishes a competitive advantage over exporters of our main competitors, such as the United States, that do not benefit from such an agreement. It places Canadian goods on an equal footing with goods from the European Union, Korea, Mexico and Chile, which already benefit from trade agreements with the European Free Trade Association.

The Canada-Peru Free Trade Agreement, which came into force along with agreements on labour co-operation and the environment, contains considerable benefits for Canada. Canadian producers immediately benefited from the elimination of tariffs on 95% of current Canadian exports to Peru, with most remaining tariffs to be eliminated over a five to ten year period. Products that received immediate duty-free access to Peru include wheat, barley, lentils, peas and selected boneless beef cuts, a variety of paper products, and machinery and equipment. Canadian businesses also received improved market access in other sectors of the Peruvian economy, such as mining, energy and professional services, as well as banking, insurance and securities.

This government is continuing to pursue ambitious trade agreements with others as well. On November 21, 2008, Canada and Colombia signed a free trade agreement along with parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment. The implementing legislation, Bill C-2, passed second reading and is now being studied by the Standing Committee on International Trade.

The Canada-Colombia free trade agreement will help to expand bilateral trade and investment with Colombia. Having the opportunity to personally visit Colombia with the trade committee, I believe it is important to engage the Colombians rather than isolate them, like some of the opposition parties would like to do.

We also want to deliver concrete progress on Canada's commitment of engagement in the Americas. The free trade agreement will provide greater market access for Canadian exporters of products such as wheat, pulses, barley, paper products and heavy equipment. It will also help the increasing number of Canadian investors and exporters that are entering the Colombian market by providing unprecedented levels of stability, predictability and protection for Canadian investors.

Less than a week later, on March 24, this government tabled implementing legislation for the Canada-Jordan free trade agreement and the related agreements on labour co-operation and the environment. This agreement would give Canadian businesses improved access in Jordan and a platform for expanding commercial ties in the broader Middle East.

● (1150)

Once this agreement comes into force, tariffs on over 99% of recent Canadian exports to Jordan will be eliminated.

Key Canadian sectors that will benefit from the immediate duty-free access include forestry—which is a great benefit for British Columbia where I am from, Quebec and Ontario and our softwood lumber agreements are providing great support for that as well—manufacturing, and agriculture and agrifood.

The government's free trade agenda does not stop there. On May 14 of this year the Minister of International Trade and his Panamanian counterpart signed the Canada-Panama free trade agreement here in Ottawa. Parallel agreements on labour co-operation and the environment were also signed at the same time. All three agreements have been tabled in the House for 21 sitting days for review and debate. The free trade agreement will improve market access for goods and services and will provide a stable and predictable environment for investments in Panama.

This government is also working on numerous other fronts to provide Canadian businesses with better access to foreign markets.

Negotiations toward a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with the European Union were launched in Prague at the May 2009 Canada-European summit. This is by far Canada's most significant trade negotiation since the NAFTA with possibly up to \$12 billion of new economic opportunities.

The successful negotiation of a high quality ambitious agreement with the European Union is a key priority for the government. Canada and the European Union have held three successful rounds of negotiations with four more scheduled to take place by spring 2011. The parties will continue to work toward an ambitious comprehensive agreement that will open markets and resist protectionist pressures in these challenging economic times.

Most recently, on May 18 in Kiev, Canada and Ukraine launched free trade negotiations. Canada already has strong cultural ties with Ukraine and our commercial ties have grown stronger over the last decade. Canadian companies are steadily building a deep business presence in areas like aerospace, communication technologies and agriculture.

A free trade agreement with Ukraine could further open markets for Canadian exports ranging from agriculture and seafood products to machinery and pharmaceuticals, and improve market access for services and help to address non-tariff barriers.

Negotiations with the Caribbean community are also progressing, and the second round of negotiations between Canadian and Caribbean officials took place a few weeks ago. Canadian officials also held a negotiating round in March 2010 with their counterparts from Central America as part of the ongoing negotiations between Canada and the four Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Private Members' Business

This government remains dedicated to advancing our ongoing free trade negotiations with other partners including South Korea and the Dominican Republic, as well as seeking ambitious opportunities elsewhere. We are also engaged in a joint study with India to explore the parameters of a possible comprehensive economic partnership. We are involved in technical discussions with Japan aimed at improving and deepening our economic relations, including the possibility of a free trade agreement, a key interest for Canadian stakeholders.

We also remain engaged with the members of the trans-Pacific partnership and are watching those negotiations with interest.

Finally, trade opportunities with China and our Asian partners continue to expand. Canada's Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway was in China last week and our Minister of International Trade is in China this week building new markets.

What does an active trade agenda really mean for Canada? To put it in straightforward terms, by bringing down barriers to trade and investment the government will help Canadian businesses compete in an increasingly competitive world while also stimulating the Canadian economy. This is where free trade plays an important role. It reduces tariffs for Canadian producers and expands opportunities for Canadian investors and service providers.

In these difficult economic times we cannot hide behind trade barriers. Protectionism is not the answer; partnerships are. We want to innovate, to move up the global value chain and to compete globally. These measures will continue to fuel our recovery from the global recession, forge a competitive advantage, support growth and prosperity and help create jobs in the economy of tomorrow.

Through this record of success we are making Canada's economy stronger, more vibrant, more innovative and more competitive. That is why Canadians can count on this government to lead efforts in securing access to foreign markets for Canadian businesses and to take every opportunity to oppose protectionism and defend free and open trade on the world stage.

• (1155)

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of the motion by my colleague from Calgary Centre. It allows me to reiterate that our government fully agrees that international trade and investment are vital to Canada's long-term growth and prosperity. Canada is a trading nation and Canadians have long participated in global commerce as exporters, as importers, as investors, and as those looking for investors and partners to help them grow, innovate and prosper.

Foreign direct investment has traditionally played and continues to play a significant role in Canada's economy. From British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador, foreign investment brings many benefits that help our businesses and communities build competitive advantage in high-value industries of the future. Foreign businesses operating here are major contributors to our economy. In fact, the level of foreign direct investment in Canada is equivalent to over 30% of Canada's annual output, or gross domestic product.

These companies are responsible for 45% of the merchandise exports, 27% of corporate profits and about one-quarter of all business non-residential investment in Canada, contributing directly to our economic growth and long-term prosperity. Foreign investors in Canada include household names like Microsoft, Nokia, Samsung, and Honda, which has had operations in Canada for over 40 years. These and hundreds of other foreign investors in Canada are creating jobs and opportunity for Canadians across many different industries and sectors.

Even before Canada fell victim to the global recession, with advantage Canada and the global commerce strategy the government has been striving to make Canada a destination of choice for global business and investment. We have focused on reducing taxes, paying down debt, fostering skills development and investing in transportation, research and innovation infrastructure, all in the name of making Canada a more competitive place to succeed globally.

These measures are helping to ensure that Canada's businesses are better able to compete in the global economy and contribute to Canada's appeal as a place for foreign investors to invest, grow, innovate and create jobs. The government's efforts in this regard are already paying dividends for Canadians. As the global economy has navigated its most serious downturn in a generation, Canadians too have been affected.

However, our country has shown remarkable resilience and strength in the face of these troubles. Our banking system, for example, remained strong throughout the crisis. None of our banks failed and none required public bailouts. Many of our banks are growing at an aggressive rate. This certainly would not be possible without a strong, stable and well-regulated financial system, cited as the most stable in the world by the World Economic Forum for the past two years in a row.

Canada's strong fiscal record has also proven to be a key strength. Because our government paid down debt in good times, we have had the flexibility to introduce Canada's economic action plan package to spur growth, create jobs and position our country for a strong recovery. Today, as many of our counterparts around the world face enormous debt loads, Canada stands to reap the benefits of a G7-leading debt to GDP ratio. We are in a strong position to return to fiscal balance more quickly than many of our counterparts and we are optimistic that we can do so while maintaining the tax advantage we have been building over the past few years.

The fact is that Canada has navigated the global economic downturn better than anyone in the G7. The experts at the International Monetary Fund are predicting that we will lead the G7 in growth in the next few years. The OECD is saying that Canada's economic recovery grew 6.2% in the first quarter of 2010. That bears repeating. Canada's economy grew 6.2% in the first quarter of 2010.

Government Orders

I am sure that all members in this place, even the opposition members, take great interest in those numbers and lay the tribute at the feet of the government where it belongs, quite frankly. I am sure that all members in the House would share that feeling.

We are well ahead of the 1.9% overall growth of the other G7 countries. We are optimistic that such growth will translate into G7-leading job growth, as was the case in the years leading up to the global downturn.

• (1200)

The world is taking notice of Canada's first rate economic performance. In fact, the business experts at the Economist Intelligence Unit are saying that Canada will be the best place to do business in the next five years.

Indeed, Canada has lots of advantages to offer foreign investors. In financial and business services, we have one of the largest and soundest financial sectors in the world. In life sciences, we host some of the most influential clinical scientists in the world and we offer one of the most generous research and development tax incentives.

In the auto sector, we are one of the world's largest exporters of automobile products. We are also home to world leaders in plastics and chemicals, digital media, aerospace, renewable energy and agri-foods.

I have more to say—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary will have four minutes remaining when the House returns to this matter.

[*Translation*]

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from May 27, consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the NDP, for a long period of time, has been calling upon the government to turn away from its agenda of tax breaks for the big corporations. In the throne speech, in the budget and now in Bill C-9, the government had choices to make and these choices should have been to favour the needs of Canadians. I believe the government had the option to stop the reckless de-funding of the government by way of corporate tax breaks that have taken away the fiscal capacity of the government.

On two occasions, the NDP has provided motions to the House concerning the needs of seniors and in Bill C-9 we do not see a

response to either one of those bills. Our motions during the last Parliament set out the original seniors charter that recognized older Canadians are not only creative and active, but they are valued members of our society. The seniors charter would have enshrined the right of every senior in Canada to income security, accessible and affordable housing, wellness through health promotion and preventive care, health care through secure and publicly accessible health care, dental care, home care, palliative care, geriatric care and, of course, pharmacare. All of those things were laid out in the charter more than two years ago, again, a road map for the government as it moved forward and made plans for the future of seniors in this country.

In June of last year we set out another road map for the retirement security of seniors. It proposed an immediate increase of \$700 million to GIS to help those seniors who live below the low income cutoff. They seem like nice words, “low income cutoff”, but those are seniors who live in poverty and there is no other word for it.

We also proposed a doubling of the CPP because today in Canada 63% of working Canadians have no pension and no savings and we must prepare them for the future. Doubling CPP over the next 40 years would ensure they have dignity in their retirement years. We also proposed in the same motion a national pension insurance plan paid for by the sponsors. Our motion was adopted unanimously by the House, so we were encouraged that perhaps the government was about to respond and give real consideration to the future of our seniors.

The government could have chosen to follow the will of Parliament on these two motions but what did it do? It chose the banks and the big oil and gas companies over the seniors of this country.

Throughout the winter of 2008-09, our party looked at the situation of pensions and we held round tables. As members have heard me report to the House before, as the critic for the NDP for seniors and pensions, I travelled to 31 communities asking seniors what they needed. They all took us back to the same discussion that we have been having about retirement income security.

Through the member for Outremont, we moved a motion to have the finance committee do studies on the pensions of Canadians and we have had people from all walks of life come before us.

My point is that, as a party, we have been out there for over a year on pensions and doing the due diligence that is important to this issue. However, as I said a moment ago, with Bill C-9, the government has confirmed its support for the tax breaks for the big corporations and the banks. It has taken \$15 billion a year out of the fiscal capacity of the government to do those things that Canadians want done.

Government Orders

● (1205)

While the NDP has been saying that we should stop corporate tax breaks, I find it ironic that members of the Liberal Party rise in this House and talk about stopping these corporate tax breaks when they promoted them for years. This deathbed conversion happened following their conference in Montreal in February. Literally for years the leader of the NDP, the member for Toronto—Danforth, has been calling for the cessation of these particular tax breaks.

Many people in my riding of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek have raised concerns with me regarding Bill C-9 when they hear how broad, comprehensive and how large it is and the things contained in it. They wonder what it is all about, why it is such an omnibus bill and why it is necessary.

I know it sounds strange to some people to think that the NDP actually has conversations with the good folks in the financial services sector but we certainly do and they are really concerned about the sudden proposition that GST will be retroactive on commissions paid for their financial services. They are concerned about what it will do to the costs in their particular sector.

Hamilton is well known across this country as a working town with a lot of good, strong, healthy unions and a lot of working people who have contributed to the EI fund all of their working lives and have had the good fortune of never having had to use it. These people have heard the stories of how under the Liberal administration \$57 billion went into the black hole of the budget and was paid down on the debt. They were counting on the Conservative government to do something about that. What happened in Bill C-9 just confirms the government's abuse of trust that took place under the Liberal government.

There is a grave sense in Hamilton East—Stoney Creek that the Conservative government is reckless when they hear about the astounding \$1 billion for the G8 and G20 conferences. Our riding is a very diverse community and people are well aware of the number of new Canadians who are in this country. Good Muslims and good Sikhs are their neighbours and they do not fear these people. Is it fear that has driven the government to take hundreds of times the cost of other countries for this, and there is no other word for it, boondoggle? Security will amount to \$1 billion. I note that there has been conversation about the Auditor General taking a look at these expenses. I would suggest that they be looked at before the money is spent.

The good citizens of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek lived through the Mike Harris years of government. They are starting to look upon the federal government as a Mike Harris-style government that is prepared to sell off anything and everything. Members may recall that the Mike Harris government in Ontario sold off the ETR Highway 407. We just need to look at the value that highway could have offered the government financially during this time.

Canadians are concerned about the potential sell-off of Atomic Energy of Canada, which the Conservatives seem prepared to sell-off for a quick buck.

I want to mention something significant, which I have said in this House before. Writer, Kris Kristofferson, said in one of his songs, *The Law is for Protection of the People*. Bill C-9 proposes to remove

environmental assessments and proposes to give the scope of the assessments to the minister. Even if we are satisfied with the minister who is in the House today, we do not know who future ministers will be so we do not know what their competency will be in this area. The government is prepared to give up Canada Post's right on outgoing letters. What will be next within Canada Post or within the CBC? What else will come up for sale?

The Canadian people trust their government to protect their interests. I would suggest to all parties in this House that this is the time to take those items out of this bill that are problematic, items such as those that deal with the environment, AECL and others, and deal with them separately.

● (1210)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a couple of comments with regard to the EI fund.

It is concerning, but I think the member may have misspoken. In fact, it was during the Brian Mulroney years that the Auditor General told the government that since the EI program was operating at a deficit, that deficit had to be included in the consolidated revenue fund on an annual basis so that it was reflecting the program performance of the entire government. It used to be a separate bank account, and then it was rolled in.

That means that when the Liberals took over in 1993 and eliminated the \$42 billion deficit that was passed over, 10 years of surpluses started.

The point is that the change was made was at a time when there were deficits. When there were surpluses, we had EI premiums going down each and every year.

However, this year, under Bill C-9, the government in fact is eliminating the liability to employers and employees that they are entitled to, either by premium reductions or by improvement in programs.

I just thought the member would be interested in knowing a bit of the factual history.

● (1215)

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, the factual history is that there were three majority Liberal governments with five surplus budgets that did not address the fact that the premiums that belonged to Canadians, that were paid by Canadians for the protection of Canadians, had been abused.

At the end of the day, we had a Conservative government followed by a Liberal government followed by a Conservative government that did not address this.

Prior to this change made by the previous Liberal government, 85% of people who applied for unemployment insurance received it, and received it for up to a year.

Now, there are about 29% who apply and they receive it for a variety of times, some as short as less than 26 weeks.

Government Orders

So there have been significant abuses of the unemployment system, or the employment system, whichever we want to call it, by successive Conservative and Liberal governments. Standing by the people of my riding who have suffered through these changes, I have no problem standing in this House and talking about the abuses of EI by both Liberals and Conservatives.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, this is an 880-page omnibus bill. It weighs several pounds. There are a lot of things in this bill that go far beyond budget implementation. For example, the post office remailers issue has nothing to do with the budget implementation. As a matter of fact, the government tried to introduce this through Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 twice over the last two or three years in this House. It is a sneaky approach to take bills that they cannot get through the House, put them into a huge omnibus bill such as this, call it a budget implement act, and then threaten an election if we do not pass this bill as is.

However, what I want to ask the member about is that while the current government is reducing taxes for corporations, trying to reduce taxes over the next three years to 15%, when the CEOs of banks are making \$10 million, it has brought in an airline tax. The airline tax is going to increase now to about 50%, which is going to make Canada the highest taxed jurisdiction in the world, higher than Holland, and much higher than the United States.

Would the member like to comment about those points?

Mr. Wayne Marston: Mr. Speaker, the thing that is really interesting is that prior to this change, at 22%, we were in the midst of the G8 and G20, halfway. We are in a very reasonable position, and the government has taken away fiscal capacity because of that and is now transferring more back onto the shoulders of Canadians.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be given an opportunity to rise today in the House to speak to the budget bill.

I want to speak about the budget, but also in connection with the previous four Conservative budgets, and comment generally on the direction in which the government is taking this country. I want to align myself with the majority of Canadians who think this country is going in the wrong direction.

I want to associate myself with those Canadians out there who are of the opinion that there is a positive role for the federal government, that it has been, and it can be again, a positive influence on the lives of Canadians. It can and ought to take further action on a whole host of issues that very much affect our society. I am talking about our rate of productivity, the major demographic transition that the country is presently undergoing, the major issue facing Canadians regarding post-retirement income security, the major issue of family poverty and specifically child poverty. It is my view that we can do more to make us more egalitarian, more prosperous, and more productive, and of course, we can do a lot more than we are presently doing in facing the environment issues that the country is presently facing.

Some may say that we are talking about an either/or situation. The Conservatives say they cannot do anything about poverty, because then they might have to reduce health care, but they fail to mention that there is a direct correlation between poverty and health. They

cannot do anything about the environment, because that might in some way prohibit or compromise corporate tax cuts. What they fail to mention is that there is a very close connection, a correlation, between a very healthy environment and a healthy economy.

When we look at some of the challenges facing society, such as child poverty, productivity, the pension issues, the deficit, literacy, and the environment, apart from a few things such as the excellence in research project that was announced a couple of weeks ago, which is excellent, there is very little in the budget that would give any Canadian any optimism for the future.

What are the issues that we have to talk about as a society? We have to start here and talk about the major demographic change that is under way in Canada right now but will get worse and worse every day, every month and every year for at least the next 20 years.

Many of us in the House are part of that cohort, that generation referred to as the baby boomer generation, generally between the ages of 45 and 65, who will begin to retire in large numbers very shortly. It will actually reach the rate of approximately 1,200 people per day. Because of this, we will develop a situation where we will have people without jobs, but more importantly, or worse, more significantly, we will have jobs without people.

Much has been written about the baby boomers, but it is my premise that no generation in the history of mankind cared less about the generations that followed than the baby boomer generation. It does pain me somewhat to say that, because I am very much part of that generation.

We as a society have a fundamental obligation to leave the world a better place than we found it. That is from the view of the country's finances, and we have had much discussion here in the House about the very large, significant and growing deficits that this country is incurring, and from the point of view that every child have an equal opportunity. That starts at early childhood development and continues through education. It continues in post-secondary education, but it does not end there. It continues with lifelong learning.

From the point of view of poverty, literacy, skills-training issues, and most importantly, from the point of view of the horrendously important challenges facing Canada, the best country in the world, on the issue of climate change and other environmental issues. This fact becomes painfully obvious when we read the budget and the previous budgets of the government.

● (1220)

From a financial point of view, the government inherited a \$13-billion surplus. It spent like a drunken sailor. There were tax decreases, some wise and some very foolish. As a result, this year and next year, we are left with the largest deficit in the history of this country.

Comparing the amount of the deficit, although large, to other countries, other countries' deficits are larger, but that does not reflect the fact that Canada is not a unitary government. If we add the federal deficit and all the deficits being incurred by the provincial governments, it is horrendous. The question that has to be asked every minute of each day is who is going to pay it back. The answer to that question is our children and generations to come.

Government Orders

Another issue that is not talked about at all in the House is our lagging productivity rate. We are behind the United States and have been for some years. Each and every year we are falling further and further behind. There are a number of reasons for this that are not being addressed by the government. We have to become more competitive.

Some of the root causes are our education system, lack of support for post-secondary education, lack of support for training and education, lack of research and development and innovation, but mainly the lack of innovation, and we see in our business sector some of the infrastructure deficits that were talked about last weekend by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, removing some of the disincentives to work, and of course, one of the most important issues is literacy. We do not hear those issues being talked about in the House.

These are very important issues that affect our productivity, which in turn affects our prosperity, which again affects the future financial health of each and every Canadian. One specific issue regarding productivity I want to mention is the Atlantic gateway project of 2007. It was announced that there would be \$2.1 billion, to the government's great credit, over the next five or six years to improve main highways, ports and border crossings throughout all provinces in Atlantic Canada. It would make the region more competitive and it was very much a step in the right direction. The government did this with great fanfare. There were many press releases and press conferences; whatever one can name, the government did.

Specifically, there was \$137 million allocated for 2007-08, \$221 million for 2008-09, \$283 million for 2009-10, and \$335 million for 2010-11. Of the 2007-08 money that was actually appropriated, \$137 million was untouched; and in the next three years, there was never any mention whatsoever of the \$221 million, \$283 million and \$335 million. In other words, it died on the vine. We have no idea where that project is now. We have no idea where the initiative stands. This is very disappointing to me, as a member of Parliament who comes from Atlantic Canada.

I come back to the issue of child poverty. There is a correlation between child poverty and health, child poverty and education, child poverty and productivity, and child poverty and future interactions with the criminal law system. However, again, that issue will never be mentioned by the government.

Presently, 40% of Canadians do not have the literacy or numeracy skills to compete in today's knowledge economy. If they lose their job, it is with great difficulty that they find another one. Again, that is an issue that we will not hear mentioned in the House.

I would like to spend my last minute talking about the environment. I pulled out the platform of the 2006 government. The promise was that a Conservative government would:

Address the issue of greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), with a made-in-Canada plan, emphasizing new technologies, developed in concert with the provinces and in coordination with other major industrial countries.

There is no greater example of intergenerational inequity than that. The government has done absolutely nothing. It replaced that with the "Turning the Corner" regulation. It has done absolutely nothing. Now it is saying that it will be do whatever the United States does,

which is basically transferring our sovereignty to our southern neighbour.

• (1225)

In closing, I made some of those points that I think are very important. These are issues that simply should not be left to future generations. Each of these issues should not have been included in this budget.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to point out that after this budgetary process, Canada will have the highest air security fee taxes in the world.

Every Canadian air passenger in this country will be paying the highest taxes in the world. The Americans are paying in the neighbourhood of a \$5 fee, and Canadians will be paying triple or quadruple that. When the Canadian government talks about being competitive with its greatest trading partner, the United States, how can this be an issue of trying to be competitive with the United States when it has now raised our taxes to be the highest in the world?

At a time when the government claims it is reducing taxes for corporations, does the member see some inconsistencies in the government's approach to taxation?

• (1230)

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I certainly do see many inconsistencies in the government's approach to taxation. I believe I talked about them during my speech.

On the air traffic security charge, it is my position, and I have studied this issue extensively going back to when the \$14 charge was initially implemented, that it ought to be a user fee based upon what the actual costs are. Those costs should be very transparent and should be shown to Canadians.

In actual fact, when it came in at \$14 I knew it was not \$14. I was actually the only MP who blew the whistle on this. I said, "No, this is wrong". Successive governments admitted that they were wrong with the \$14, and it was reduced to something like \$6 or \$7 per person.

It has come up briefly since then, but again it should be a transparent, user fee based on exactly what the costs are.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for his excellent speech.

One of the most sensitive indicators of the health of a population is in childhood health. In our country, unfortunately, over the last three to four years or so we have seen something terrible happen. Our newborn mortality rate has actually increased significantly.

Canada has moved from being sixth in the world, in terms of our newborn mortality rate, and dropped to 22nd in the world. This is a very sensitive indicator of not only the health of our population but also the efficacy of our health care system.

I would like to ask my colleague, does he not think that the current Conservative government has actually been asleep at the switch on one of the most important issues affecting Canadians, and that is the issue of the health care system that we have today and also the health of our population?

Government Orders

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of those statistics. I am not going to stand here in the House and pretend I know the complete answer. They are concerning and disappointing, but not knowing the exact causes, I am not going to speak specifically to that.

On the whole issue of health care, this is an issue that deserves a much overdue very public debate as to where we are going on the funding of health care in Canada. The Toronto-Dominion Bank issued what I consider to be an excellent report. I urge everyone to read it. The report was just issued on Friday, setting forth some of the realities of health care funding across Canada. There are 10 points and I agree with perhaps 9 of the 10.

I think this is something that has to be read by members and all Canadians. There has to be a very public and open debate as to the whole funding of our health care system. The report states that if we do not do anything, health care costs will consume 80% of all government funding. In other words, we are going to have to close down universities, schools, roads, ports, and airports to pay for our health care system, which I do not think would be very good for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill.

This bill is not palatable because it seeks to introduce in an extraordinary way a number of measures that the government wishes to avoid submitting for debate in the House of Commons. Look at the number of measures included in Bill C-9. It touches on 42 different budget items. These measures truly seek to make significant changes in a large number of areas and should be debated.

The bill touches on relations with other countries, tax issues, relations with various organizations, seniors' issues, and so forth. It touches on everything, and in a way that I would say is undemocratic. This is probably the most undemocratic bill I have ever seen in the House, because it seeks to introduce measures that are unacceptable to the public and the groups targeted. I will focus on one of those groups: people who have the misfortune of losing their jobs.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Yves Lessard: I do not know whether it is as distracting to you, Mr. Speaker, but I am bothered by people talking in the House.

I will use the example of employment insurance. Since I arrived in the House six years ago, the name of the employment insurance fund has changed four times. When the name is changed so many times, it is because, like anyone who wants to misuse and take funds that do not belong to them, the government is trying to use subterfuge to justify taking this money. Over the last 14 years, a surplus of more than \$57 billion has accumulated and been misappropriated from the employment insurance fund. Only employees and employers contribute to this fund, and the surplus that accumulated was misappropriated through cuts to employment insurance benefits. The precise amount taken was \$57,170,000,356.

When the Conservative budget was passed in 2008, just two years ago, the name of the employment insurance fund was changed and

the Employment Insurance Financing Board was created. That was the third time the name has been changed in order to give this power to the administrators and to be able to continue quietly dipping into the EI fund, to create a separate fund, we were told. A separate fund was not created and it continued accumulating surpluses to be used for other purposes. In this year's budget—and as Bill C-9 is now proposing—this separate fund will henceforth be called the employment insurance account and it will be a separate management account, we are told.

This is when we, as parliamentarians, must intervene. We cannot condone such a thing because, for one thing, that money is not the government's to use for anything other than EI benefits.

● (1235)

For another thing, this constitutes an economic crime that affects the people who need this money, which belongs to them, that is, workers and their employers.

This time, we would have expected the government to present measures to restore the employment insurance system. Not only did it fail to do that, but it is creating the new EI fund. It is thus making sure that it will continue accumulating surpluses so that between 2012 and 2015, another \$19 billion will be plundered and used for other purposes.

How could this money be used? Obviously, it could be used to make sure that people who lose their jobs can receive benefits. Some 56% of people who lose their jobs cannot receive employment insurance benefits. The government has made the eligibility requirements so strict that most unemployed workers do not qualify.

We have introduced Bill C-308, standing in my name, which if passed would mean that people applying for employment insurance are presumed to be acting in good faith. Right now the government requires those applying for EI to prove their good faith, which is absolutely reprehensible. When a person loses their job it is an undeniable fact. We also know whether the person has accumulated enough hours. Nevertheless, all sorts of measures are used to prevent people from getting employment insurance.

We want the qualifying period to be 360 hours for everyone and the rate of weekly benefits to be increased to 60% from the current 55%, for an improvement of 5%. It is not a lot, but for people who are receiving very little, it is something.

The measure raising the number of weeks of benefits to 50 should be made permanent. Just a little over a year ago, the government set the number of weeks of benefits at 50 weeks instead of 45, but that measure comes to an end in the fall. It will have to become permanent.

The most appropriate measure would be to have a comprehensive plan to return the money removed. The \$57 billion that was taken from the employment insurance fund should be put back. With that money and almost no increase in contributions we could improve employment insurance benefits for workers who have the misfortune of losing their job.

Government Orders

Not only is the government not planning to return the money it removed, but it is planning to continue misappropriating money from the fund. I am calling on my colleagues, whom I believe to be sincere when they make the same arguments we do, the opposition colleagues in particular, to be in the House, when the time comes to vote on Bill C-9, and put their money where their mouth is by voting against the bill.

Of course, there is one party that says we need not go to an election over this. But when should we go to an election? When measures do not help people then we should go to an election in order to have a debate over what is good for the people. They should quit hiding their heads in the sand.

• (1240)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his comments on the employment insurance situation, which he has been a champion of in this place for many years.

I believe the new employment insurance agency called for seed money of some \$2 billion. I understand, though, those funds will not be available for the payment of benefits. They are basically the administration capitalization.

With our current situation, the record levels of unemployment, the benefits being paid out now vastly exceed the premiums being collected. Therefore, in recent months we have been operating at a deficit. The separate fund has been operating at a deficit because it is supposed to be stand-alone.

I spoke with the Auditor General and she assured me that at the end of the next fiscal year, if it continues to be in deficit, that would be included in the consolidated recent fund and the government would have to transfer moneys out of the treasury into the separate fund to cover the funding of benefits.

Is the member aware of that?

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Liberal member for his question, which is a very relevant one.

He is right. The fund is currently operating at a deficit, but that is only for a short period of time. By early 2012, things should sort themselves out. Some temporary measures have been put in place and are currently covered by the fund, without an increase in premiums. These measures are expected to be dropped next fall, which means that the current deficit will quickly turn into a surplus. According to the minister's books, between 2012 and 2015, the fund will generate a \$19 billion surplus. That will cover the \$2 billion deficit, but there will still be a net surplus of over \$17 billion by 2015.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech. He has been a tireless advocate for employment insurance.

Could he comment on the fact that over this last recession we saw a significant number of workers who did not qualify for employment insurance?

Over the last 15 years, that the deficit has been managed by siphoning off the employment insurance funds. I know the member commented on that specifically in his speech.

However, despite the rhetoric about the numbers of job that have been created, a lot of those jobs are part time, seasonal, contract work and many of those workers are not eligible for employment insurance.

What would the member like to see changed to ensure those workers are included in the employment insurance system?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, the NDP member is quite right to raise that question. Earlier, I mentioned the people who are not eligible for employment insurance. Of all these people who contribute to employment insurance, only 46% can hope to be eligible. Of that 46%, only 33% of women and 17% of young people will be eligible for benefits. So there is discrimination against people who have atypical, temporary, seasonal or part time jobs.

We are proposing that we make people who have accumulated 360 hours of employment eligible for EI. That way, people who have worked fewer hours will also qualify. I think that is the best measure, under the circumstances.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to this issue. It goes to the heart of the lives of Canadians from coast to coast. Right now we are dealing with the largest deficit we have seen in three decades. Our debt is going up. When the government came into power, it was lucky enough to have a balanced approach between debt reduction, spending and also tax reductions. That was the one-third, one-third, one-third policy when we were in government.

It left the current government in good stead. It gave it a surplus. It also gave it a very solid banking system. The Liberal government of the day refused to adopt a number of initiatives that would have changed banking in Canada and would have enabled us to be much more susceptible to the economic viruses that have destroyed so many banks, banking systems and economies across the globe. However, that did not happen, and we are thankful for it.

The government has to listen. Instead of adopting the ideology that was so destructive south of the border in the time of President Bush and President Reagan, it really has to look at what has worked for Canadians. It needs to ensure we follow a path that is good for our citizens and not adopt an ideological approach that has been proven to be very destructive.

The tax reductions and the absence of spending control south of the border has been incredibly destructive to the U.S. economy, to the degree that I am extremely worried about what will happen there. When the Americans catch a cold, we get pneumonia. Despite the good management and monitoring of our fiscal systems in Canada, we have a very high risk of running into serious problems because of what will happen in the states.

Government Orders

I think all of us in the House would plead with the government and strongly recommend that it not follow the course of action that we saw during the time of those two presidents. It has proven to be very destructive on so many levels. Most important, it hurts the citizens who we serve.

We also have other international storm clouds afoot, including increasing competition, particularly from China and India. China now has foreign reserves in excess of \$1 trillion. This is a very powerful lever that the Chinese have on us. In fact, the Chinese are using their foreign and economic policies to secure major sectors of the world that have natural resources, particularly South America, Southeast Asia and Africa. Africa contains more than half of the world's natural resources.

The Conservative government has been missing in action in many of these areas. It has taken a much more narrow view in its foreign policy. This is a much larger game. To look at things in a very parochial fashion takes Canada out of the playing field and it will hurt our citizens. In this globalized world, unless we use all the tools we have, from foreign policy to trade to defence to economics and aid, we will not be in the game.

Not being in the global game will mean that our economy, our workers and our businesses will be at a disadvantage. Therefore, I ask the government to think of using all of those tools in how we enable our country to have a very prominent future. We have ensured that our citizens will have as good a future, if not a better future, than what we have had. One of the great challenges the government has is how to enable that to happen.

Let us look at some of those solutions. I know the leader of my party has been very strong, and wisely so, on investing in education. Although this is a provincial responsibility, nothing prevents the government from using its convening powers to work with the provinces to serve our citizens. The ability of our citizens to acquire the skills they need to garner a well-paying job is crucial for not only their economic future but also for their health.

I strongly recommend that the government work with a coalition of provinces that are willing to look at how we deal with people having access to skills training so it is not a financial burden to them. The movement of people across provincial boundaries is crucial. The recognition of skill sets and removing those boundaries for Canadians to move across provinces is essential. If we remove the barriers to trade and mobility, we will have a much more nimble and successful economy.

Investing in infrastructure and in research and development is crucial, not only in people and infrastructure but also operating costs. Researchers cannot do their job unless they have the tools to pay the operating costs for their research.

• (1250)

I also encourage the government to work with groups like the MaRS Centre in the University of Toronto, the University of British Columbia and other universities to operationalize our research. The phenomenal research taking place in Canada is exciting. One of the major challenges is to take those discoveries from bench to bedside, to take the research we know and operationalize it.

I attended the pediatric academic sciences conference in Vancouver three weeks ago, which is the largest collection of pediatric scientists in the world, 6,000 were there. When I listened to the great research that had been done, it struck me that there were things we know could save the lives of a lot of people. We have all this knowledge, but that knowledge is not getting to the bedside. This was one of the laments that many of the researchers had.

I suggest there is a great opportunity for Canada to be a leader in translational research, and that is getting the research, getting it to bedside, getting what we know and getting it operational on the ground. This is the great challenge and a great opportunity in the future.

Another thing I suggest is we know our economic situation will never be solid unless we can get our health care spending under control. Health care costs are growing at 6.5% per year, revenues at 2.5% to 3% on average in good years. That means we have a delta, a separation between demand for health care and supply resources, so much so that in the next 20 years any province will have 80% of its entire budget consumed by health care. Right now in many provinces it is approaching 50%, which means there is less and less space for education, infrastructure, welfare and other social programs.

The provinces are being squeezed by this huge creature called the health care system, which is gobbling up more and more of their resources. We cannot get away from it. This is the single greatest challenge any government will have. As President Obama's budget officer has said, unless they get their health care costs under control in the U.S., nothing else will make any difference.

In my personal view, the only way to do that is to modernize the Canada Health Act to allow provinces to explore different options. I strongly recommend that the government look at what happened in Europe, where 17 of the top 20 health care systems are. Why do we not look at those mixed systems, the way they fund health care systems in terms of paying for results, for patient services, as opposed to block funding, and better use of IT technologies. There are a lot of things we can do, but, again, the government needs to use its convening powers to work with the provinces to make this happen.

On the prevention side of health care, the average child in Canada sits and watches television or a computer screen for 40 hours a week. That is staggering. As a result, this generation of children will be the first generation in history to have a shorter lifespan than their parents, which means we will have a much higher incidence of chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular problems. This will put a huge pressure on our health care system. Therefore, we need to encourage children to be active, to get out and play, by having them turn off the television sets and video games one night a week. Getting them out is crucially important to enable children to have a better life.

Routine Proceedings

I could talk about pension renewal and reform. The average age when pensions came in was 58. Now the average age is 80 for men and 82 for women in our country. Therefore, I encourage the government to look at pension renewal and reform and allow people to work beyond age 65. There are lots of things we can do with that.

These issues are too important to lie fallow. All of us in the House feel too many issues are being dealt with that are not germane and not important to the average person on the street. We have to tackle these issues of the economy, social programs and have a balanced, effective science-based approach to deal with these challenges. If we do not, people will get hurt and when that happens, we have violated our responsibility to our public.

• (1255)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2008 the hon. member's party came out clearly in favour of the government's \$50 billion of corporate tax cuts. Liberals kept that position in 2009 when only the New Democrats stood in the House and said that massive corporate tax cuts in this fiscal economic climate would be irresponsible. I noticed that recently the Liberal Party has seen the light and is now adopting the New Democrat position. I also note that members of his party voted for the last budgets and I anticipate his party will likely vote for the budget this time as well.

Could the hon. member tell Canadians why they should have any faith in the Liberal Party when it campaigned for corporate tax cuts and voted for budgets, yet claims it does not support the principles underlined in those budgets?

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing is that the hon. member forgot about the political realities in Canada today. He neglected to mention them.

I do not know if the member has the luxury of voting against the government, but the issue of whether or not there will be an election really falls on the Liberal Party. I would ask the gentleman whether or not he thinks the Canadian public would have liked another election only a few months after we had had an election. The Canadian public said very clearly to us that it did not want an election. The member knows full well that if we had defeated that budget, there would have been an election.

The Liberal Party wants to work with the government, indeed with all parties, with an effective, balanced approach in order to have a strong economy and stable social programs. In fact my seatmate, who happens to be our party's finance critic, has offered many intelligent and constructive solutions to the government, as have many members of my caucus.

I hope the government listens because if it does not, our country is going to get hurt. We will continue to try to work with the government for the betterment of our country.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that the current government inherited about a \$13 billion surplus when it took office back in 2006 and it has squandered that. Now we have probably the largest deficit that Canada has ever had. It does not bode well for some of the matters the member rose, such as skills training and all the things related to doing better in the future.

The member has also been a strong advocate for health initiatives. We have an aging society and the costs with respect to our health care system are going to start gobbling up enormous amounts of the government budget. It does not seem to me that the government has even acknowledged these challenges that are hurtling toward us.

I wonder if the member has some thoughts about what responsible governments would do in these times.

• (1300)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is true that one of the untold stories of our times is that the current government was given a \$13 billion surplus. When times were good, it actually had the largest spending increase that we had seen in many decades and it burned through that surplus rather than using it more responsibly. That was highly irresponsible. The Prime Minister took Canada to the brink, and then when we faced this economic downturn, it thrust Canada off the cliff. Today we are sustaining this \$56 billion deficit, which would have been much less if the government had actually done the responsible thing when times were good and lived within its means. This is not well known in the public but it is the truth.

Although the management of health care is a provincial jurisdiction, unless the government is willing to tackle the issue of health care and health care expenditures, then no matter what it or a province does, the provinces are going to be in a completely unsustainable situation. Patients will suffer and provinces will delist or ration care because they will not be able to meet their budgets.

I remember when I worked in emergency, I had to treat patients in the hallway in the emergency department, which I thought was completely disrespectful to them. But what can I do as the physician when all of the beds are completely filled in the emergency department? I have to treat people in the hallway. That is the cold reality of what doctors and nurses are being faced with across our country today.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO THE MULRONEY-SCHREIBER DEALINGS

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am tabling, in both official languages, the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Certain Allegations Respecting Business and Financial Dealings Between Karlheinz Schreiber and the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT**

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very intently to the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca as he referenced the economic prowess of his seatmate, the member for Markham—Unionville. No doubt the Liberal Party believes in his economic prowess. I am sure at one point in time that party was absolutely in lockstep with that member's economic prowess when he said we should deregulate the banks. Of course, if the Liberal Party had followed through on what that hon. member wanted to do, we would have been in the same situation as in the U.S. with Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers, Goldman Sachs and all the rest of them that went down the great proverbial, and I will refrain from using the word. Needless to say, if that is their economic policy, then clearly the Liberals are still in lockstep with the government.

It is not about the luxury of opposing. It is about working for the people of this country in a democratic fashion. If we believe the government is headed in the wrong direction, then we oppose it. It is not about whether we will lose seats or our party will not be the government in the next election; it is about fundamentally understanding what the government is doing and if we should oppose it, then we do so.

That is what we have done and we suffer the slings and arrows of the government when it says we never vote for any of its budgets, and that is right. We do not vote for its budgets because we fundamentally disagree with its budgets, especially this one. This compendium of some 880 pages contains not only budget items, which of course it would because it is a budget bill, but it also contains numerous other pieces of legislation that should be before us individually in one form or another, especially when we are talking about things like the environment.

There was a national energy program that a previous government brought in which those in the west absolutely abhorred. I lived there at the time, as I went to the University of Alberta, and I understood why they did. But now the government is saying we will do it through the National Energy Board, or the NEB, so just change the last word and all will be well.

We went from something that was abhorred to something that we are supposed to love because we are going to include regulations that this body and this House has built up over time based on the expertise of people who have said that this is what is needed to protect the environment for everyone who lives on this planet, not just those of us who live in this country. We now have a group of folks who say that it is okay to drill another hole in the ground similar to the one in the Gulf of Mexico, but oops, it has sprung a leak and they wonder how they will plug it. They have tried golf balls, shredded tires, mud and cement. Now they are just going to take the cap off the top of it and try something else, but it will leak 20% more.

Is that what we want from the NEB? I would hope not. However, the government, by including it in this bill, has not allowed us to debate critical measures such as that so that we can engage Canadians about what really affects them beyond the budget. This really is not the budget.

In my previous life as a municipal councillor, I was the chair of corporate services and if I decided to put the planning act inside my budget, my constituents and the citizens of the municipality would have been justifiably outraged. Why would I including planning documents in a budget? It does not directly affect their taxes.

The measures the government has included in this bill that are outside of the budget do not directly affect the government's expenditure of moneys, per se. There is one item that involves money, and I will get to it because it is money that parties that are in government actually owe Canadians.

No thought should be spared and no stone should be left unturned when it comes to ensuring that the environment is safe and that we are doing all that we can to protect the environment. We should not simply give things away and allow folks to run with it in an unregulated fashion. That is what I fear will be the case when the NEB takes it over.

● (1305)

However, when we talk about money, one piece the government did put in the bill talks about putting the EI fund into the budget. It would have been nicer if it talked about putting back the money which the previous government and the current government pillaged, to the tune of \$57 billion, from the fund. The government should be talking about giving it back to its rightful owners, the workers and their employers. They are the ones who paid it and they are the ones who are meant to use it when needed, but last year when the recession occurred, we found that a good chunk of it was already gone. It had been spent by the previous Liberal government, and the remainder had been spent by the Conservative government. When is either one of them going to give back the \$57 billion?

We see in the budget that an account is going to be set up, but no one is going to get any money per se. The money that was taken away will not be given back.

Things could have been done for workers to get through last year and this year. The recession is not over for workers. Those who are unemployed are still unemployed for the most part. There is a great many unemployed workers in this land, especially in my riding where the unemployment rate is still the second highest in this country. The government will say that last month it created *x* number of jobs, yet we see the unemployment rate has moved only marginally.

The government never speaks to how many people fell off the system. The unemployment rate only counts those who are in the EI system. It does not count those outside the system. The government's own statistics group says it is too hard to count that group.

Government Orders

The U.S. makes that count. If we extrapolate the numbers in the U.S. based on what we do here especially when it suits the government's purpose, we can expect that the unemployment rate, which is 8% plus across the country, will increase another 3%. That becomes the true unemployment rate because we are including people who have either fallen off or have never gotten on the system in the first place. As we saw last year, a great many folks did not qualify for EI because the rules were changed.

It started with the Conservative government under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and I see that he is the subject of a report that was tabled today. It continued under the Chrétien Liberals who changed the system as well. Now we are at a point in the House, as I have witnessed over the last 18 months, where there is a hodgepodge of fixes.

We added on a piece by giving a 52-week extension to the members of the armed forces when it comes to parental leave. It is a good piece, but what happened to the RCMP and other police officers who went to Haiti? Oops, we forgot about those folks. It is a good private member's bill that is well worth supporting, but we forgot about another group.

That is what happens when changes are made to big legislation with band-aids. We do not get it right. We miss things. One of the biggest things that is missing in all of this is the \$57 billion that is owed to the workers of this country and their employers, who have paid it. Not only are they owed money, but now the government has decided that at the end of this year it will remove the freeze on EI premiums, and will continue to do it. By the government's own calculations in the budget, it will charge Canadian workers and their employers \$19 billion beyond what it needs to pay out.

I will give the Conservatives credit. They learned really well from the previous Liberal government. If it adds additional moneys to the EI premiums that have been collected, it could pay down the deficit. That is what the previous government did. The current government has learned the lesson and it is going to do the same thing. It is going to take a third of the \$60 billion deficit from workers who have finally found jobs and are getting back on their feet. The government is about to take it off their paycheques. It may even be taking it off the paycheques of folks who were denied employment insurance last year. Talk about rubbing salt in the wounds of the unemployed.

Workers were denied EI last year because the government refused to amend EI so that people could get into the system who deserved to be there because they had paid into it. The government decided it would not change the system and it is about to take money from folks for the next year and the year after that beyond what is needed to run the system in order to pay down a deficit that the government created through its mismanagement. At the end of the day, workers who perhaps did not have the opportunity to collect EI are going to end up paying again.

It is reprehensible that the government will not fix the system. The government has heard time after time over the last 16 to 18 months from New Democrats at this end of the House in private members' bills on how to fix the system. We were imploring the government to fix the entire system, not just made hodgepodge changes to it. The first thing the government ought to do is write a cheque for \$57 billion and put it into the employment insurance system.

● (1310)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right that there have been a large number of private members' initiatives. We know they require royal recommendations and we also know that the Conservative government would certainly not grant them. This reflects the mood of the House, which is extremely important, because the mood of the House reflects the mood of the people.

We have not had a recession since 1993, and no one predicted that, even when the U.S. went into recession. Under the rules of the game, the EI fund was to withhold two years of surplus to pay for a recession and the balance was to be returned by reduced premiums or improved programs, and I think everybody understands that. The real key now is that the obligation to do that will be eliminated by Bill C-9 because that liability will be summarily taken away. The cash will continue to flow whether there is a surplus or a deficit in EI operations, but that liability will be wiped off the books.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. There is a spirit for a change in the system, especially among opposition parties in the House.

As I said today and as I have said in the past, the system is broken. When we try to fix one aspect of the system, we end up inevitably not fixing the system. There were some premium reductions, but \$57 billion was in the EI account and it was spent. If we look at the actual new programs that were introduced, some that were called for but were never done, then we did not see either or. We did not see huge premium holidays. We did not see brand new programs that would really mean something. If we had, we would not still be stuck with 15 to 18 weeks of sick benefits.

If somebody has a catastrophic illness and does not have a short-term disability plan through their employer, the only place they can get sick benefits is through the EI system. What do they get? They get less than four months, but they may be sick for 12 months. What do they do for the other eight? They end up on welfare.

● (1315)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a question about the air security charges that all air passengers will have to pay. People are asking why these charges are so high compared to other countries. They want to know why the revenue collected far exceeds the amount spent on security and the justification for a 50% increase in this tax.

Government Orders

Canada was the second highest country in the world next to the Netherlands, and after the increase in February, we are now the highest in the world. The international fee alone has been increased 52% from \$17 to \$25.91, but in the United States that international security fee is only \$5. That puts our airfares out of line with those in the United States. How are we supposed to be competitive with the American airline industry when the government is single-handedly making us uncompetitive?

I wonder if the member has any comments on that.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona is absolutely correct about the additional fees. It is one thing to pay the true cost but another thing altogether to pay above and beyond. The government quite clearly has shown that it is overcharging when it comes to security fees.

I congratulate my seatmate, the member for Elmwood—Transcona, for talking about a passengers' bill of rights. When it comes time to protect passengers, where is the government then? The government votes against it.

An hon. member: Hiding.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: The government is hiding from the consumer.

The government is quite happy to take money out of the pockets of consumers beyond what is needed to keep them safe, but to give them a bill of rights that would give them some sort of compensation for sitting in a plane on a tarmac for an extended period of time, the answer to that is no.

It seems to me that if we want passengers on airlines to be safe, then we should be able to pay the cost of that and no more than the cost of that. Consumers believe that is fair. To overcharge them to pay down a deficit created by the government is totally unfair and passengers do not want to put up with that.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-9. It is a budget implementation bill and it is a very extensive bill.

It has some interesting aspects to it that have created even more problems than simply the fact that the Conservatives are projecting, in the budget, in excess of a \$50 billion surplus.

Bill C-9 is an omnibus bill. Canadians should know that an omnibus bill is one which does many things all in the same package. Normally we would see those in terms of justice legislation, where there are three or four proposed changes to the Criminal Code. They are all changes that have to do with one existing piece of legislation, but relate to different aspects of it.

In this particular case, we have an omnibus bill that does not deal with one other act of Parliament. It in fact deals with a number of acts. It is quite unusual. Theoretically, a government, after winning an election, could walk in here, table a budget which not only laid out the budgetary measures for the session, but it could also put into that budget implementation bill every other promise it had made in an election whether it related to the budget or not.

That is exactly what has happened here. We have a case now where inside the budget implementation bill, Bill C-9, and there is a

big debate among parliamentarians and Canadians at large who follow this, there are initiatives which were never mentioned in the budget speech, were not in the budget itself, and which are substantive changes to existing legislation.

They include the privatization of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, AECL. My home backs onto their offices in the Sheridan research centre. A lot of my constituents are engineers and work there. This is causing great grief.

When I went to the briefing on Bill C-9 with the ministerial staff and had an opportunity to ask some questions about this, they were not very many answers, just "We are doing this, this and this". The policy rationale was never there.

People are asking why we want to privatize AECL and get into public-private arrangements? They want to know if it is going to do something to the integrity of the R and D of AECL, whatever remains. They want to know what it is going to do to the whole model. This problem of AECL has been with us for a long time. This decision of the government to go forward with these discussions has caused great difficulty.

If we had a bill that came forward that called for the privatization of certain aspects and parts of a division of AECL, there would have been substantial debates in this House. There would have been substantial expert witnesses called to comment on the proposal in that bill. There would have been rigorous due diligence done with regard to virtually every aspect of the bill.

When we take a subject matter like that and put it into a budget implementation bill, it is that one big, large omnibus budget implementation bill that is being debated in the House, and reviewed and studied in committee.

It goes to the finance committee. I know the members on the committee. They are excellent colleagues. However, I do not think that they have the expertise in the area of atomic energy. I do not know how they could possibly discuss it. In fact, the people who were coming before committee to talk about it only had a couple of hours to make their case.

● (1320)

If it were a stand-alone bill, it would have had probably a dozen hours or so at second reading. It would have had substantive committee witnesses. It would have had third reading. It would have gone to the Senate. The rigour with which we handle legislation here is very significant, but that has been denied to that aspect.

That is not the only one. There are significant changes to the Environmental Protection Act. There are significant changes which would say that we will have a situation where we can waive the requirement for environmental assessments on major projects if there are certain circumstances in place, like time, where we have to have something done quickly. I remember asking questions of one of the hon. members about putting economic priorities ahead of environmental priorities, and the member quite correctly said we have to look at both. Good environmental policy is good economic policy. The reverse is also true.

Government Orders

We have a significant challenge before us in terms of greenhouse gases, climate change, and preparing ourselves to do our share to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our country, but when we start playing around with the Environmental Assessment Act, all of a sudden that seems to fly in the face of social and public responsibility. Canadians have already very clearly said how they feel about us doing our share, and after the government embarrassed Canadians at Copenhagen, it is no wonder they are concerned about things like this.

Members have also mentioned the airline tax. The EI fund also, when I was at the briefing with the officials, was just glossed over. I asked the question of the officials there about how it would operate. I did ascertain that there was to be some \$2 billion put in as seed money for the administrative part, but that this new separate agency was to be responsible for the operations of employment insurance in Canada. All of the premiums collected from today's workers would go into the fund, and all of the benefits would come out.

Here we are in severe economic difficulty with record unemployment, and it will even rise. It will rise even greater than it is today. We have been operating at a deficit. There has been a deficit there. When I spoke to the Auditor General last, she assured me that the operations of this stand-alone agency will be accounted for in the determination of surplus or deficit of the Government of Canada in terms of its operations of the program, notwithstanding that it is a separate bank account again out there.

I think what annoys all of the opposition parties is the notional surplus, the \$57 billion of premiums that were collected in excess of benefits required to be paid out, which were built up over a dozen years of surpluses because Canada's economy was booming, and the lowest unemployment in our history had been achieved. That \$57 billion represents a liability to Canadians. It represents a matter of either return the premiums to those who paid them or improve programs that would then be affordable.

The government did neither of them, despite all of the interventions and all of the initiatives of members of Parliament. The Conservatives have summarily said it will disappear. It is basically another indication that the government has refused to be open, transparent, and accountable to Canadians on yet another area of significant public interest.

• (1325)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Mississauga South touched on a number of areas in Bill C-9 where the government is improperly bringing initiatives through the door of this omnibus bill.

I want to go back to the area of security charges. We know that in the United States the international air security charge is \$5. In Canada, the international air security charge ranges as high as \$25. That is a huge variation. I think Canadians could understand that if the tax money were being used for safety issues it may be justified. However, we know that the revenues collected far exceed the money spent on security.

What is the government using the money for and why did it increase this tax 50%? That is a huge increase at a time when the government says that it is reducing taxes on Canadians. It is doing the opposite.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member has pointed out another example of where the government has not satisfactorily explained to Canadians the basis for its policy decisions. We see this time and time again.

I think Canadians want some assurances that when we are in difficult economic times the government is taking prudent steps to address the challenges that face us. However, it is taxing through the back door with the proposed increases in EI premiums. Now it will have to increase premiums to pay for the deficits that it is accumulating currently, money that it collected once before in the \$57 billion.

All of a sudden it is going in circles. It is obfuscation on behalf of the government. It is quite unfortunate, particularly at a time when we have an aging society with so many demands on our health care and social services systems.

• (1330)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech and especially the spirit of his speech about how much is contained within this bill that it is almost like so much is being brought in under the cover of night. This stealth way of doing it is essentially irresponsible for any legislature to turn its back on this.

I would like to ask the member a question about some of the issues. He mentioned EI and talked about many other issues, but Canada Post will also be a major issue with remainders.

I commend the member for the comments he made that these bills standing alone would give it a fulsome debate in the House. Whether it is a minority or not, it does not matter. What matters is that each would receive a full hearing by all members of the House duly elected by their constituents.

In this particular situation, I will give one prime example that I feel is very important and that is the issue of telecoms. The bill would amend the Telecommunications Act to allow foreign satellite carriers to be considered a common carrier. That is an amazing policy shift that is contained within Bill C-9. It should be a stand alone bill.

I wonder if my hon. colleague has comments about that particular issue and others that he may have missed.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. He is very active in the House and follows the legislation. He knows how rigorous the process is when we deal with any of the varied items in this budget implementation bill, whether it be the remainders, the telecoms, AECL or the EI fund.

Any one of those issues would have had dozens of hours of debate and expert witnesses to ensure that we did our due diligence, so that when we have to vote on bills we do it from knowledge rather than from ignorance. The government has shown contempt for Parliament by not allowing parliamentarians to exercise due diligence.

Government Orders

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and debate this particular set of amendments to Bill C-9, the budget bill proposed by the Government of Canada. Quite clearly, we have heard the debate about the nature of this bill being the large omnibus type that the government has favoured in order to put forward very radical changes to Canadian society without the proper input of the parliamentary process, the committees and all of the things that could make any of these things more justifiable, if they are justifiable, in the minds of Canadians.

That is exactly what is going on here today. We are trying to achieve some of the things that were set out here in Parliament to accomplish. As our leader of the New Democratic Party has stated in the challenge he has put down to the other opposition parties, this is not likely the time that the government will call the tune and go to a potential election over these issues.

This is a good time to stand up for Canadians to try to make Parliament work, just as we have tried to make Parliament work with the Afghan detainee issue and a number of those types of issues that focused on how the process should be accomplished and how we should work within the House.

Here we are with another one of those issues. How does Parliament work? How should Parliament work in a minority situation?

In a minority situation, major changes to legislation should be available to the opposition parties and the public to understand completely and not be put forward in this very subversive fashion. It subverts the purpose of Parliament and puts it on an incorrect course. That is why we are all standing up here today and that is what we are working on.

I want to spend a little time on my particular subject, which is the question of aviation security. I am the transport critic for our party and, within the transport committee, a major study on aviation security is going on right now which started back in the days of prorogation. In the depths of winter, I organized a forum on aviation security, which the Liberal Party promptly joined into, and it had a great deal of success. It then moved on to looking at the issue within the committee.

Quite clearly, aviation security should be addressed in all its details before any additional charges are put on our aviation industry and then through to the customer. The aviation industry world-wide is under stress. Within Canada, most of the major carriers have had great difficulty and have lost money consistently over many years. This industry is not healthy. It has had to face up to many severe challenges. This industry supports the economics of Canada and of the world to a great degree with the movement of passengers and freight at a rapid pace around the world. When this industry is under stress, the result is very apparent within the economy. We saw that quite clearly with the volcanic ash cloud descending over Europe and the result of that within the economy of Europe. It was very carefully measured.

We saw that as well at Christmastime with the tremendous overreaction to a security incident in the United States that affected hundreds of millions of people in terms of the reuniting of families

and all the things that go along with that. When we look at doing things to the aviation industry, we need to be very careful, which is why we are doing a review right now on aviation security. Most of the experts agree that the knee-jerk reaction we have had to aviation security since 9/11 has to be reviewed. It has to be taken into account.

● (1335)

Transport Canada officials have stated that once they put in place aviation security requirements, they have a very difficult time when they are redundant. They cannot get rid of them and what we see are ever-escalating levels of security costs and no particular review.

I have a fine example of that. Since 9/11, we have very secure, locked cockpit doors, which has taken out some of the threats that we might have had before 9/11 without any requirement for aviation security. Therefore, the threat to aviation has changed and yet the security proceedings have not changed.

With this air travellers' security charge in the bill, it would increase the revenue the government is generating from aviation security without addressing the issues of aviation security and the costs. The charge would add a penalty on to Canadian flyers for something that is not appropriate within the system. It would be far more expensive than most other countries in the world and would leave our aviation industry at a disadvantage. This, of course, would take money out of the taxpayers' pockets and put it into the general revenues of the Government of Canada. In many cases this looks to be considerably more than the cost of aviation security in the country as a whole, even though our aviation security system desperately needs the renovation.

The government has talked about reviewing aviation security to get rid of some of the parts that do not work so well, while at the same time raising the air transport service security charge. This was done not to pay for the costs of this service. This was done to raise more revenue for the government. That is pretty clear when we look at this and that is why this needs further review. Just as the government wants to review aviation security and just as the transport committee is engaged in a study on aviation security right now, we need to do that work before we put extra charges on our already ailing aviation industry. This has been said over and over again.

What we have here is a crass attempt to hide a tax somewhere in the system to add more revenue to the government that does not want to stand up and admit that over the course of the next five years it will have to raise more revenue for government in order to deal with the massive deficit. This is hypocritical and, in real terms to our industry, is rather stupid. What we have is a stupid, hypocritical action here with the air travellers' security charge.

● (1340)

Mr. Jim Maloway: What do you really think of it?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, I really do not want to say what I really think of it but that is as close as I will get right now.

Government Orders

We need to go back to square one. We need to examine the threat that now exists within the system. In reality, the threat is mostly about bad people, not about bad things. It is about improving intelligence. Most of the major incidents in aviation in the last 20 years has been because of the failure of intelligence, not the failure of security, and that is what we need to point out over and over again. Intelligence is not a mandate that is solely selective to aviation passengers. It should not be paying for the intelligence that this country collects on terrorists. We should all be paying for that. In some ways, the U.S. charge of \$5 recognizes the fact that aviation security is not simply about the traveller but about the overall direction that a country has to take to prevent bad people from doing bad things.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the comments from the government was that it does not seem to see the argument that containing all this within one bill is a bad thing and that it is more or less the normal operation of government.

In 2005, when the Atlantic accord was signed with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, it was implemented in the budget bill at the time. Conservatives fought vehemently to carve it out. They used every principle there was to say that this should not be included in the budget bill. It was considered sneaky. It was considered underhanded. All the negative vernacular that could be mustered in this House was used for that situation. Yet now we find ourselves with a lot more contained within the budget.

I would like the member to highlight some of the other issues he may have missed in his speech about some of the major issues that should receive a wholesome debate in the House before it proceeds.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, of course, coming from the Northwest Territories, with our concern about drilling in the Beaufort Sea, a concern that will have even less expression within our environmental legislation if the budget bill goes ahead, I have to agree with the member. There are many other things I could have focused on. I chose to focus on aviation security, because that is my critic area. But when it comes to the issue of environmental protection, this budget goes beyond hypocritical. It goes beyond stupid. It gets to the point of being an act against the people of this country. When environmental protection is taken away under the guise of a budget, it is almost inconceivable that this should take place.

For the Liberals not to support us right now in getting forward this legislation in a fashion that is different is also hypocritical and dangerous to this country. I urge the Liberal Party to get behind this amendment so that we can deal with that particular issue with greater care than what is going to happen with this budget bill.

• (1345)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member from the Northwest Territories does an incredible job of representing his constituents and representing the interests of all Canadians on the protection and sustainable development of the north. I wish to thank him for that. I am sure that his constituents are grateful for the good job he does in the House.

The member started his comments on the proposed amendments to the bill by talking generally about the demise of democracy in the House. From my standpoint, being a mover of the motion to divide the bill, that is the very essence of the problem we have with the way the government is conducting itself on its budget bill.

Conservatives ran on a platform of openness and transparency, on providing a new way of democracy in Canada, and on the involvement of the grassroots. Yet it takes major changes to an environmental statute, developed over more than three decades by industry, the public, first nations, and small communities in every corner of Canada, and throws them into a budget bill, therefore limiting the discourse on a statute, by law, that was supposed to come before the parliamentary committee on the environment within months.

I wonder if he can speak to the issue that the very department that received an F grade from the Information Commissioner surely should be providing for better consultation on the bills that are the responsibility of that agency.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, quite clearly, the Minister of the Environment has abrogated his responsibility here. The Minister of the Environment in that cabinet must have understood what was going down here. He must have supported what was going down here with these environmental legislation changes hidden within a budget bill. He is the one who is responsible for this action. That should be made very clear.

How could anyone who calls himself an environment minister in this country consider this kind of action without public debate and without the principles of environmental protection that we hold so closely in this country and have held in the past? For that to be taken away like this without a specific public debate is really quite astounding.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my disappointment with the budget implementation bill.

In this time of economic uncertainty, the government has seen fit to ram through changes to legislation in the budget implementation bill rather than to follow an established democratic process. In our parliamentary democracy, it is customary for government to bring forward changes it wants to make here in the House and then to allow debate for hon. members, the representatives of the people, on their behalf.

The government chose to go another route. It chose to hide substantive policy changes in the implementation of this budget. As members know, this amounts to a kind of democratic blackmail. That is not only undemocratic, it is just plain wrong.

In what has become a disturbing pattern, the government has again, this year, incorporated into its budget implementation bill major changes to environmental safeguards.

Government Orders

Last year's budget bill took a slice out of the federal duty to assess the environmental impact of projects that could have potential impacts on the navigable waters of Canada. It moved to exempt all federal stimulus-funded projects from any assessment previously triggered by waterways impacts and those for which the federal contribution was under \$10 million. The beautiful province of British Columbia, my province, has hundreds of rivers, and this change puts them in serious danger.

These are just the sorts of changes Canadians want to see their representatives in this House discuss. That debate is completely eliminated when the government pushes through legislation in the background of a budget implementation bill.

This year's budget bill, however, swings an axe at a crucial environmental law, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The axe cuts deeply. What is most disturbing about the process by which this law is being eviscerated is that Parliament has moved that a review of the law be undertaken this year and that recommendations for reform be made. The review is already slated to come before the parliamentary committee on environment and sustainable development within weeks.

The government has chosen to short-circuit this process. Instead of hearing and considering the views of interested stakeholders and other concerned parties, it has chosen to fast-track the changes through this budget bill.

Bill C-9 transfers reviews of major energy projects from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The effect is the diminishment of public representation. Neither the NEB nor the CNSC are equipped to conduct community consultations, nor do either have previous experience with these sorts of projects.

It also removes from the public clear access to intervenor funds that would allow groups and individuals to make themselves heard, and it lessens the requirements to consider environmental factors when proceeding with a project.

Second, and this is most troubling, the Minister of the Environment will be empowered to narrow the scope of any environmental assessment, which sets a dangerous precedent. This means that at the discretion of the minister, a project can be approved based on an assessment of only part of its overall environmental impact.

In January of this year, the Supreme Court of Canada found that the government failed to follow federal laws by scoping the Red Chris mine in northern B.C. to exclude the mine and the mill in order to avoid a comprehensive assessment and public input. What Bill C-9 therefore means to do is remove from the public any recourse for requiring consultation.

In addition, Bill C-9 removes one of the key triggers for a federal assessment, and that is federal spending. The limit for federal spending that would require an assessment is all but completely removed. Almost all federal stimulus funding projects would be exempted.

The bill will exempt from environmental assessment all projects falling under the building Canada fund, the green infrastructure fund,

the recreation infrastructure fund, the border infrastructure fund, the municipal rural infrastructure fund, and many more. Such projects range from transmission lines running thousands of kilometres to road extensions, new bridges, and interchanges.

• (1350)

The New Democrat motion to enable the finance committee to split the bill provides the opportunity to defer study and the vote on the environmental reform measures until the environment committee review has been completed, which is a matter of only a few short months. Regrettably, the government manoeuvred to prevent this constructive solution from proceeding. Addressing long-term environmental or health impacts should not be shunted aside for short-term political gain from fast-tracked project approvals.

Ultimately, it is Canadians who will pay the cost. With these changes, one has to wonder what the future holds for the Enbridge pipeline project. Having just presented the proposal last week, will it be subject to the scrutiny and public consultation that is so needed, or will the minister narrow the scope and allow 225 oil tankers to sail along our coast every year? The people of northern British Columbia want to be consulted, and Bill C-9 effectively silences them.

I know that my time runs short, so let me be brief by saying that the budget still has many shortcomings. It has yet to fund a national transit strategy. In my riding, the Evergreen Line is desperately in need of funds so that it can be completed. In fact, it has not even been built. This is a project that was promised over two decades ago, and we are still waiting for the funds to complete it.

The budget invests over \$1 billion in a three-day event instead of putting much-needed police officers on the streets in every Canadian community. There is no money for a real, affordable housing strategy in this country. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans remains underfunded, under-resourced, and understaffed.

I hope that all hon. members will support the motion brought forward by my hon. colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona and will vote these measures out of Bill C-9.

• (1355)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his speech, the hon. member talked briefly about Fisheries and Oceans and how a lack of funding is certainly a problem that has existed for quite some time.

I was wondering if he could paint a picture of what was overlooked in this particular budget. We talked about eco-certification and an office therein, but I was wondering if he would also talk about what else should be in it. Since he is the fisheries critic for the New Democratic Party, I was wondering what else he would like to tell us was overlooked in this Bill C-9 budget.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, not only did the budget fail to address the real resources of the department, but in the throne speech there was absolutely no mention of salmon. We have an essential element of what makes the Canadian fabric what it is, and there is no mention of how we are going to protect our wild salmon.

Statements by Members

For instance, I met with a group today, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, which is looking for funds. It is looking for ways to protect the wild salmon by investing in habitat, in stewardship, and in watershed management, which is badly needed on the west coast. The group is not able to do the job that is needed to protect this magnificent animal, the wild salmon.

A problem emerging on the west coast is sea lice from fish farms. That needs to be addressed.

There are so many issues under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans that could be addressed in the budget, yet the budget fails to address them. I hope we take a greater look at that.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member gave a fine speech. Ironically, today is the 20th anniversary of the Sparrow decision, when the Supreme Court of Canada handed down its decision on treaty negotiations.

With respect to what we see as the complete undermining of the environmental assessment regulations in this omnibus budget implementation bill, how does the member see this kind of regulation impacting on the duty to consult by the government? A number of first nations have spoken out quite strongly, raising concerns around this process and the bill. Could he comment on what he sees as possibly being a looming problem and perhaps future litigation in court cases?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, that is a question of great concern to many first nation communities across the country. When these types of moves happen at the federal level to remove democracy or democratic processes that do not allow groups, organizations, governments like our first nations to be involved with decisions that will impact their very lives and communities, we are very concerned about those.

We do not see the accountability, openness and access that was promised. We see the reverse. We are seeing behind-closed-door decisions and legislation being rammed through at record speeds. We do not see an inclusion of communities like first nations to strengthen the way we do business and operate in our country.

This problem needs to be fixed by separating out these processes so they can be debated and discussed in a democratic way, including first nation communities and many others in our country.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have demanded that the government crackdown on crime. For too many years, the Liberal politicians have weakened our laws and legal system. Our government is correcting that imbalance.

In the last month we have announced legislation to eliminate pardons for serious crimes, protect children from online exploitation, provide mandatory jail time for serious drug offences, tackle auto theft and trafficking in property obtain by crime and provide tougher sentences for white-collar crime.

Earlier we took action to crackdown on gun crime, increased the age of consent, eliminated house arrest for violent crime, strengthened penalties for street racing and much more.

We are now also taking steps to enhance the safety and security of the online marketplace with legislation to combat spam and amendments to protect the personal information of Canadians.

This government is delivering on our commitment to make our streets and our communities safer.

* * *

[Translation]

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today, on World No Tobacco Day, to speak about the damaging effects of cigarettes, especially for youth.

[English]

When I was first elected in 1997, smoking rates were 31%. By 2006, the Liberal government had reduced that number to 19%.

Since the Conservatives have come to power, there has been no further reduction in smoking rates and illegal tobacco sales have doubled nationally, to over 32%, in 2008. Contraband cigarette smuggling costs Canada an estimated \$2 billion a year in lost revenues.

The government's announcement on Friday is too little, too late. A comprehensive approach must include enforcement, education, engagement of first nations, as well as interdepartmental and interjurisdictional co-operation.

We urge the government to re-evaluate the failed enforcement strategy that has seen the number of contraband cigarettes double and put our youth at increased risk—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[Translation]

“MP FOR A DAY” COMPETITION

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to welcome Frédéric Michel, a student from the Cégep de Victoriaville, who won the 2010 “MP for a Day” competition.

This competition is part of a course that studies political life and systems. Its main goal is to interest youth in politics and allow them to learn more about public life.

This year, students had to write about the challenges related to agricultural policy. This gave them the opportunity to explore many of the issues faced by the agricultural sector.

Statements by Members

I would like to thank Jean-François Léonard, the political science and geography teacher, with whom I organized the competition. I would also like to thank the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du Centre-du-Québec, the Sévigny-Baril duo from La Capitale as well as the UPA Centre-du-Québec for their contributions to the scholarships awarded to Frédéric and the students who came in second and third, Maxime Labrie and Sarah L. Desrochers.

* * *

[*English*]

OIL SPILLS

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as we watch the ongoing environmental devastation caused by the oil leak in the Gulf of Mexico, now is the time for Canada to take proactive measures to prevent similar disasters from damaging Canadian shores.

We know oil spills are ecological disasters that impact entire ecosystems. They spread damage over thousands of kilometres of ocean and shoreline. They have a catastrophic impact, as fisheries are wiped out and communities are devastated and their damage lasts for decades, if not centuries.

We also know they are inevitable. Wherever oil is drilled or transported in tankers, accidents will happen. The question is not if, but when. On British Columbia's pristine coastline, this is far too high a price to pay.

Last year I introduced a bill to ban oil tankers in sensitive waters. I hope all members of the House support this effort at disaster prevention.

The government must also permanently legislate a moratorium on offshore oil and gas drilling in B.C. and the Arctic. The short-term economic benefit of offshore drilling is outweighed many times over by the economic impact of the inevitable spill and the permanent damage to our coastal ecosystem that would certainly result.

* * *

HOCKEY

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Essex county is the hotbed for Canadian hockey talent. We might be the Florida of our country, but when it comes to hockey, no one does it better than our region.

For the second year in a row, the Windsor Spitfires have captured the Junior A Championship, the 92nd Memorial Cup. The Wheaties of Brandon were indeed the breakfast of Windsor champions Taylor Hall, the tournament's MVP, who, together with Spits defenceman Cam Fowler, are expected to be selected in the top five picks in the upcoming NHL entry draft, with 10 Spitfires expected to make NHL teams this year.

However, that is not all. The LaSalle Vipers captured the Junior B Championship, the Sutherland Cup. The Belle River Canadiens advanced to the finals of the Junior C Championship. The Canadian Hockey League named the town of Essex's Matt Puempfe its rookie of the year.

It is true that Windsor-Essex is the automotive capital of Canada, but with this year's hockey successes, Windsor-Essex is centre ice for Canada's game.

* * *

● (1405)

ANNIVERSARY CONGRATULATIONS

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in commemoration and celebration of two historic anniversaries of landmark institutions in my riding and indeed in Quebec and the country as a whole.

The first is the centennial anniversary of Maimonides Geriatric Centre, affiliated with McGill University since 1979. The first psychogeriatric day hospital in both Canada and the United States, it is recognized for its high quality of care, its respect for the dignity of its clients and its incredible army of volunteers.

The second is the centennial anniversary of the Young Men's — Young Women's Hebrew Association.

[*Translation*]

The institution popularly known as “the Y” was a second home for me on Mont-Royal Avenue when I was young. And now it has moved to my riding of Mount Royal.

[*English*]

It has evolved today into a state of the art fitness community and cultural centre that reaches out to all people regardless of race, religion, age and economic class.

I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to these two incredible institutions, of which we are all their beneficiaries.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ÉTIENNE-LE BEL CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as the ongoing issues at Chalk River give us reason to worry about the future of the medical isotope supply, researchers at the Étienne-Le Bel Clinical Research Centre at CHUS and the Université de Sherbrooke's faculty of medicine have shown that technetium-99m can be produced using a cyclotron, which does not require highly enriched uranium and does not produce radioactive waste. Creating a decentralized cyclotron network would secure our supply of technetium. The Étienne-Le Bel Centre is already involved in building a new cyclotron, and the cost of setting up a pilot site in Sherbrooke will be just a fraction of that associated with nuclear reactors.

Not only are researchers at the Étienne-Le Bel Centre pioneers in this field, but they are also offering the government a solution on a silver platter. I support the Étienne-Le Bel Centre's proposal, and I hope that the government will be smart enough to do so too.

Statements by Members

[English]

INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S DAY

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and welcome four remarkable young girls from Kelowna, British Columbia who are here with us today to lead a children's march on Parliament Hill. The march will take place tomorrow at noon to commemorate International Children's Day and to highlight a child's right to education, protection, equality and health.

Cassandra Hinchliffe, Jenni Matheson, Amelia Leonard and founder Alaina Podmorow are members of Little Women for Little Women in Afghanistan. They are dedicated and committed to helping children around the world and are asking Canadians to do the same. In Alaina's own words, "Every single Canadian must take responsibility and take action....Each of us must make change".

Each member and senator in Parliament has received an invitation to join the march. I thank everyone who has already confirmed their attendance and thank the young ladies for their leadership and for providing hope and opportunity to children around the world. Education equals peace.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ranchers in Alberta and Saskatchewan have fought through two tough years of drought. Today I am pleased to announce in the House that our government has committed over \$114 million to help our ranchers buy feed while their damaged pastures recover.

Our farmers and ranchers are a hardy bunch and they take pride in their independence. Ranchers in my riding are in the heart of this area and this new funding will provide a much needed boost to them. This critical support is thanks to the hard work of our Minister of Agriculture as well as Alberta Minister Jack Hayden and his Saskatchewan counterpart. The Saskatchewan agriculture minister, Bob Bjonnerud, said:

The drought had a major effect on livestock producers in the designated area and this initiative will help them address the resulting additional feed costs.

This is another example of how our government works together with its provincial counterparts to support our farm sector.

* * *

● (1410)

ST. JOHN'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the St. John's International Airport is a gateway to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. On occasion, however, adverse weather conditions hamper and delay air traffic. Not having the right airport landing equipment can cause diversions and delays, which are holding the airport back from reaching its full potential as an economic enabler.

For example, decisions regarding plant and office locations, the booking of large conferences and entertainment events are influenced by this frustrating problem. The airport authority seeks to enhance the landing equipment and infrastructure by the

installation of a category 3 instrument landing system and related airfield infrastructure. This would increase availability to 98.91% and would place St. John's International Airport in the same usability range as other major Canadian airports.

In the first year of implementation, 700 arriving and departing flights would potentially be spared disruption due to adverse weather conditions. Clearly, these improvements at the airport would be a priority. I encourage the federal government to act quickly to enhance this vital transportation link.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada announced today that the Canadian economy grew by 6.1% in the first quarter of 2010. This is the strongest quarterly rate in a decade.

Today's report shows that Canada's economic action plan is making our economy stronger and stronger.

With the tax relief granted by our government to help Canadian families, consumer spending has risen. Business investment has also increased thanks to our government's strong support for job creation.

The OECD and the International Monetary Fund are predicting that our economic growth will be the strongest of all the G7 countries this year and next.

Canada's economy is on the right track, but the global recovery remains fragile. We must complete Canada's economic action plan, which has the support of the Conservative members from Quebec.

While the Liberals have plans to raise taxes, our government is working hard to save jobs and maintain our economic growth.

* * *

[English]

FREEDOM FLOTILLA

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, New Democrats are shocked and deeply saddened by the unacceptable loss of life and injuries sustained as a result of the raid by Israeli forces against the Freedom Flotilla of ships bringing aid to Gaza.

Our leader joins other international leaders in the call for an urgent and independent investigation into this terrible incident that jeopardizes the pursuit of peace in the region. He also calls on our Prime Minister to immediately lend Canada's voice to the rapidly growing call for this inquiry.

Statements by Members

This violence further underlines the urgent need for a negotiated peace and resolution to the crisis in Gaza. New Democrats further call on the Canadian government to work with the international community to find an end to loss of life in this region.

Speaking personally, I hope that our Prime Minister took the opportunity he had today on the world stage to strongly express those concerns directly to the Prime Minister of Israel.

I extend my profound sympathy to the families of those who died and call on Israel to immediately release all those detained in this incident in international waters. Respect for those who seek peace must be fundamental to actions of all governments.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we heard that Canada has recorded its strongest quarterly rate of economic growth in a decade. Indeed, Canada posted the strongest first quarter growth in the entire G7. No wonder the OECD secretary-general singled out Canada for praise, saying:

I think Canada looks good—it shines, actually

Canada's economic action plan is having a major positive impact with its job-creating tax cuts, stimulus infrastructure projects, and much more. Our Conservative government's plan has helped create 285,000 jobs since last July.

The last thing our economy needs is a massive Liberal tax grab. While our plan is helping lead the way on jobs and growth, the Liberal plan to raise taxes would halt our recovery in its tracks, and according to experts, would kill almost 400,000 jobs. Canada's economy just cannot afford another Liberal tax grab.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, some current members of the Conservative cabinet may have to say goodbye to their seats in the next election. This should be the case for the members for Louis-Saint-Laurent, Pontiac and Mégantic—L'Érable, who are all ministers, as well as the member for Beauce.

In fact, they may not even have the right to run. Why? Because they violated the Canada Elections Act by exceeding the allowable campaign expenses in 2006, which allowed them to unfairly promote the Conservative campaign platform.

It is probably this same desire that motivated the government to plaster economic action plan signs from coast to coast to coast at an outrageous cost of \$42 million. When it comes to spreading propaganda about Conservative Reform ideas, the government does not balk at spending astronomical amounts.

No one should ignore the law. That applies to all citizens and even more so to Conservative ministers.

● (1415)

[English]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's incompetence has already run up a staggering \$1.1 billion tab for the upcoming G8 and G20 summits.

Earlier this year the government budgeted security costs at \$179 million. That figure has since been eclipsed by this Conservative boondoggle.

How could the Conservatives not anticipate that changing the location on the fly, to the heart of Canada's largest city, would lead to uncontrollable security costs and countless lost work hours for those closed businesses within the security perimeter?

Canadian taxpayers now have to fork out \$1.1 billion, more than \$100 per family, for just 72 hours of meetings. By comparison, the G20 summit in Britain cost only \$30 million.

The Conservatives preach fiscal restraint to justify their crippling funding cuts to Canadian environmental programs, international aid and women's groups. They say they have no money for early learning, EI, pension reform and other real problems affecting Canadians.

The hypocrisy is both breathtaking and obscene.

* * *

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is an important one for those of us who have long opposed the long gun registry.

Tomorrow, the public safety committee will start clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-391, which would end this registry.

However, Liberal MPs such as the member for Ajax—Pickering, as well as the NDP justice critic, have hinted that they are ready to play political games by introducing amendments to Bill C-391 that would actually keep the long gun registry.

It has been well known for some time that the Liberal leader's plan is to force his rural MPs to support this boondoggle. What is not so well known is that the NDP leader and his justice critic have hinted that they too will move amendments to keep the long gun registry, a move that may surprise the 12 NDP MPs who supported Bill C-391.

It is time for NDP MPs who voted against keeping the long gun registry to speak up. Their voters deserve to be heard.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***PUBLIC SAFETY**

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are happy that we are sponsoring the G8 and G20 summits, but the government's planning of this has been a mess. It shifted the location, its agenda has antagonized world leaders, and now security costs have gone through the roof. Every time the government tries to explain this, its explanations get more and more farcical.

Will the Prime Minister accept responsibility for this fiasco, and will he give Canadians an honest accounting of how these security costs have spiralled out of control?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say very directly to the Leader of the Opposition that, regrettably, security costs money. This is not money we want to spend; this is money that security experts tell us we must spend.

There are literally tens of thousands of people who will be convening in our biggest city, Toronto. We have an important responsibility to keep these people, who are coming from right around the world, safe. It is not just the 30 leaders, it is the tens of thousands of people who join them. We are committed to doing just that.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they should have known that before they changed the venue. There is no summit in the history of the world that has cost as much as this one, and it is not just the security costs, it is the agenda.

Two world leaders came to Ottawa to beg the Prime Minister personally to put the environment and climate change on the agenda: the UN Secretary-General and the President of Mexico. The Prime Minister turned them down, so now Canadians are asking why this summit is costing us a billion dollars and the Canadian agenda will not even allow leaders to talk about what matters. How come?

•(1420)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the child and maternal health issue, the Prime Minister has shown great leadership.

Let me tell the House what the G20 will be discussing. They will be discussing something that is foreign to the leader of the Liberal Party: the economy and the need to create jobs.

The coordinated effort of the G20 has played an absolutely instrumental role in preventing what could have been a worldwide economic depression. That is why today, this government was so thrilled to see the first quarter results out for the Canadian economy. The Canadian economy grew by 6.1% under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the economy grew because of the leadership of Canadians, not the Prime Minister.

[Translation]

No one is suggesting that the economy should not be discussed during the summit. It is possible to talk about both the environment and the economy. This is the only government that does not believe it is possible. And now it is spending \$1 billion. Why not talk about both issues?

Will the Prime Minister at least put the environment on the agenda for the G20 and the G8?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has shown great leadership, as has the Minister of the Environment, on the important issues facing our planet. That is why Canada was an enthusiastic supporter of the Copenhagen accord, which is the next generation of environmental leadership that we are seeing.

However, with the G20 and the G8, one of their fundamental priorities is the economy and what we can do to instill more jobs, more hope and more opportunity. That is the kind of leadership the Prime Minister is providing to Canadians, and as host, when he welcomes the world, he will be able to sell the Canadian success story, something that even the leader of the Liberal Party should be proud of.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, conservative costs for the G20 have ballooned into a billion dollar boondoggle. Canadians understand the need for security. What they do not understand is why it is costing hard-working Canadian taxpayers over a billion bucks of their money when the Conservatives told them it would only cost \$179 million.

Canadians have to live within their budgets. Why can the Conservatives not live within theirs? How can the Conservatives claim any credibility at a conference focused on fiscal restraint when they cannot even manage the budget for the conference?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear to the Liberal Party that all the costs have been fully budgeted for and the government is on target.

Let me also say this. This is an important opportunity for Canada to provide leadership on the world stage. These are not funds that we want to spend on security. These are funds that we have to spend. These are funds that our security experts tell us we must spend, and I can say very directly that at the Hokkaido summit held in Japan, the security costs were in excess of \$1.5 billion. So, regrettably, the costs of security are not insubstantial.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives just do not get it. They are completely out of touch with Canadians. One billion dollars can buy 500 MRI machines or 340,000 hip or knee surgeries. It would pay for 17,000 public health nurses. These are the priorities for Canadians. Why are they not the priorities for the Conservative government?

Why did the Conservatives not plan properly for the G20 conference, and who over there is going to stand up and take responsibility for this waste and incompetence?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this party and this government need no lectures from a Liberal when it comes to waste and incompetence. We saw in the years that the Liberal Party was in power more than enough of that.

Let me say this. None of us are pleased with the amount that security costs, but we are listening to the experts. These are not funds that we would like to spend. These are funds that we have to spend.

We will be hosting not just 30 world leaders but literally tens of thousands of leaders from around the world. We must do our part to ensure that they are kept safe.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government broke its own law by withholding a report from the Commissioner of Firearms showing that police forces are using the gun registry more than ever before. According to the law, the Conservative government had until last October 22 to table the report. It did not release the report until November 4, which was two days after the vote on Bill C-391 to eliminate the gun registry.

Why did the government wait so long to table the Commissioner of Firearms' report?

• (1425)

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has his facts wrong. The RCMP has confirmed that the force submitted its firearms report on October 9, 2009, and that the report was, in fact, tabled according to the rules.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Suzanne Hurtubise, had to take her minister to task about the deadline for tabling the report.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he is willing to do anything, even break one of his own laws, to hide information that might interfere with his firearms registry agenda?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, the member has his facts wrong. The RCMP has confirmed that the force submitted its firearms report on October 9, 2009, and that the report was, in fact, tabled according to the rules.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a broad coalition of Quebec stakeholders is urging the government to maintain the gun registry. The National Assembly, police forces, families of victims of crime, public health experts and many others want the government to keep long gun control in place.

Why does this government want to eliminate the gun registry despite the fact that it saves lives and that stakeholders in Quebec agree it is a good thing?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. While we support the licensing and registration of prohibited weapons, we do not support the wasteful long gun registry. It is time to end the criminalization of our hunters and outdoor enthusiasts once and for all. Police Chief Hanson from Calgary has called the long gun registry a placebo and said that it creates a false sense of security.

[Translation]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government is so short of arguments to justify its ideology that its spokesperson, Senator Boisvenu, has resorted to talking about the large number of deer that cause accidents and single mothers who do not teach their sons about hunting. He even bemoaned the fact that it does not occur to 14- to 18-year-olds to buy guns. That is appalling! The fact is that in 2009, over 7,000 long guns were confiscated for public safety reasons.

Why is the government bent on eliminating a registry that saves lives?

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite does not trust us, maybe she would believe the Leader of the Opposition who said:

No sensible Canadian thinks the problem is the shotgun on the barn door. No sensible Canadian thinks the problem is the target shooter or the legitimate licensed gun owner. The problem is those handguns.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' \$1 billion boondoggle on the G8 and the G20 is still upsetting Canadians and Torontonians, in particular. The rather weak defence from the Minister of Public Safety this weekend was that the government could have saved a lot of money if it had called in the army, but it was afraid, get this, of Liberal propaganda. It was afraid of Liberal propaganda, so it is spending all this money.

Why will the Prime Minister and the government not simply admit they have mismanaged this project?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. Let me say this very directly to the leader of the fourth party, regrettably security costs money. This is not money that we want to spend. This is money that security experts tell us we must spend.

There will be literally tens of thousands of people from around the world, in addition to the 30 world leaders who will be visiting Canada. We must ensure that they are kept safe. Some of these individuals have significant security risks and we want to ensure that they, the people of Muskoka and the people of Toronto, are kept safe.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is an easy way to get to the bottom of this and to test the claim of the minister, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has agreed to look into these costs.

The government needs to provide him with all of the documents and all of the figures so that he can do this. We are currently debating the very estimates that provide the funding for this whole project.

Will the government provide those documents and all of those figures to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, so that we can have the information and his analysis when it comes time to cast those votes?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very direct to the leader of the NDP. We certainly welcome the important work of the Auditor General. We welcome the review of the Parliamentary Budget Officer on the summits' security bill.

* * *

• (1430)

MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess we can expect those documents within a couple of days and we will look forward to that.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister said that he wanted to make improving women's health the main focus of his G8 presidency. With just four weeks to go before the summit, Canada has still not announced any funds. Rumour has it that the government is planning on spending only \$1 billion over five years.

Can the Prime Minister explain why he is prepared to spend as much on a three-day conference as he is on five—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of International Cooperation.

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reason why we will be focusing on maternal and child health is because today 500,000 women are dying during pregnancy and delivery, and eight million children under the age of five are dying every year.

This demonstrates the kind of leadership that Canada will have going into the G8 and the G20. Because we are leaders, that is why we are also hosting all the great leaders of the world to discuss these important issues.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OFFSHORE DRILLING

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, although the Americans have instituted a moratorium in the same waters, the Conservatives are moving forward with issuing permits for oil exploration in the Beaufort Sea. And they have less stringent regulations than the ones that apply to companies exploring in the American section of that same sea.

Will the government suspend all oil activities in the Canadian Arctic, including Lancaster Sound and the Beaufort Sea, until a comprehensive review of the risks of offshore drilling in the far north has been completed?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 11, the National Energy Board announced that it would review offshore drilling regulations. I remind my colleague once again that no drilling permits have been issued for the Arctic or the Beaufort Sea.

We are happy that the American authorities have also decided to suspend the drilling that was planned for this spring, because they have reached the same conclusion as us. The entire process must be reviewed.

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government says there is no explanation in the Beaufort, but it is fast-tracking licences and allowing seismic testing on the sea floor.

The National Energy Board warned the government that it did not know whether a relief well could ever be drilled in the same season should there be an accident. That means a spill in the north could last up to a year or longer.

Shell Oil and Cairn Energy are already beginning to drill in those same waters. For the fifth time, will the government immediately table an emergency and safety contingency plan to deal with any oil spill off any of Canada's three coasts?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no drilling authorization has been granted, period. No drilling is taking place at present in the Arctic or the Beaufort Sea. This is the case.

President Obama wants to examine what happened in the Gulf of Mexico to better understand and improve the regulations to ensure the future safety of workers and to protect the environment. The President has reached the same conclusion as we have here in Canada.

Let me be clear, the NEB announced that it will review the entire process, the public will be invited, and the process will be open and transparent.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives hid a report on the effectiveness of the firearms registry for a number of weeks.

They wanted to mislead Parliament just as members were to vote on whether or not to maintain the registry.

The Conservative culture of deceit has soared to new heights when the Prime Minister wants to mislead Canadians and their Parliament on such an important issue.

What right did they have to hide this report from parliamentarians last October?

Oral Questions

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite did not hear because she was yelling when I answered this before, but the RCMP has confirmed that the force submitted its firearms report on October 9, 2009, and that the report was, in fact, tabled according to the rules.

[Translation]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, they do not listen to police. They accuse them of being in a cult. Then, they bury a report that shows that police need a registry.

The icing on the cake is that Senator Boisvenu blamed the overpopulation of deer on the registry and single mothers. That is shameful. The registry saves 300 lives a year, and police want to keep it.

Do the Conservatives and the NDP really want to be responsible for 300 deaths a year just for the sake of the deer population?

● (1435)

[English]

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me say what Al Koenig, former president of the Calgary Police Association, had to say:

—proposed mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes— and not the gun registry—will curb firearms offences. Wiping the slate clean and not making responsible gun owners into criminals is a good start.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Israeli army launched a bloody attack on a convoy of ships bringing humanitarian aid to Gaza. The convoy, led by a flagship carrying over 600 people who wanted to be involved in bringing aid, was sailing in international waters. It was loaded with 10,000 tonnes of building material, textiles and food. Between 10 and 19 people were killed.

Will the government officially demand that an international investigation be launched into the circumstances surrounding this tragic raid?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, Canada deeply regrets this incident, which caused deaths and injuries. We are trying to obtain more information at this time in order to shed some light on this tragic incident.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, arms control is a vital part of the peace process in the Middle East. In the past, the Canadian government has been very active in controlling and limiting nuclear proliferation.

Did the Prime Minister take advantage of Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to ask the Israeli leader to sign the international nuclear non-proliferation treaty?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that the parties that have already signed the treaty, specifically Iran, must comply fully and

completely with existing International Atomic Energy Agency treaties.

* * *

SECURITIES

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec coalition continues to grow. Constitutional expert Henri Brun is adding his voice and denouncing the federal power grab in the area of securities.

He believes that voluntary membership is just a sham, a ploy, and even though the federal government is pretending that there is no requirement to join, Quebec will lose its ability to regulate financial markets.

Why is the Conservative government taking over this economic lever and showing contempt for the Constitution and the people of Quebec?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the lever that this government is trying to put in place is a lever that will protect and encourage investments coming into this country. It will protect the secure investments of Canadians. We are putting in place a voluntary Canadian securities regulator. Quebec and all the provinces are welcome to join whenever they wish.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary must be suffering from jet lag to say such things.

If the Conservative government succeeds in its power grab at the Supreme Court, Henri Brun believes that a very powerful undertow will negatively affect Quebec on the financial markets, and, I quote: "This will exert enormous pressure [on Quebec] that we will not be able to withstand."

Why is the Conservative government pushing so hard to create an administrative nightmare? Is it to strip Quebec of its financial position for the benefit of Toronto perhaps?

[English]

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member was envious that he was not able to join us at the OECD last week. He stayed here to try to fight something that most Canadians are in favour of. In fact, if he had been with us at the OECD he would have heard this statement by the OECD:

The presence of multiple regulators has resulted in inadequate enforcement and inconsistent investor protection. It also makes it harder for the country to respond to changes in the global market place or to rapidly innovate.

We heard that at the OECD last week. And I am over my jet-lag, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

•(1440)

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the industry minister cannot seem to help himself. It is one mess after another. The G20 \$1 billion boondoggle is largely due to him vainly attempting to shoehorn it into his own riding, until a costly switch to Toronto.

As health minister, he used his title to act as pitchman in a video produced by one of his political supporters.

Does the minister not understand that favouring one company over all others violates Treasury Board rules?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. There is no conflict here. There is no pecuniary interest.

We did not hear the hon. members on the other side of the aisle when Jean Chrétien went around the world with team Canada: 100 business people, 200 business people. They were happy to applaud him when he did that but I cannot stick up for the people in my riding.

We are here to do a job. We are here to build businesses in this country. We are here to build the economy. We had a 6.1% growth in the last quarter. We are doing our job.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this video is no trade mission. Even the *National Post* gets that message. It said that it was no trade mission. It said today:

If [he] doesn't understand the distinctions, maybe he's not qualified to be industry minister.

It added:

Picture Hillary Clinton... promoting Mars bars in Shanghai.

Government policy bars a minister from providing a marketing advantage to single entities. Will the Prime Minister act on this brazen violation of the rules?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are proud in our role and responsibility as MPs and as cabinet ministers to promote business, promote Canadian business, promote jobs and promote opportunities. That is part of our job.

What do those members do on the other side? They think of ways to tax Canadians and tax businesses, which is why they are on that side. That is why we have 6.1% growth in quarter one. We are proud of our record.

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ETHICS

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Justice Oliphant found countless ethical violations involving Brian Mulroney.

Mr. Mulroney received a \$2.1 million settlement from Canadians after he claimed, under oath, that he had no business relationship with Karlheinz Schreiber.

Justice Oliphant called Mr. Mulroney's excuses "patently absurd".

Oral Questions

In light of today's report, will the government immediately launch legal proceedings to recover the \$2.1 million and launch a broader inquiry to finally get to the bottom of the Airbus affair?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government sends its appreciation to Justice Oliphant and all those who worked with him in producing that report.

The report was released about an hour and a half ago. It makes a number of recommendations and the government will be reviewing those recommendations.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the Conservatives who prevented Justice Oliphant from investigating the real issue.

Brian Mulroney stated under oath that he did not have a business relationship with Karlheinz Schreiber. This got him a \$2.1 million payment from the government. We must immediately initiate legal proceedings to recover the \$2.1 million and there should be a public inquiry into the Airbus affair.

Will they take these two steps or will they continue to protect their own?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, as usual, the hon. member has it wrong. The questions were drafted by an independent individual, a Dr. Johnston.

There have been a number of recommendations and the government will be reviewing those recommendations in due course.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the public safety committee will start clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-391 to scrap the wasteful long gun registry.

Front line police officers from across the country, as well as four key provincial attorneys general and justice ministers have all been clear. They oppose keeping the wasteful and inefficient long gun registry, and yet Liberal and NDP members continue to ignore these voices.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Public Safety tell the House why the Liberals and the NDP should avoid political games and support this bill?

•(1445)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his hard work and dedication to ending this wasteful and ineffective long gun registry.

Oral Questions

At committee we have heard real police officers with real front line experience and they agree. The registry is not reliable and does not protect police officers.

I call upon the Liberals and NDP, especially those who voted for Bill C-391 at second reading, to listen to their constituents, not the Liberal leader, and keep Bill C-391 as is.

* * *

OFFSHORE DRILLING

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, British Petroleum announced that its latest plan has failed. Thousands of gallons of oil continue to spew into the ocean unabated and the disaster in the gulf only gets worse.

The fact is that a similar or worse catastrophe could easily happen here. In this country, experts report that after years of deregulation, Canada actually has even weaker environmental laws than those governing the offshore in the U.S.

Will the minister finally take action to close this industry loophole, stop listening to his friends in the oil lobby and get on with the job of protecting Canadians?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are appalled and horrified by what they are seeing in the gulf but my friend overstates the case. He is fully aware that no licences have been issued for drilling in Canada's north, none whatsoever in terms of deep drilling.

He is also fully aware that the National Energy Board is undertaking a very serious review of the environmental standards and public safety standards that will apply to all such future wells.

Canadians can be confident in how this matter is being dealt with.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, soon after the spill, President Obama announced a six month freeze on new drilling and a massive investigation into what exactly what wrong.

Meanwhile, the Conservative government continues to pretend that it was just an isolated accident that cannot happen here. However, the government's own regulator testified that a spill could happen in Canadian waters with the only difference being that it would be worse under our conditions.

Will the minister pull his head out of the tar sands long enough to realize that his agenda of gutting environmental protection and letting industry self-regulate is leading us to catastrophe?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, listening to my colleague, one would almost think that he is hoping for a catastrophe so that he can make some political hay. That is not how it works. As we have said from the beginning, no authorization has been issued for offshore drilling in the Beaufort Sea or arctic waters and no project will begin unless the government is convinced that the environment and the health and safety of workers will be protected.

That being said, we are pleased that President Obama has announced a six-month freeze on assessments because it means that they have come to the same point as us: the National Energy Board

will review the entire process and the public will be invited to participate.

* * *

FISHERIES

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the visit by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to the Gaspé, the Quebec government called for emergency measures to mitigate the 63% decrease in the snow crab quota in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence. The Quebec fisheries minister is calling for more flexibility in the EI system to support fishers, fishers' helpers and factory workers who have been affected by the crab crisis.

Will the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development take action?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is always unfortunate to have to reduce the catch rates in the fisheries, but our priority must be to protect the resource. I think that we must take a cautious approach with an issue like this. We must also think about the future, and according to experts, by 2012, the stocks should be replenished. Also, we are in negotiations with the Government of Quebec to find ways to mitigate the impact this has had on everyone involved.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is responsible for the current crab crisis, because it mismanaged the resource. Now it must step up and help the 1,000 workers in eastern Quebec who have been affected by this crisis.

Does the government plan on guaranteeing these workers and their families a minimum income by providing financial assistance or by making adjustments to the number of hours required, so that they can qualify for employment insurance?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, we obviously sympathize with the workers affected. I think my colleague is well aware that the higher the unemployment rate in a region, the fewer the hours of work required to be eligible for assistance.

I remind members that we have invested \$1.5 billion in training for workers. We have made it much easier for the Government of Quebec to do what it needs to do to provide training so that workers who are experiencing difficulties can find another profession. Quebec also has ways of helping these people—

● (1450)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

*Oral Questions***MEDICAL ISOTOPES**

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the Chalk River facility closed, the isotope shortage has been getting worse by the day, to the point where sick people are being deprived of essential care. One solution to this shortage would be to get isotopes from Israel though a Health Canada approved company called Lantheus.

Why does the Minister of Health refuse to try this very obvious solution, which would save lives?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member is well aware, this is a global issue. The supply of medical isotopes will never completely diminish but there is a global shortage.

In our commitment to the health and safety of Canadians, we are coping and will continue to work very closely with the provinces, the territories and the medical community to ensure that patients do receive the care they need.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was no answer there.

Last week, the supply of medical isotopes was at 10% of normal, which means that cancer patients must wait even longer for tests.

Despite this ongoing crisis, the government has rejected a plan to have additional isotopes supplied by Israel.

Why has the government turned its back on thousands of cancer patients and their families telling them to fend for themselves? Why, more than a year after this crisis started, has it failed to secure a stable supply of isotopes?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, Canadians can take comfort in the fact that their government decided to address the problem in order to strengthen the supply chain.

First of all, the top priority of the government and AECL is getting the NRU reactor up and running. That is our top priority. We must also look at the medium and long terms. We voted to invest \$35 million in research to develop cyclotron accelerators. Some \$10 million has been invested in clinical trials and \$3 million to ensure the best possible coordination in the supply chain. That is action. That is what we have—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain.

* * *

[English]

BILL C-9

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government buried major policy changes in the budget hoping to ram them through unnoticed with the rest of its agenda.

This American-style approach is bad for democracy and goes against the transparency the government pretends is so important to it.

The Liberals are no better. They are all talk and no action when it comes to opposing Bill C-9.

We are calling upon both parties to do the right thing for Canadians by pulling these sections out of the budget. If the government really believes that these changes have public support, then it can reintroduce them as stand-alone bills if it must.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe it has been almost three months now that we have been debating this bill in the House of Commons and at committee. The all party House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance has studied it, heard from dozens of witnesses and there were no amendments. It passed in fact in the House.

There are some very critical and important components in this. We wish the opposition would recognize that Canadians want this moved forward and need it moved forward. The opposition should stop opposing everything good.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the sweeping policy changes the Conservatives and Liberals are forcing through are ill-conceived and bad for Canada.

At a time when the entire southern coast of the U.S. is at risk from a major oil disaster, why would the government gut environmental protection for new energy projects in Canada? Why are the Conservatives so keen to have a fire sale of AECL, a valuable and internationally recognized nuclear research agency?

If the Liberals and Conservatives are so sure these policies would wash with Canadians, why are they hiding them in an 880 page budget bill?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the hon. member and her party would be opposed to the changes that have been put forward relative to environmental assessments. They have been called upon by all of the premiers in this country every year for the past 10 years. The smart regulator has called for these changes. In fact, the Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability, who reports to this House, has called for precisely these changes. They would increase the authority of the Minister of the Environment and of CEAA to streamline the process to make it more effective and more responsive to Canadians.

* * *

● (1455)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Environment Week, a week championed by our Conservative forefather Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, who was born in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound in Neustadt. Even back then, Conservative governments realized the importance of protecting the environment.

Would the Minister of the Environment please tell the House how this government is continuing the Conservative tradition of environmental stewardship?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians can be proud of the actions of this government relative to the environment.

In the last three years our Conservative government has negotiated the Copenhagen accord, harmonized our targets with the United States, introduced tailpipe emission standards for passenger cars, light trucks and now regulations for heavy duty trucks, established biofuel content regulations for diesel and gasoline, introduced historic national waste water standards for sewage and expanded our national parks by 30%. That is our Conservative legacy.

Mr. Diefenbaker and my colleague can be proud of our larger parks, cleaner water and lower emissions.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, by condemning African women to having illegal abortions, the Conservatives are isolating Canada on the international stage and going against the advice of the other G8 countries, the scientific community and CIDA, not to mention the wishes of the vast majority of Canadians.

Exactly whose interests will they represent at the G8 summit? Why are they trying to delegitimize women's right to choose?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud this government recognizes that when we can do something, we do it and we act. That is why we are going to be addressing the health of mothers.

A limited number of interventions can prevent most maternal and newborn deaths and these are tools that we know. They are cost effective and they are evidence-based.

By increasing prenatal care, antenatal care, by having a skilled health assistant at the birthing process, by having more antibiotics, micronutrients, all of these things will decrease mortality and improve—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the National Bank of Canada may not renew financing for Levinoff-Colbex tomorrow because details of the federal plan to help modernize slaughterhouse facilities, and especially to manage specified risk materials, are not known. Because of SRM regulations imposed by the Conservative government, the slaughterhouse has lost \$4 million per year since 2007.

Will the minister finally inform beef producers of the program eligibility criteria and the amount of financial assistance, and tell us what form this assistance will take, if it ever arrives?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Levinoff-Colbex is one file that we have been working very hard on to ensure that this slaughterhouse receives the assistance it needs.

In the last while, we have provided Levinoff-Colbex with \$10 million from Farm Credit Canada and \$9.6 million from the slaughter improvement fund. There is also the \$40 million investment to introduce new technologies to different companies, for which Levinoff-Colbex is also eligible. We have also provided \$25 million for a transition plan.

The federal government has done its job and put money on the table, and now it is up to the government of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Outremont.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Barlagne family, French citizens who moved to Quebec three years ago, are going through a stressful time.

The Federal Court has just ruled that their daughter Rachel, who has cerebral palsy, would place an excessive financial burden on Canada and that the family has to leave the country.

The decision is now a political one, not a legal one. The judge said that the only recourse is to seek a ministerial exemption on humanitarian grounds.

Will the minister make the only humane decision possible and allow the Barlagne family to stay in Canada?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I want to remind the hon. member and the House that the Privacy Act prohibits a minister from discussing the details of a case or anything personal. The opposition may want me to violate the act, but I have no intention of doing so.

In Canada, everyone has access to a very open and very fair legal system, and every individual can present their case to the courts of Canada.

* * *

● (1500)

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government learned last Friday of vicious attacks on the Ahmadi Muslims in Lahore, Pakistan. Our government was deeply disturbed by this and we would like to offer our deepest condolences to those who lost their loved ones in these terrible attacks. These acts were clearly motivated by hatred. Victims were targeted based solely on their faith, which is completely unacceptable.

Would the Minister of Foreign Affairs please inform the House what our government is doing to address the issues facing the Ahmadi Muslims in Lahore and attacks on minorities around the world?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government condemns last Friday's barbaric attacks on worshippers at two mosques in Lahore. We are urging Pakistani authorities to ensure equal rights for members of minority communities. We will continue to work with Pakistan and our allies to bring peace and stability to that country.

Additionally, my colleague from Edmonton—Sherwood Park will be putting forward a motion to the House officially condemning these acts. Our government actively works with countries around the world to promote freedom, democracy, the rule of law and particularly religious freedom.

* * *

SYDNEY HARBOUR

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are appalled with the billion dollar price tag of the G8 summit for an 18 hour meeting. However, they are not as upset as the people of Cape Breton with the government's lack of action for the funding of the Sydney Harbour dredging project. In response to my Friday's question, all I received were condescending comments from the regional minister about the people of Cape Breton.

Is there any chance the G8 security detail could maybe kick off 15 minutes early so the money the government saves could dredge the harbour in Sydney?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in a response, the dredging of Sydney Harbour is a complex and costly undertaking that will require the involvement of all levels of government and the private sector.

While I am on my feet, I would like to mention the fact that we have made major investments in Cape Breton, ones of which I am very proud. We have invested some \$28.7 million in 116 projects through CAF, RInC and ICF. The list goes on such as \$14 million from the infrastructure stimulus program—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Halifax.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada is supposed to uphold ethical principles, carefully monitor scientific advances in this complex field and protect Canadian families. However, since being created, it has done very little licensing or regulatory work. Over the last month, three of the agency's directors have resigned. We do not know what is going on because it is being muzzled.

Will the government tell Canadians what its plan is to bring real accountability and transparency to this agency?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the board continues to fulfill its mandate in respecting overall management at the agencies providing advice to the minister. I have

Speaker's Ruling

a very good working relationship with it and it has been very transparent. There has been some turnover in the board of directors, but it was a result of individual choices to leave the organization. I will continue to work with it.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point further to my point of order of May 14. I would like to advise you and all hon. colleagues that with respect to the agreement in principle that was reached by all parties on May 14, we continue to make very good progress on the terms of the memorandum of understanding that is to flow from that agreement.

We had collectively agreed to have this memorandum of understanding finalized today. However, there are a few remaining issues that we would like to take a little more time to work on and therefore will take the coming days to finalize the document.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues for all the co-operation and work they have done on this at this point.

● (1505)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on the same matter, the proposed agreement that is the subject of these discussions is a matter of great importance to the House and flows from an order of the House and a ruling by you.

On behalf of the official opposition, I would simply like to underscore the importance of all parties in the House pursuing this matter with great diligence to ensure that it is not punted into never-never land, but in fact is successfully completed within the next very short while.

ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order, please. I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 5, by the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou regarding the use of the term “token Quebecker” or “Québécois de service” in reference to some members.

[Translation]

I want to thank the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou for raising this issue, as well as the member for Crowfoot, the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, the member for Joliette and the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages for their interventions.

Following question period on May 5, the member for Beauport—Limoilou rose to object to being referred to as a “token Quebecker” or “Québécois de service” by the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin. In doing so, she spoke of the need for all members to act respectfully toward one another, regardless of their opposing beliefs and ideas.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

These very sentiments were echoed by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who characterized such a remark as insulting. The Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages and the member for Crowfoot added that there were in fact no token members.

Together with the member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, the member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord dismissed the claim, saying that only the French term “Québécois de service” had been used, rather than “token Quebecker” as was suggested and that previously the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean had used the term intentionally when referring to himself.

[Translation]

Acknowledging that some members may indeed consider such language offensive, the member for Joliette contended that there are many occasions where members of his party are slighted during proceedings, without feeling the need to bring the insulting language in question to the Speaker’s attention every time.

[English]

The use of this same terminology has been brought to the attention of the Chair in the past. On March 31, 2009, at page 2221 of the *Debates*, the member for Bourassa raised a similar point of order and since then, the Chair has found that it has been used more than a dozen times, including a number of times in just the past few days.

[Translation]

While the term “token Quebecker” or “Québécois de service” may be acceptable to some, it appears to the Chair that it is being used in a provocative manner time and time again in the House. Members raising objections to language used in the House have, in the past, cited *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Second Edition, at page 618, which states:

[English]

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, at page 619 also states:

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day... Although an expression may be found to be acceptable, the Speaker has cautioned that any language which leads to disorder in the House should not be used.

[Translation]

In the current circumstances, the use of the term in question has clearly led to some disorder and considerable offence, and I would therefore urge hon. members to refrain from using it and any others that tend to lead to disorder.

As I suggested when this matter was first raised, members may bring questions about the use of this term, and perhaps even more broadly, questions related to unparliamentary language, to the attention of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

● (1510)

[English]

I would also like to take the opportunity to remind the House in the strongest terms possible that all members are legitimate and duly elected members of the House who have rightfully taken their seats. As rightfully noted by the member for Crowfoot, none of them are token in any sense of the word and to suggest otherwise would diminish the importance of our parliamentary system, our electoral system and the decisions of the very electors who sent them, indeed all of us, here.

I thank hon. members for their attention and for their co-operation.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

AGREEMENT CONCERNING ANNUAL REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREE TRADE BETWEEN CANADA AND THE REPUBLIC OF COLOMBIA

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I would like to table, in both official languages, the treaty entitled “Agreement concerning Annual Reports on Human Rights and Free Trade between Canada and the Republic of Colombia”, signed in Bogota on May 27, 2010.

The agreement is tabled pursuant to the government’s policy on the tabling of treaties before Parliament and is therefore subject to a period of 21 sitting days for examination. However, if during that time the House proceeds to a vote on a bill that refers to the agreement, the vote will be deemed as having fulfilled and respected the requirements concerning the examination.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES PENSION PLAN

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a revised actuarial report on the pension plan for the Canadian Forces.

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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), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to five petitions.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Criminal Code.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union concerning its participation at the parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 54th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, the role of parliamentarians in enforcing gender equality in women's rights 15 years after Beijing, which took place in New York, New York, United States of America, on March 2, 2010.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities in relation to Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment. I wish to thank all the committee members and other members of Parliament for their hard work, commitment and collaboration in getting this bill through expeditiously.

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study on the main estimates 2010-11.

JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

In accordance with its order of reference of Wednesday, March 3, 2010, the committee has considered the votes under Justice in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, and reports the same.

● (1515)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Tuesday, April 20, 2010, be concurred in.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, presented on Tuesday, April 20, be concurred in.

This motion is really about updating the citizenship guide. As the House knows, there is a new citizenship guide. Tens of thousands of

copies have been printed, but there is no reference to gay rights and gay history in it.

Why is it important that newcomers to this country understand the proud history of Canada? We receive immigrants from around the world and there are countries where gays, lesbians and bisexuals face death, torture, and penalties such as prison terms. For example, in Uganda gays face death threats. Homosexuality is a crime punishable by death in Iran. In Paraguay, in April of this year, a 20-year-old lesbian was abducted and dragged into a car, strangled, suffocated, and subjected to multiple blows which resulted in severe bruising to her body. In Turkey, on April 27, a founding member of the Black Pink Triangle was murdered. She did not survive the gunshot wounds to her back and head. On December 13, 2009, in Honduras, a 27-year-old gay activist, a member of the national resistance front against the discrimination against gays and lesbians, was also murdered.

There is violence and discrimination in many countries. Immigrants come to Canada from many of those countries, so it is very important that the citizenship guide clearly state the rights and responsibilities of new citizens. Under the section regarding the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, under equality rights it should be spelled out clearly that Canadians are protected against discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation or age. It should be mentioned in the section "Towards a Modern Canada" that homosexuality was decriminalized in 1969 and that more recently, civil marriage for same sex couples was legalized nationwide in 2005.

May 17 of every year is the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. In 1985, as a new school trustee I heard of a murder in Toronto. Kenneth Zeller, a librarian who was very much loved by the elementary school students where he taught, was gay-bashed and murdered in High Park, a park that a lot of gays and lesbians go to in Toronto. He was killed by four high school students. It was tragic. It was unbelievable, in a way, that these were young people who had graduated from our high schools.

During that period, I went around to different high schools and spoke to a lot of gay and lesbian students. I encouraged them to talk about what was happening in their schools. With the help of a student worker, Tim McCaskell, we were able to invite gay and lesbian students to speak to the school board about their experiences. The Toronto Board of Education was the first school board in all of North America to adopt a curriculum that talks about sexual orientation. We also pledged to train all the teachers and adopt policies to protect students.

● (1520)

Many years later, a recent survey has indicated that three-quarters of LGBTQ students and 95% of transgender students feel unsafe at school. A quarter of LGBTQ students and almost half of the transgender students have skipped school because they feel unsafe.

Six out of ten gay and lesbian students reported being verbally harassed about their sexual orientation, and one in four LGB students has been physically harassed about his or her sexual orientation. Two in five transgender students and one in five gay and lesbian students have been physically harassed.

Routine Proceedings

This kind of difficulty and violence happens in our schools, which is why recently there was the launch of the Gay-Straight Alliance. MyGSA.ca is a website that encourages teachers and students to come together to counteract homophobia. This is supported by Egale and is an excellent website that helps promote the curriculum and helps promotes students.

It is important to look at the history of pension rights in Canada. George Hislop was a gays rights pioneer who won the right to same-sex survivor's benefits from the Canada pension plan for gays and lesbians across Canada. In the early 1970s, when it was not easy to be out of the closet anywhere, George was on national television with his partner, Ron Shearer. His partner had contributed to the Canada pension plan for many years, but when he passed away and Mr. Hislop applied for a pension, he was turned down because he was the same sex as Mr. Shearer.

Same-sex couples were excluded under the Canada pension plan until August 2000 when the laws were finally amended to include them. Those amendments, however, continued to deny pensions to those whose partners had died prior to January 1, 1998, which was the case for Mr. Hislop's same-sex common law partner. Because of his same-sex class action lawsuit based on the charter right of equality, he was able to leave a lasting legacy of tolerance to our entire country.

A person like George Hislop should be celebrated in our citizenship guide, because he was a leader in the lesbian and gay community in fighting discrimination and demanding equal respect.

Luckily in July 2005, the federal government agreed to start paying pensions pending the appeal. While Mr. Hislop did receive his first cheque in August, he passed away soon after.

I talked earlier about equal marriage, and about the long struggle here on Parliament Hill and in the community. Brent Hawkes at the Metropolitan Community Church has been a leader in Canada in pushing for people to learn to love and support each other and not be judgmental. It is part of the universal fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Church. The MCC published banns for same-sex couples, Kevin Bourassa and Joe Varnell, and Elaine and Anne Vautour, in accordance with the age-old legal tradition.

The Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto married the couples in a double wedding ceremony on January 14, 2001. It was an extremely joyous occasion. I was fortunate to be there. I want to share what Reverend Brent Hawkes said. He said:

Love is the fundamental basis of all Christian teaching.

Because of their Christian heritage, their current faith and for many, their current loving relationships, access to marriage has always been desired by many in our congregation. In fact, blessing same sex unions was one of the first types of services provided by UFMCC [Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches] when it was founded over 30 years ago.

●(1525)

I believe that most Canadians either support our right to marry...or they believe that the state has no business in telling us that we may not do so....and that the majority of Canadians cherish freedom of religion as a fundamental right in our society. Most Canadians would agree that one group in society should not impose its religious beliefs on another group with a different view.

He continues that love and marriage is something that should be celebrated and not prohibited. I witnessed the marriage of Michael

and Michael. They are from Halifax. They have been together for 20 years. In Michael Leshner's affidavit, he said:

It should not be necessary for me to justify my application for a marriage licence and requiring me to do so would be discriminatory, humiliating and upsetting. Being denied a marriage licence suggests that Mike and I do not love each other, and that our hopes, our dreams, our life together do not exist. Mike and I, while supposedly equal citizens of this great country, are deemed non-persons, because we are gay.

Subsequently, in 2005-06, there was a series of votes in the House of Commons, and gay marriage was finally approved. I want to repeat a short part of a speech by the member for Toronto—Danforth, the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada. When the House debated the Civil Marriage Act, Bill C-38, he said:

Mr. Speaker, there are junctures in a country's path when it is an honour to be a member of Parliament because one is able to help make a fundamental choice, a choice that celebrates more of our rich diversity and extends that fundamental Canadian value of equality. Originally, the goal of extending marriage—civil marriage—rights came directly from the grassroots, part of the long struggle of gays and lesbians for a society in which their right to a just, equitable relationship was recognized, meaning the celebration of their union, but also, let us hope, our celebration of their union.

It is important that all of this history and the rights of the gay and lesbian community be recognized, celebrated, and documented in our citizenship guide. For us not to do so, especially for our new immigrants, is unfair and unjust. There is no excuse. The citizenship guide, as it is, is fairly substantial. It is hefty. There is all sorts of good information in the citizenship guide. There is absolutely no reason not to include this section.

Many people have done a great deal of work on equality. Not only should we include all of this in the citizenship guide, but I believe that the federal government has a role to play in helping to educate our young people and new immigrants to make sure that they understand that homophobia is not tolerated, that there is a hate crime in this country, and that gay bashing will be punished.

All those elements we celebrate should be included. We must make sure, whether people are young or old, new to Canada, or live in urban centres or rural Canada, that all citizens of Canada understand this priority.

●(1530)

I want to take the time to read something that passed through the House of Commons three times in three years in three Parliaments under three prime ministers. The House of Commons voted to affirm the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and to affirm the inclusion of same-sex couples in civil marriage.

The first vote was in September 2003, following the historic Court of Appeal for Ontario ruling. The second vote was in 2005 on Bill C-38, which is the equal marriage bill. The final vote was 158 to 133.

Routine Proceedings

The third vote was on December 7, 2006, and that vote was divisive, because even though Bill C-38 had passed, the Conservatives at that time wanted to bring forward that issue again. Thankfully, the vote passed again for the third time in three years.

Immediately after its passage on December 7, 2006, Canadians for Equal Marriage had this to say:

We are heartened that Canadian values of inclusion, equality and respect for difference have shown themselves to be stronger than ever.

A clear pattern has been established in the three votes that have been held in Parliament since the courts first ruled that excluding same-sex couples from civil marriage violates the charter. This is a pattern of growing acceptance of equal marriage, a pattern that reflects Canada's growing consensus on this issue.

Most MPs, like most Canadians, have come to understand that equal marriage doesn't harm anyone; it only makes life better for some. They have come to understand that a generous and inclusive definition of marriage actually strengthens the institution. They have come to understand that the only reason to exclude same-sex couples from civil marriage is discomfort, resistance to change and moral judgment. And they have learned that voting in favour of equality and inclusion feels really, really good.

We also want to salute all the Canadians who may have been uncomfortable with including same-sex couples in marriage, but who have come to accept and perhaps even embrace equal marriage. It's you who have truly demonstrated the wonder of Canada—that people with such diverse backgrounds and beliefs get along and live together in peace and harmony. That ability makes Canada the envy of the world.

That is why many of them want to come to Canada.

To continue with this statement from the Campaign for Equal Families:

Our common challenge now is to look at each other with eyes of understanding and compassion. To put aside our differences and focus on what we have in common. We all want to build a better Canada and a better world. And now that we have put this issue behind us, we can get on with that task.

In the not-too-distant future, we will look back and wonder how it was that this was even an issue. We will be proud that Canada chose to continue its long tradition of inclusion and respect for diversity, and refused to turn back the clock on equality. And hopefully, one day, the idea that someone would hide their sexual orientation or their gender identity will make no sense at all.

We look forward to that day.

We look forward to the day when all new immigrants understand that they do not have to hide their sexual orientation or their gender identity. That day, when every new immigrant becomes a citizen, he or she will be proud of Canada's long tradition of inclusion and respect for diversity. Now is not the time to turn back the clock on equality, which is why we must include gay rights and gay history in our citizenship guide.

• (1535)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina for raising a very relevant topic today, but with all due respect, I do not think we want to diminish the importance of this report.

We need to recognize that at hand is Bill C-9, which we were debating, the bill entitled leading the way on jobs and growth. That has seized all the members of the House and should, because there are a number of important issues in that bill that we need to get done immediately. I would suggest that all hon. members would be willing to continue with that hon. member's debate once we get the bill passed through the House.

Therefore, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Speaker: I am afraid that the hon. parliamentary secretary is a little premature. We are on questions and comments at the moment. He can ask a question or make a comment, but I do not think he can move a motion at this point.

The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina may wish to respond to the comment of the hon. parliamentary secretary, although perhaps his comments are an indication of what he is going to do when he gets the floor a little later.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that ruling. I thought that there should be at least an hour of discussion on this matter before a motion such as that was moved.

I will attempt to answer that question, rhetorical though it is.

It is important that we deal with this citizenship guide. Why? It is because the first batch of the citizenship guide has been printed. There probably will be a reprint of the guide quite soon.

It is such a basic issue of fundamental rights. Right now, in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, sexual orientation is included. How is it possible that it is not in our citizenship guide? I think it is a priority. It is important that the House have a comment and issue a position on whether it believes that gay rights should be in the citizenship guide. That is why I raised that as a motion.

To try to answer the question the member has raised, I have no idea why environmental assessment, for example, is in Bill C-9 and whether it pre-empts a review of the environmental review process. Bill C-9, the budget bill, has all sorts of things in it that are not connected with the budget, such as the sale of Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. or Canada Post, and so on.

Therefore, we should continue the discussion on this very important issue.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after that very crude, wrong-headed attempt by the Conservatives to shut down yet another debate, I welcome the opportunity to actually raise a question on the issue at hand.

We can hear the reaction from the Conservatives. This is what they do. They take blunt instruments and try to brutally beat people into submission.

On the issue of Bill C-9, it is completely inappropriate what they have done with the monster bill in 24 different areas.

We have the third report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration that the member for Trinity—Spadina has brought forward, thankfully. The issue, of course, is the issue of respecting diversity.

We have a government that does not respect diversity. It has cut and slashed all funding for organizations that support the rights of gay Canadians. In every single place, what it has done is slash funding. Now we see the citizenship guide that completely eliminates any reference to the many contributions of gay, lesbian, and transsexual Canadians.

We have people who come to Canada, and that presence, that history, and those immense contributions are simply erased by the government in a very mean-spirited way.

Routine Proceedings

I want to ask the member for Trinity—Spadina if she sees this as a systematic attempt by the government to completely eradicate the contributions made by gay Canadians by eliminating references to gay rights, equal marriage, and the history of gay Canadians. Does the member see this as a strategy that the government employs to try to eliminate that respect for diversity on which Canada was founded?

● (1540)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, I could add to the elimination list, the elimination of the funding to Gay Pride Day. Gay Pride in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver are extremely successful events. Gay Pride Toronto, for example, brings in over one million visitors. The economic spinoff is phenomenal. It promotes tourism. It helps small businesses and hotels in Toronto. It is the same with the ones in Halifax, Ottawa, Montreal, and Vancouver. To deny the funding to Gay Pride Day in Toronto, for example, is totally unjustifiable. But I see a pattern. It is a shutdown, a silencing, a bullying effort. It is a moral statement in some ways that would include, for example, not funding organizations that provide information, counselling or referral services on abortion in developing countries. It is really a way to say that government is not for all people. Government is only for those who agree with a very narrow ideology.

This citizenship guide should be for all new citizens, not typecast to a certain group of people, because those who have homophobic thoughts are the ones especially who need to know that gay bashing is not acceptable, that it is a crime in Canada.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for putting this motion forward for discussion this afternoon.

I want to ask her why the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration was seized of this issue. I know it is a very important issue to members of the GLBTT community in Canada, of which I am proud member.

We were very concerned when we saw the new citizenship guide and saw that we were made virtually invisible in terms of the history of our community as part of our country's history. We believe that is an important history. It is one of the things that distinguishes us from almost every other country on the planet and Canada's progress on issues of GLBTT rights has been far greater than almost any other country, perhaps greater than any country on the planet.

I want to know why the committee felt so strongly as to look at this issue and pass this recommendation. Perhaps she could tell us something of the discussion that the standing committee had.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, the reason that the citizenship and immigration committee decided to send forth a position on this matter is precisely because of what the member said. No one should be invisible. New immigrants need to see themselves reflected. There are gay, lesbian and bisexual immigrants coming to Canada. Some of them are refugee claimants. They came to Canada because they face the death sentence, torture, harassment and beatings in their home countries. They came to Canada wanting to be proud, wanting to celebrate who they are. There is no reason that they must hide their sexual orientation. That is why it is critically important that we have this history. Frankly, it is not just tolerance. It is a celebration that we should have—

● (1545)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know I was so intent on getting back to the actual debate at hand, and I know that we have most Canadians supporting this legislation. In fact, the committee has dealt with it and brought it back here without amendments. I think it is important that we move on.

So, at this point, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: 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.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 51*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Aglukkaq
Albrecht	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Carrie
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Davidson	Day
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fast	Finley
Fletcher	Galipeau
Généreux	Glover
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder

Routine Proceedings

Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Plamondon	Proulx
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Ratansi	Regan
Kent	Kerr	Rodriguez	Rota
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Russell	Savage
Lake	Lauzon	Sgro	Siksay
Lebel	Lemieux	Silva	Simms
Lobb	Lukiwski	Simson	Stoffer
Lunn	Lunney	Szabo	Tonks
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Trudeau	Valeriote
Mayes	McColeman	Zarac — 101	
McLeod	Menzies		
Merrifield	Miller		
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)			
Moore (Fundy Royal)			
Nicholson	Norlock		
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon		
Oda	Paradis		
Payne	Petit		
Prentice	Preston		
Raitt	Rathgeber		
Reid	Richards		
Richardson	Saxton		
Scheer	Schellenberger		
Shea	Shiple		
Shory	Smith		
Stanton	Storseth		
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Trost		
Tweed	Uppal		
Van Kesteren	Vellacott		
Verner	Wallace		
Warawa	Warkentin		
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to		
Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)	Wong		
Woodworth	Yelich		
Young— 119			

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.*[English]*

The House will now resume with the remaining business under routine proceedings.

* * *

PETITIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a group of seven petitions signed by people from all across Halifax regional municipality.

These petitioners draw attention to an increase in violent assaults against public transit operators, school bus drivers, para-transit and intercity bus workers across Canada. They say almost 40% of Canadian bus operators have indicated they have been physically assaulted in their career.

These employees, of course, provide a valuable service to the Canadian population and as such deserve stronger protection.

The petitioners ask the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada to amend the Criminal Code to recognize the growing incidence of violence against these workers, affecting their safety and that of the travelling public.

POSTAL SERVICE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to present a petition from the residents of Halifax Regional Municipality.

This petition recognizes the need to improve and maintain the network of public post offices that play a key role in the social and economic life of Nova Scotian communities.

The petitioners point out that the government is allowing Canada Post to close post offices with as little as one month's warning to the public, which is an insufficient amount of time for communities to discuss solutions to the loss of such a necessary resource.

The Nova Scotians who have signed this petition urge the government to consult with the public, their elected representatives, postal unions and other major stakeholders to develop a uniform and democratic process for making changes to this vital network and to retain the integrity of that network for the benefit of all Canadians.

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Bagnell
Bains	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Blais
Bonsant	Bouchard
Brisson	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Deschamps
Donnelly	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Eyking
Folco	Gagnon
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guamieri	Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-
Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Lalonde	Layton
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	MacAulay
Malo	Maloway
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard	Mendes
Minna	Mourani
Mulcair	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Nadeau
Neville	Oliphant
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paquette
Patry	Pearson

Routine Proceedings

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Earl Dreshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to present a petition signed by several constituents of my riding of Red Deer.

The petitioners urge the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

FIRST NATIONS UNIVERSITY

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in support of First Nations University of Canada. The petitioners call for the reinstatement of provincial funds and up to \$3 million in federal funds to the proposed Indian students program will not ensure the long-term sustainable funding of the First Nations University.

They also indicate that the founding mission of the First Nations University includes a commitment to enhance the quality of life and to preserve, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of first nations people, that we must not lose the valuable resources and indigenous knowledge that has been created in the First Nations University and that, above all, we must support students at First Nations University who have demonstrated their dedicated commitment and overwhelming desire for their continuation at the institution.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to work with students, staff and faculty to build a sustainable and viable future for the First Nations University of Canada by fully reinstating federal funding of at least \$7.2 million.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition to the Parliament of Canada calling for an immediate end to the Gaza blockade and expressing support for the recommendations of the United Nations fact-finding mission on the Gaza conflict.

[English]

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by over 700 people from all across Canada. The petitioners are reminding members that section 241 of the Criminal Code of Canada states that everyone who counsels a person to commit suicide is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 14 years.

They are calling upon Parliament to retain section 241 of the Criminal Code without changes in order that Parliament not sanction or allow counselling, aiding or abetting suicide, whether by personal action or the Internet.

•(1630)

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting petitions on behalf of hundreds of people from northern Ontario who are very upset with the absolute failure of the government to stand up with any coherent vision for the base metal

industry. Of course, I am speaking about the ham-fisted handling of the sale of Inco and Falconbridge, two internationally respected Canadian mining companies that were picked off by corporate raiders like Xstrata.

Now there are 1,000 jobs being lost in Timmins. All the copper refining capacity of Ontario is disappearing. We are 10 months into a Vale strike. This is all as result of a lack of vision from a government that treats mining as if it were doing ShamWow infomercials.

The petitioners are asking the government to open up section 36 of the Investment Canada Act and call upon the government to actually stand up for industry instead of just hocking cleaning products.

CANADA POST

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of the people of the rural municipality of Buchanan No. 304 requesting that Canada Post maintain and improve its network of public post offices and consult with the public should any changes be considered.

They make the point that the federal government is allowing Canada Post to close public post offices in spite of a moratorium on closures in rural and small towns and that a month is an inadequate amount of time for a whole community to discuss a closure and explore options.

Public post offices connect communities throughout this vast land, helping us to overcome differences and distances. These post offices play a key role in our social and economic life by providing the infrastructure that healthy communities need to thrive and businesses need to grow.

The petitioners call upon the government to maintain and improve its network of public post offices and to consult with the public.

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from petitioners from around the Halifax and Dartmouth areas who are calling upon the government to restore funding to KAIROS.

The petitioners state that whereas the programs delivered by KAIROS benefit hundreds of thousands of people in marginalized communities who are facing humanitarian crises, as well as political oppression, and who urgently need these funds and services, and whereas this decision cuts funding to many projects, including a legal clinic to assist women who are victims of the ongoing violence in the Congo, African youth organizations, a women's organization protecting against human rights abuses in Colombia, grassroots local support to peace and human rights work, women in Israel and Palestinian territories who work as partners for peace in the Middle East and various environmental initiatives, therefore, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately restore its funding relationship with KAIROS and to fund KAIROS overseas programs for the period 2010-2013.

Both the petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

Routine Proceedings

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the privilege and responsibility of presenting petitions is one that extends back centuries and is the oldest role that we members of Parliament have. However, the Speaker does not have the opportunity to present petitions on behalf of his constituents and, therefore, as the MP for the adjoining constituency, it is my honour to do so when they arrive at his office.

I have a petition signed by members of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Kingston, also on the subject of KAIROS. They say much the same thing as was in the previous petition, so I will not go into details. However, I do present this on behalf of the Speaker for the citizens of Kingston.

PRISON FARMS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my petition today is signed by dozens of Canadians and it calls upon the government to stop the closing of the six Canadian prison farms.

Dozens of Canadians, as I have indicated, are demanding that the government reconsider its decision. All six prison farms, including Rockwood Institution in Manitoba, have been functioning farms for many decades providing food to prisons in the community. The prison farm operations provide rehabilitation and training for prisoners through working with and caring for plants and animals. The work ethic, the rehabilitation and the benefit of waking up at 6 a. m. and working out of doors is a discipline that Canadians can appreciate.

On Sunday, June 6, 2010, Margaret Atwood will join citizens of all ages and political stripes on a march to the Correctional Service of Canada, Kingston headquarters, where they will be posting their demands for saving and revitalizing Canada's six prison farms. There are 16 months of public events, letters, petitions, delegations and parliamentary motions that have nearly unanimous support across the country and yet the federal government is plowing ahead with its ill-considered plan to shut down Canada's six prison farms.

Heritage dairy herds that provide milk for inmates in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick are slated for disposal. The first sale is scheduled for Kingston's Frontenac Institution the week of June 21. This will be the death of the farms.

• (1635)

SKIN CANCER

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present, the first one being on skin cancer. It says that one in seven Canadians will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. Melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer and one of the most rapidly increasing cancers in Canada and the second most common cancer in young adults.

As education, resources and treatment are extremely limited, the petitioners are calling upon the Government of Canada to support a national skin cancer melanoma initiative to provide much needed access to newer drug treatments and funding for research and educational programs.

As we know, there will be testing tomorrow on the Hill.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is regarding the long gun registry. It says that the long gun registry was originally budgeted to cost Canadians \$2 million but that the price tag has spiralled out of control to an estimated \$2 billion a decade later and that the registry has not saved one life since it was introduced.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to support and pass Bill C-391 and any other legislation that will cancel the long gun registry and streamline the Firearms Act.

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from many residents who live on the waterfront of Toronto, whether they are 680 Queen's Quay, 10 Queen's Quay or 500 Richmond. Many of the condominiums' residents are extremely worried about the interruption of their lives when the G20 summit is held on June 26.

They originally were petitioning to have the venue at the CNE grounds but now they are pushing to ensure there is compensation for local residents and businesses for any loss of business and property damage caused by or because of the G20 summit.

They have noted that at previous G8 and G20 summits there has been significant property damage and loss of business in the surrounding areas and that the summer months are the peak period for businesses in the downtown core to make a profit. They are worried about their small businesses in the area. Many vendors cater to tourists and we are at the height of tourist season. They are concerned that the proposed security area will prevent potential customers from having easy access to their businesses. They are extremely concerned that if there are any broken windows or damage to the property of businesses or their own condominiums they will not be compensated. They wish to see a response from the government as quickly as possible.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition regarding high quality child care.

The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to achieve multi-year funding to ensure that publicly operated child care programs are sustainable for the long term. They are supporting the New Democrats' bill that would protect child care by enshrining it in legislation under a national child care act to be a cornerstone of Canada, like the Canada Health Act.

The petitioners also want to help end child poverty by using the \$1,200 allowance to enhance the child tax benefit without taxes and clawbacks because they want to ensure that all children's health and school readiness will be enhanced, that family poverty will be reduced and that such inclusion in workforce productivity would be promoted and enhanced.

Routine Proceedings

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 202 and 219.

[Text]

Question No. 202—**Hon. Geoff Regan:**

With regard to the \$12 million grant awarded to the Wind Energy Institute of Canada under the Clean Energy Fund at Natural Resources Canada (NRC), did meetings take place between the Minister of NRC, the Minister's exempt staff or NRC departmental officials and other Ministers of the Crown or their exempt staff, and, if so (i) when did the meetings take place, (ii) where were they held, (iii) who attended?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the department has no record of any meetings having taken place between the Minister of Natural Resources, NRCan., the minister's exempt staff or NRCan departmental officials and other ministers of the Crown or their exempt staff regarding the clean energy fund project with Wind Energy Institute of Canada.

Question No. 219—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to Measurement Canada's retail gasoline pump inspection program: (a) what is the number of government inspectors, by province; (b) what is the number of private corporations authorized to provide inspections; (c) are individual private inspectors accredited by the government to inspect pumps; and (d) is there any follow-up testing of private inspectors?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to Measurement Canada's retail gasoline pump inspection program: in response to a) At present, the number of active Measurement Canada inspectors performing inspection activities pursuant to the Weights and Measures Act is listed by province and territory as follows:

Newfoundland	2
Nova Scotia	3
Prince Edward Island	0
New Brunswick	3
Quebec	22
Ontario	23
Manitoba	4
Saskatchewan	5
Alberta	9
British Columbia	11
Yukon	served by British Columbia
Northwest Territories	served by Alberta
Nunavut	served by Manitoba

These inspectors are tasked with performing inspections of gas pumps and also conducting inspections of measuring devices in the eight sectors that will be regulated as a result of Bill C-14, An Act to amend the Electricity and Gas Inspection Act and the Weights and Measures Act.

In response to b) Presently, 26 private organizations, incorporated legal entities, are authorized by Measurement Canada to perform gas pump inspections. The total number of active organizations; that is, including mass inspections is 102. These 102 organizations are

authorized by Measurement Canada to perform inspections pursuant to the Weights and Measures Act.

In response to c) Individual technicians must be employed by an organization that is authorized by Measurement Canada. Not all technicians of an authorized organization are automatically recognized. Prior to being designated as inspectors who may perform inspections on behalf of the government, technicians must receive training from Measurement Canada and then pass theoretical and practical evaluations. Presently, 68 recognized technicians are employed by authorized organizations that can perform gas pump inspections in the field.

In response to d) Authorized organizations and their recognized technicians receive extensive follow-up and monitoring. These activities include annual audits and follow-up inspections. All of the work performed by recognized technicians is entered into a government database and is closely monitored by Measurement Canada.

* * *

• (1640)

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 198, 199, 200 and 203 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 198—**Mr. Richard Nadeau:**

With regard to government jobs in the National Capital Region between 2000 and 2010, how many federal public servants were located in the Outaouais region and how many were located in the Ottawa region?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 199—**Mr. Richard Nadeau:**

With regard to leases signed by the government in the National Capital Region, what is: (a) the number of such leases that expired in 2005 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; (b) the number of such leases that expired in 2006 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; (c) the number of such leases that expired in 2007 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; (d) the number of such leases that expired in 2008 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; (e) the number of such leases that expired in 2009 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; (f) the number of such leases that expire in 2010 in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region; and (g) the number of vacant premises in the Ottawa region and in the Outaouais region in 2010?

(Return tabled)

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Question No. 200—**Mr. Richard Nadeau**:

With respect to government agency and Crown corporation positions in the National Capital Region, what is the number of employees with the following government agencies, Crown corporations and other government organizations from 2000 to 2010, broken down by those in the Outaouais region and those in the Ottawa region: (a) Atlantic Pilotage Authority; (b) Great Lakes Pilotage Authority; (c) Northern Pipeline Agency Canada; (d) Laurentian Pilotage Authority; (e) Pacific Pilotage Authority; (f) Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency; (g) National Literacy Secretariat; (h) Competition Bureau; (i) Office of the Correctional Investigator; (j) Transportation Safety Board of Canada; (k) Public Service Integrity Office; (l) Office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner; (m) Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals for Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security appeals; (n) Office of the Prime Minister; (o) Cadets Canada; (p) Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety; (q) Canadian Police College; (r) Security Intelligence Review Committee; (s) Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development; (t) Office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner; (u) Pension Appeals Board; (v) Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada; (w) National Battlefields Commission; (x) Status of Women Canada; (y) Employment Insurance Board of Referees; (z) Canadian Judicial Council; (aa) National Joint Council; (bb) Cape Breton Growth Fund Corporation; (cc) Tax Court of Canada; (dd) Federal Court of Appeal; (ee) Federal Court; (ff) Supreme Court of Canada; (gg) Office of the Commissioner of Lobbying of Canada; (hh) Elections Canada; (ii) Federal Labour Standards Review Commission; (jj) ExportSource.ca; (kk) Canadian Race Relations Foundation; (ll) Canadian Coast Guard; (mm) Governor General of Canada; (nn) Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics; (oo) Infrastructure Canada; (pp) Royal Canadian Mint; (qq) Marine Atlantic; (rr) Currency Museum; (ss) Public Sector Pension Investment Board; (tt) Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation; (uu) Canadian Intellectual Property Office; (vv) Federal Healthcare Partnership; (ww) Technology Partnerships Canada; (xx) Policy Research Initiative; (yy) Receiver General for Canada; (zz) Defence Research and Development Canada; (aaa) Species at Risk Act Public Registry; (bbb) Leadership Network; (ccc) Canada Business Network; (ddd) Networks of Centres of Excellence; (eee) Environmental Protection Review Canada; (fff) National Search and Rescue Secretariat; (ggg) Service Canada; (hhh) Criminal Intelligence Service Canada; (iii) Public Prosecution Service of Canada; (jjj) Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation; (kkk) Federal Bridge Corporation Limited; (lll) Canada Lands Company Limited; (mmm) Canadian Biodiversity Information Facility; and (nnn) Veteran Review and Appeal Board?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 203—**Mr. Pierre Paquette**:

With respect to deputy minister, assistant deputy minister and associate deputy minister positions, as of December 31, 2009, what was the breakdown: (a) by first official language spoken; and (b) between Anglophones and Francophones who did or did not meet the linguistic requirements of their positions?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Taxation; the hon. member for Welland, Canadian Food Inspection Agency; the hon. member for Don Valley East, Ethics.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this bill.

[English]

We call it a bill but it is a Trojan Horse. Buried inside this budget bill are a series of measures that the government could simply not have passed had it not put them in the budget bill.

We have a golden opportunity to open up this Trojan Horse and take out the nefarious legislation that is within it and to move ahead with the consideration of those important proposals but it will require the government to split out these pieces of legislation so we can deal with them separately. I would like to address why that is so important. I think the government should do exactly this.

[Translation]

I would like the leader of the official opposition to behave like a real opposition leader and use his power to prevent the Prime Minister from sneaking major legislative changes through by hiding them in this budget bill. Passing bills on the sly like this is a last-resort strategy for a government trying to make changes that do not have unanimous approval. Knowing that Canadians would not support each of these changes individually, the Conservatives tried to sneak them into its budget bill.

Some of the most disturbing changes in Bill C-9 are those to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act giving the Minister of the Environment the power to determine the scope of environmental assessments and to turn responsibility for reviewing power generation proposals over to the National Energy Board, which has close ties to the business sector. This bill includes a hodge-podge of unrelated elements and looks a lot like American budget bills, which tend to include hundreds of clauses added as a result of political manoeuvring.

Some of the most significant provisions buried in the Prime Minister's budget bill are: authorization to sell Atomic Energy of Canada Limited without any public debate or scrutiny; a measure to privatize Canada Post that takes away the crown corporation's exclusive international remaining privilege; and approval for having cleaned out the employment insurance fund, which had a surplus of \$57 billion in contributions from employees and employers over the past 10 years. That was one of the largest thefts in this country's history.

We hope that the Leader of the Opposition will stand up for his convictions and vote against the measures in Bill C-9. It is important that he do so.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I want to speak a little further about some of the key elements that are buried in the budget bill. We can agree or disagree with some of these budget measures, but buried in this bill are projects and initiatives that the government could simply never pass through the House of Commons any other way.

The first that we want to discuss here today is the gutting of our environmental assessment process. The environmental assessment process for major projects including major energy projects is absolutely vital. We do not have to look any further than the crisis that is unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico right now to see why an environmental assessment is so important for major projects.

Yet, what is the government proposing to do? The government is proposing to give to the Minister of the Environment, without any accountability to Parliament, the power to simply waive any environmental assessment requirements and to ask the National Energy Board, for heaven's sake, to conduct the environmental assessment such as it might deem fit.

This is exactly the reverse of what our friends the Americans are doing as they realize when there is one agency responsible for getting approvals that ultimately generate revenue to government, that generate business for business, that are related to energy projects, that it has an exclusive focus and jurisdiction, that what is needed is a separate set of eyes and a separate process to deal with the environmental consequences, dangers and issues that can arise from an environmental project, particularly of a major magnitude.

Why empower the minister to limit environmental assessments at a time when Canadians and our neighbours to the south as well as asking governments to be more vigilant when it comes to environmental assessment, not less? This bill will open up greater risk for our Canadian environment and we could see the same kind of disaster unfolding in Canada on one of our coastlines or even in the Arctic as we are seeing unfold in the United States.

Mark my words, I do not want this to come true. I do not want this to be a prediction of something that is actually going to happen. I want us in this chamber to take responsibility to ensure that it does not happen, that it never happens, and that it could not happen here.

That is why I am calling on my colleagues in the other parties of the opposition to stand up and be counted. In fact, I would call on them to stand up and speak because I notice that even though this is a vitally important bill and even though there have been pronouncements on the part of both of the other opposition parties that they oppose some of these measures like the weakening of our environmental assessment process, we find that they are not willing to stand up and speak.

It is only New Democrats now, according to the list we have before us, who are prepared to keep fighting the bill. I call on my colleagues in the opposition, on the opposition leader, and the leader of Bloc Québécois to ensure that the members of Parliament from those parties are speaking to this issue and are standing up for Canadians when it comes to the environment. It is time for us to do our job.

Furthermore, I call upon them to bring their members to the House when the vote comes and to ensure there are sufficient numbers in the House to defeat this clause so that we can protect environmental assessment in Canada.

Some would say, "Oh, that would mean that it would take us into an election". An election is not going to happen on top of the G8 and G20. Why not? Because the Prime Minister has already spent \$1.2 billion to have these international guests come to ensure he can have his photo opportunity. There is no way that an election is going to happen on top of that.

It is time for the opposition parties to use the leverage and power that we have, and that Canadians sent us here to use in order to ensure that the government is kept under control. Conservatives think the opposition is weak. They think the opposition is unwilling to stand up to them.

Prove them wrong, that is what I say to my colleagues in the opposition. Let us stop the gutting of environmental laws here in Canada.

I could make exactly the same case when it comes to another element of the budget bill. This has to do with the sale of AECL.

● (1645)

AECL is a very important public enterprise. If it were to be debated here, I doubt very much there would be support of this chamber for it to be sold off, especially in tough economic times and without any sense of what would happen, in terms of environmental protection, not to mention the future of the jobs.

It is an obnoxious precedent being set here by the government. I call on the opposition parties to stand up and fight.

It also argues that we should privatize Canada Post. That is the wrong direction to go when we are talking about an essential public service. Taking profitable overseas mail distribution and turning it over to big companies that compete with Canada Post would undermine the ability of our public post service to do the job that Canadians expect it to do, and have expected it to do for many decades. It is a vital corporation.

In closing, I call on my colleagues from the opposition parties to understand that we have a key historic moment here to use the leverage given to us by 62% of Canadians who did not vote for the current government to put a stop to what it is trying to do in this budget bill.

● (1650)

Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity, in between some of the comments made by the hon. member, to hear him say something about privatization of Canada Post. I can tell members, as the parliamentary secretary to the minister responsible for this for over four years now, there has been no discussion of privatization of Canada Post. Quite frankly, it is ludicrous.

However, what does trouble me is that he spoke of one particular aspect in the bill, which is called remailers. There are at least 10,000 jobs across this country, in Montreal, Vancouver, and Toronto, that rely on something that has been happening for 20 years; that is, remailers, small mom and pop organizations, print shops, across this country that have been operating for 20 to 30 years doing remailers. We have heard evidence about that remailing business going to other countries because Canada Post does not compete. So, it is going to other countries.

What does the member have against the small mom and pop shops and 10,000 employees in Toronto, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal and Vancouver, who rely on these jobs now? Does he want to close down those small businesses that have been operating for 30 years under this particular aspect?

I want to hear from that member about those small mom and pop businesses that rely on this type of business.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question because it is a very timely question that he has asked.

Only a very few weeks ago, I held a meeting in my constituency with some of the small businesses which used to give postal service, under contract to Canada Post, that have been shut down because of the very policies of the current government. Some of the citizens from the area, very upset that they have lost their local postal service, were there at that community meeting, as well. It was quite well covered in the newspaper.

The fact is that business has been shunted over to Shoppers Drug Mart. The result is we literally had in front of us in a meeting of 75 people, four or five of these businesses, some of which had operated for years. People were in tears because they were losing their livelihood and their relationships with the community.

So, I do not apologize for a minute for trying to stop the current government from doing what it is doing to Canada Post because it is not doing the right thing.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth for that impassioned speech. I have a very specific question for him.

With the gutting of the environmental regulations, as proposed in this budget implementation bill, first nations across this country have raised some valid concerns about the fact that this process may mean that they are not consulted when large projects are going into their area.

Today is the 20th anniversary of the Sparrow decision, which was all about consultation with first nations, and here we have the current government presenting a proposal that cannot guarantee that appropriate consultation regarding environmental projects would happen.

I wonder whether the member would comment on that.

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her championship of the concerns of first nations, Métis and Inuit people over quite a number of years. She raises a very valid point.

The whole concept of environmental assessment is designed to ensure there is thorough, indepth, informed consultation with

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citizens who will be affected by projects. That is what it is all about. That is why environmental assessment was invented. It was not invented just for a group of technicians, or special interest groups, or corporate representatives or lobbyists to go off and whitewash a project and say that it would not have any environmental impact or that we should not worry, that they have it handled.

I am sure the representatives of BP said to the American government and some of the officials who were dealing with its approvals that they should not worry, that they had it covered. Now there has been everything from the top hat to the top kill. BP does not have a clue what it is doing now that it has unleashed the power that resides thousands of metres below the earth's crust.

Because environmental assessment is so critical, we know we should apply the most careful and thorough tests on any major engineering project that could produce similar kinds of consequences in Canada. I would bet that if I went out on the streets of the country right now and asked people if they thought it would be a good idea for us to weaken our assessment of major projects from the standpoint of their environmental consequences, they would say no. We say no too.

● (1655)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been over 40 days now since the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico started. Wildlife officials report that 491 birds, 227 turtles and 27 mammals, including dolphins, have been collected dead along the U. S. gulf coast. Have we not learned anything from this oil spill?

Those beautiful fish, turtles and dolphins are magnificent species. It is tragic they are now dying and many more will die. The top kill over the weekend did not work. The next thing BP is planning to do is to place a funnel on the leak, but this means that the leak could increase by 20% during this entire process.

How could we possibly not learn that deregulation of any projects, especially when it comes to oil or energy, is a bad idea? Look at what is happening here. This bill is anti-democratic, it is bad for the environment and it is bad for ordinary Canadians.

Why is it anti-democratic? This is supposed to be a budget bill. It is supposed to talk about spending. What does it have to do with deregulation? The bill would—

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am wondering the relevance of the member's speech. She may be lost in American jargon and American legislation, but we are in Canada. We are not responsible for what happened in the gulf. We have a different legislative system here. We have a different environmental process here. This government is taking care of that issue. What does that have to do with the budget bill? It has nothing to do with it whatsoever.

Let us talk about Canadian legislation. Let us talk about what Canada is doing. We are doing the job here and the member should pay attention to that.

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The Deputy Speaker: From the Speaker's hearing, I think the member for Trinity—Spadina was referencing part of the budget bill, which is before the House. I will take a look at the group of amendments before the House. I encourage all members, when they speak, to remain relevant to the amendments or the substance of the motion that is before the House.

The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely my point. Environmental assessment has nothing to do with the budget bill. Why is it in Bill C-9? I am glad the parliamentary secretary noticed that environmental assessment really should not have anything to do with the budget. While he—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It is going to be very difficult for the Speaker to make a judgment call on relevance if he cannot hear what the member is saying. I ask all hon. members to hold off on their questions and comments. There will be a period for questions and comments as soon as the member for Trinity—Spadina is done with her speech.

● (1700)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, I am quite amazed that my Conservative colleagues actually got my point, that wrecking the environment should not have anything to do with a budget bill, but that is precisely what they are doing. They are taking the environmental assessment on energy projects, oil and gas, from the environmental assessment agencies. They then give the responsibility over to the industry-friendly National Energy Board, or the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Let me explain the connections between the National Energy Board, the oil industry and the government. The National Energy Board does not have the experience necessary to conduct proper public consultations and environmental assessments. In fact, about 90% of the board's total expenditure is recovered from the companies it regulates under the National Energy Board.

That is like asking someone like BP to decide on whether its oil drilling is safe or not. In fact, 90% of the National Energy Board's expenditures come from the companies it is supposed to regulate. How could that possibly be done? The companies cannot be asked to regulate themselves. The government is supposed to regulate the projects that come in front of it.

Not only are six of the board members longtime veterans of the private oil and gas industry, on top of that, the Conservatives have hand-picked 10 out of the 12 members on the board. Sometimes the board only takes written submissions. There are no public hearings or consultations. Who did the board choose to hear from on one of the projects, the same-season relief well policy? It heard mostly from the big oil companies. No wonder, they are funded by them.

Of the 300 staff at the National Energy Board, only a few dozen of them work on environmental issues. They do not have the expertise. They are not designed to do environmental assessment. It is not their job, yet they are now given the responsibility to look at all our energy projects. It will take away the environmental protection role that the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is supposed to

have. It is set up, under the environment minister, to conduct reviews of projects that may have serious consequences.

When there is an oil leak, whether it is diesel, oil or deep-sea drilling, oil has huge environmental consequences as do nuclear projects. This move is anti-democratic and bad for the environment.

Part of the budget bill has cancelled the eco-energy renewable power program, a project that was quite popular. Now it is gone. After increasing some money for Environment Canada, there will be a \$53 million cut.

Also most unacceptable in the bill is the selling of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. That will have serious consequences. Last year's spending on AECL ended up being more than double what was budgeted, raising questions about what the final figure would be this year. Embedding the sale of AECL in the budget bill makes absolutely no sense.

● (1705)

The other element I want to talk about is the whole Canada Post situation. I have met with quite a few of the postal workers in my riding. My riding actually has four postal stations in its vicinity. The workers are extremely worried that their jobs are on the line. The bill would remove Canada Post's monopoly on outgoing international letters, which means that it would earn less, for example, when they needed to deliver mail to rural Canada. Canada Post runs itself like a business and if it loses this monopoly on international letters, it will earn less and other mail service across Canada will suffer.

This proposal is identical to what was proposed in Bill C-14 and Bill C-44. These two bills were defeated in the House. What the government has done is totally undemocratic. It brought back the bill that it was unable to pass and put it into this enormous Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, in all types of areas that have nothing to do with the budget.

We ask all members of Parliament, who are not Conservative, to stand and vote against the bill.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the first group of motions in the Group No. 1 list, the air travellers security charge. It has been noted that in the United States right now, on international flights, the security charge is \$5. The government, until now, has had the second highest security charges in the world. Now with a 50% increase in the security charge fee, the tax on air travellers, we are now the highest in the world. For an international flight, we would be looking at a security charge up to \$25.

The government is inadvertently driving customers to the American air carriers. It is making the Canadian air industry more uncompetitive vis-à-vis the American airlines. As of this spring, rather than pay \$5, people will have to pay \$25 in air taxes.

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Would the member like to comment on why a government that prides itself on trying to be competitive with the United States is doing things that make the Canadian industry uncompetitive?

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, it was quite interesting this morning to see a private member's bill on competition, to ensure that Canadian companies get more advantages so there would be more business. This does the exact opposite.

The proposal is to charge Canadian airlines, such as Air Canada, \$25 for international flights. It used to be about \$15, which was already too high. This is after the Minister of Transport refused to pay for police patrols. The government is supposed to protect travellers and airport security, yet it would not pay the cost of police patrols.

The government is downloading it to the passengers and the airlines. As a result, a lot more air travellers will buy tickets from American companies and other companies rather than Canadian companies because they do not want to pay this extra amount. It is bad for the passengers and it is bad for the Canadian airline industry.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her intervention. However, she is completely off base.

The remaining industry in Canada employs some 10,000 workers. These are ordinary, hard-working Canadians who depend on the remaining business for their livelihoods. That is how they put bread on the table.

For years we have heard the NDP pay lip service to the fact that they claim to be the great defenders of the workers across Canada. However, when it comes to practice, actually getting things done, they do the exact opposite.

For over 20 years it was accepted in Canada that remailers were conducting their business legally in this country. Somewhere along the line, some smart lawyer at Canada Post found out that there was a discrepancy between the English and French versions of the Canada Post Corporation Act. It went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The Supreme Court of Canada said it was going to prefer the French version and asserted the right of Canada Post to actually have control over the remaining industry.

Our government is correcting that and continuing the current practice in which remailers can continue to do business, in which 10,000 Canadians have their jobs. My question to the member is, how can she justify voting against hard-working Canadians?

• (1710)

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the smart lawyers at Canada Post.

Canada Post belongs to the people of Canada. They run Canada Post like a business. Of course, they want to make sure that they, as a business, make as much money as possible. They understand that not every Canadian has email.

There is an art to writing letters. Handwritten letters are still very important, especially for a lot of seniors who would like to send get-well cards, birthday cards, and wedding cards. All of those elements are important for people to communicate with each other, especially in rural Canada.

We want Canada Post to be financially viable—

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-9 is a travesty of the democratic process in the House. I know I am not supposed to use the term “hypocrisy” when I am speaking of individual members, but I think I am allowed to do that when I am speaking of the government as a whole. This bill really fits that category.

I have stood in the House repeatedly challenging the government to use omnibus crime bills as opposed to, as it is wont to do repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly, individual bills on crime, and of course, taking advantage of all the publicity that it gets, which I find quite repulsive, trotting out victims in each one of these areas just so it can have a photo opportunity.

When we look at the number of crime bills we have had and how many of those could have been incorporated into omnibus bills and then referred to the justice committee where they could have had thorough review, investigations and expert witnesses coming in, hearing from the general public on legislation of that kind, it could have done that in a very efficient way as opposed to what we have seen with regard to the numerous bills we have had. We just had another one today. Bill C-30 came through today. Again, it is a classic example where it could be easily combined with a half dozen other bills that are either outstanding or we know are coming from the government.

Instead of having to waste a great deal of time and debate in the House, we could have had reasonable debate and sent it over to the justice committee where it would have been properly investigated and then come back to the House for further debate and either passage or rejection.

We have seen that pattern by the government repeatedly since it first came to office. Then what we have seen, both in last year's budget and even more so in this year's budget, is an attempt on the government's part to justify that, for efficiency purposes, we should have an omnibus bill.

We have heard from any number of other members the number of provisions, and I am going to come back to this, in this bill that really at their essence have nothing to do with budgetary matters and have everything to do with other serious public policy issues that should be given their due attention as opposed to what has happened with the bill.

When we juxtapose those two positions, all of these crime bills coming through not in the form of omnibus bills, which they should be, and then throwing into a budget bill, which is what Bill C-9 should be, all sorts of other public policy issues that should not be there, it is inevitable to see the inconsistency in those two positions, and as I said in my opening remarks, the shameful way that democracy is being thwarted in this type of approach by the government.

Again, it is not the first time it has done it. It certainly did it quite extensively in last year's budget with the budget implementation bill, but it has gone even significantly further in this one.

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We may say, if we have had a reasonable amount of debate on it, is it not justified? As we know, in fact it is not. Any number of those other issues that have been injected into Bill C-9, into this budget implementation bill, are not issues that would call for the government to fail should the provisions not go through the House, whereas the budget bill, as we all know, is a matter of confidence and the government does come down if the vote is against it.

We know that the official opposition is running scared from the government and is not prepared to bring the government down on major policy issues. The government is using that to its advantage with the fear that the Liberals have of having to face the electorate. So the Liberals are certainly guilty to a significant degree when we see these types of bills coming through, because they are being intimidated, they are being bullied, and they are succumbing to that intimidation and bullying by the Conservative government. That again is not a healthy democracy to be functioning within.

• (1715)

That process is bad for democracy and it is bad for good public policy, and let me go to that now. A number of these provisions that have been incorporated into Bill C-9 clearly should not be there, should be stand-alone bills.

Let me deal with the environmental assessment provisions that are in here. The provision in Bill C-9 should be a separate bill. It should be in front of the environment committee, where members of that committee are thoroughly knowledgeable of the necessities we have in this country for environmental assessments. Those committee members have thorough knowledge of what is required with regard to environmental assessments at the national level in this country. They have the ability to thoroughly review the legislation to determine whether in fact it is adequate.

As I think everyone in the House knows, we are opposed to the policy position the government has taken in this regard. Moving the assessments out of the environment department into natural resources, providing almost absolute discretion to the minister as to when assessments are to take place, is clearly not good public policy. It stands out in these circumstances with what has happened in the Gulf of Mexico, the concerns we have of the government being quite willing to be overly friendly with the oil and gas industry, willing to bend the rules. We have seen recently, and I am sure this would have gone through but for what happened in the Gulf of Mexico, a request by the oil and gas industry to further loosen the rules generally with regard to exploration, but specifically with regard to exploration and drilling offshore. That request had been made. But for the Gulf of Mexico, I am quite convinced the government would have been prepared to move on it.

If this bill goes through as is, what will happen is that provision will surface at some point in the future. The government again will be receptive to that kind of approach, claims of poverty by the oil and gas industry that they cannot afford to do full assessments, they cannot afford to meet higher standards, and the government will cave in and allow them to do whatever they want to do. That has certainly been the history, whether it is in Alberta in the oil sands or any number of other places across the country where the oil and gas industry has had its way and we have seen the consequences. That is the kind of abuse that this kind of legislation allows for.

With regard to the other provisions, the provision that is always of particular concern, given the community that I come from, is the stripping out of the \$57 billion in the fund that was supposed to be there to take care of workers when they were faced with high levels of chronic unemployment. Stripping that out is something that always stands, in a community such as Windsor—Tecumseh where the labour community is very conscious of that having happened, first under the Liberals and now being finalized under the Conservatives. That bill should be a separate bill. That provision should be a separate provision and we should be voting on it separately so that it is very clear as to who is prepared to stand up in this country to protect workers when they are in that difficulty.

The final point I want to make is what is not in the bill, around pensions. Again, in the community I come from, we have taken some major hits on private pensions going down, on the Canada pension and the OAS not being sufficient to take care of people in their retirement. We owe them that obligation. We have set out in very clear form some of the alternatives that could be followed. None of that is in the bill and is another reason that we are adamantly opposed to it.

• (1720)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask about management systems, because I admire the member's intellect in some of these areas. When he talked about management of the oil and gas industry, he brought up the important point that we have been making as well that recently there was a change in the management system so it became a goals-oriented process, so that some mandatory items were removed. The industry had to set goals and prove that they were going to meet those goals. Their arguments are that if we just required certain goals, if there was an accident and they had followed those goals, they could say they were blameless. Or the other one is that things are changing all the time and there are new technologies that the companies could use.

I would like the member to comment on the new management changes.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and his kind comments. They were better than what I got from my colleagues back here.

He makes a very good point. With regard to that, some of the news that broke over the weekend was about what went on with the approach taken in the Gulf of Mexico by BP and by their own people, who had told them that the system, the technology, they were going to use was really, seriously questionable. It is the same kind of thing. Even if it was goal-oriented and they had those kinds of standards, they did not meet them.

The initial reports came out from their own staff saying that they had serious doubts about whether this would work, that there were serious problems of risk, and that they should be reconsidering it. A few months later, another report comes out, and all of a sudden, they can now meet them. There was no change in technology.

It is that kind of abuse.

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What it is really about, and my friend from the Yukon is very right about this, is that we need government protection in this area. We cannot leave activity as risky as this to be determined by the industry, which is clearly in conflict when it comes to setting those standards. They have to be set by independent arbiters and experts in the field. Those standards then have to be met by the industry in question and have to be enforced.

That is true, certainly, in the oil and gas industry. It is also true in any number of other areas where government has to play the role of protecting their citizens.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed listening to the speech from the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Tomorrow is Hunger Awareness Day, which speaks to a whole range of issues, including, of course, issues of poverty, first and foremost.

Employment insurance, for many Canadians, is the last opportunity to stave off a life of poverty when people have been adversely affected because they have lost their jobs. Communities like the member's community of Windsor and my home town of Hamilton Mountain have been just devastated by the tsunami of job losses as a result of the recession we are still in but that we first felt the effects of in 2008.

One of the things in the budget bill, as the member correctly pointed out, is the final nail in the coffin of the \$57 billion fund of EI moneys, which the government is now taking for itself and is putting into consolidated revenues. It is basically legalized theft.

I want to ask the member for Windsor—Tecumseh whether his community is facing the same reality as we are in Hamilton, where people now have to rely on social assistance, because EI is no longer there for them. All the costs are now going onto ratepayers, the very people who have lost their jobs in our community.

• (1725)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that Windsor and the county governments are faced with a significant increase in the number of people on the social service welfare rolls. There is no question. I have seen a growth in numbers of as much as 17% to 20% over the last two years. It appears to be levelling off at this point. However, the increases are at that level. The Ontario government has made it very clear that across the whole of the province there will be huge increases.

We have seen similar figures, interestingly, in Alberta and British Columbia, with a 20% to 25% growth in the number of people who are receiving welfare benefits. That is a direct result of all that money disappearing out of the EI fund. The federal government is not in a position to expand without taking money out of general revenue, which is what it should have done as opposed to dumping all that money into general revenue over the years.

The fund was there. At a time of crisis, such as we are going through at this period of time and have been going through over the last 18 months, those funds would have made a great difference in ending the poverty level in this country.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to stand to speak to Bill C-9, the budget

implementation act, because it gives me an opportunity to speak about what I think are two very critical issues in the public governance field. The first is the question of sound, appropriate public policy in government. The second issue, which I think is just as important, has to do with two different visions of an economic development model in this country, one from the government and one from the New Democrats. I would like to point out that I think Bill C-9 highlights this very critical difference for Canadians.

I want to start, first, with the question of sound public policy and the question of accountability and sound budgeting practices.

The bill that has been tabled is approximately 880 pages long. It is what is called an omnibus bill. For any Canadians who might be watching right now, that means that the government has taken items that are normally part of a budget and has added to them legislative proposals on a wide variety of other subjects that are not typically part of a budget bill.

I would respectfully suggest to all my colleagues and to all Canadians that this is an inappropriate practice, and there are some solid reasons for that.

First and foremost is one of respecting the democratic process. When a budget is tabled in the House, of course, members of Parliament debate the items in that budget and determine the proper and appropriate economic blueprint for the year ahead, which is what Canadians have sent them to do. That includes raising revenue and spending revenue and other measures that have to do with the running of our country, fiscally and economically. In order to debate that budget properly, we need to have subjects in that budget that lend themselves to that debate.

When a government, such as the one here, throws into that budgetary process items that have no business being in that budget, it cripples the debate, and it causes parliamentarians to have to vote on items that are not budgetary in nature. We cannot then have a proper, full debate on issues that are very important.

In some ways, I think Bill C-9 is a classic example of one of the major problems of the current government, which is that it has a fundamental disrespect for Parliament and a fundamental disrespect for the institutions of government in this country.

Of course, this is not the first time the current government has illustrated this disrespect. It has prorogued Parliament twice when it has found it inappropriate or uncomfortable to debate the issues Canadians send us here to debate. It has used the budget process before to engage in this kind of inappropriate behaviour.

We all remember back in 2008 that the current government used the budgetary process as a political attack—a political attack on the public service, a political attack on pay equity, a political attack on women, and a political attack on political parties—by trying to ram through a budget in the fall of 2008 that was as much an aggressive document of political ideology as it was one of sound budget.

I want to highlight for Canadians a couple of those inappropriate measures in this budget, and there are many. These are some of the more egregious ones.

Government Orders

First, the current government has seen fit to put in provisions that would seriously and significantly impair the environmental assessment process at the federal level in this country. They are in the budget. Now, Canadians might ask what an environmental assessment process has to do with a budget. If Canadians asked that question, they would be asking an astute question that I think exists on this side of the House, which the government does not seem to want to answer.

I want to briefly summarize this environmental assessment process. It exempts certain federally funded infrastructure projects from environmental assessments, period. It pre-empts a review of the environmental review process in June 2010. It allows the Minister of the Environment to dictate the scope of environmental assessments. It weakens public participation. It enables the removal of the assessment of energy projects from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and transfers that jurisdiction to the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

• (1730)

Let me repeat that. It takes the review of energy projects away from an environmental assessment tribunal and has the projects reviewed by energy agencies. I think Canadians would find that shocking, particularly because, as we speak, there is an oil well in the Gulf of Mexico that is gushing millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico. It is creating what will no doubt be a century of environmental degradation and devastation. Why? It is coming out that there were weak regulatory and oversight procedures in the United States. In other words, the fox was in the henhouse.

Canadians, North Americans, and citizens of our world, I would argue, want projects to be analyzed in terms of their environmental sustainability and worth. That is not done by the very agencies whose job it is to try to pass those energy projects. It is a clear conflict of interest.

This budget also includes the privatization of part of the business of Canada Post. One might ask what that has to do with the budget. Why is there any place in this budget for a provision that would send the international mail provision of Canada Post off to the private sector? Again, it is because what the government wants to do is put ideological and political measures into the budgetary process to try to have them passed as a confidence measure. Government members know, as all Canadians know, that the Liberal opposition in this country will pass anything to avoid an election. That is putting narrow political partisan interests ahead of good public policy, and I think it is lamentable.

I want to talk about the budget from a straight budgetary point of view, because there are a lot of bad measures on their own in this budget. For instance, as has been spoken about, \$57 billion of EI premiums have been taken from workers and employers in this country—

Mr. Brian Jean: That was the Liberals.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, that is a good point. The money started to be taken by the Liberals. It has been finished off by the Conservatives. They took \$57 billion and put it into general revenues and have not put the money back.

I hear catcalls of innocence from Conservative members. If they are sincere about that, they will put \$57 billion back into the EI account. They will put it back in, because it is not their money. It belongs to the workers and businesses who deducted it and paid it, trusting that the money would be there as insurance money for unemployment, not for funding tax cuts to corporations.

Let me move to that. What is in this bill, as well, and what is odious in this economic time is the momentous tax shift from corporations to individuals. Every Canadian knows that the Conservative government brought in the HST in Ontario and British Columbia and provided \$6 billion of bribe money so that the governments in those two provinces would bring in the HST. It will result in hundreds and hundreds and in some cases thousands of dollars in taxes being transferred onto the backs of ordinary people in these two provinces.

We are doing that at a time when the government is running a deficit of over \$50 billion. One would think that when we are running a deficit of \$50 billion, we would not be giving money to corporations, but the government does. Why? Because it is the triumph of ideology over common sense. No government in its right mind would be transferring money and wealth, going into debt, and borrowing money to give to corporations when it is \$50 billion in deficit, but the government has done that.

It is raising the airline tax by 50%. Every time a Canadian goes to the airport in this country, he or she will be paying twice as much as he or she used to.

The government says that it is opposed to tax hikes, but it has raised EI premiums, doubled the airline tax, and brought in the HST. Canadians are not fooled. They know who is taxing them, and they know that they are being taxed unfairly.

What is not in this budget? There is no child care, no national housing policy, and no real help for pensions in this country. In terms of pensions, the country needs an expansion of CPP and an increase in GIS. We need \$700 million annually to lift seniors out of poverty in this country. All we need is \$700 million. The government will spend \$1 billion on security for three days of meetings in Toronto for a photo op for the Prime Minister, when for \$700 million, every senior in this country could be lifted out of poverty.

Budgets are a question of soul. When a budget is brought forth, we look into the soul of a government, and I think all Canadians are seeing clearly where the soul resides in this government.

• (1735)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the deletions in group no. 1, specifically the air travellers' security charge, the environmental assessment, and the EI funding.

I am particularly interested in the air travellers' security charge. It has been alleged, and rightly so, that the revenues that are being collected through the air travellers' security charge far exceed the money that the government is actually spending on security.

Government Orders

The government is already raising more money than it is spending on security. Why would it increase the charges by 50%, making Canada the highest taxed jurisdiction in the world, exceeding Holland, and putting us at a competitive disadvantage to the United States? In the United States there is an international security tax of \$5. The new Canadian tax is \$25.

Before this new change, Canadian airlines were already at a competitive disadvantage with people buying their airfares in the United States through U.S. carriers. Why would a government that is trying to make Canada competitive be making Canada more uncompetitive?

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, a government will increase fees on Canadians when it wants to hide the fact that it is raising revenue from ordinary Canadians while trying to fool them into thinking that they are not paying taxes.

Just because a government says it is so does not make it so. The government stands up day and after and says it is not raising taxes. That is what the government says, but it raised the HST, and it is raising the airline taxes and EI premiums. To taxpayers, those all amount to the same thing, it is money out of their pockets.

Worse, the government claims that it is raising the security fee increase in order to pay for security, but the money that would be raised by this tax is not going to aviation security, it is going to consolidated revenues. That tells Canadians quite clearly that the government is raising money off of Canadians every time they go to the airport to help it deal with its \$50 billion deficit so that it can give money to corporations in this country that do not need it.

● (1740)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the items in this budget bill that perhaps has not gotten nearly as much attention as it should have are the sections that are eviscerating federal environmental assessments.

For people who are maybe watching this debate at home today, that is particularly germane in light of what we are seeing south of the border in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly with respect to the oil spill down there.

We have a government here that, instead of re-examining all aspects of development that have an adverse impact on our environment, is making it easier and is loosening regulations. It is making it possible for people to essentially get around environmental assessment criteria. It is now being put into the budget in a way that formalizes the gutting of our environmental assessments.

I think it is one of the issues that deserves much more detailed attention. It deserves independent study, outside of this budget bill.

I know the member for Vancouver Kingsway is on the west coast. I know he has his own concerns about tanker traffic. I just wonder whether the member could bring a western perspective to that part of the debate, on environmental assessments in particular.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for this opportunity to address this issue.

It is exactly true. We on the west coast have a pristine coastline. We are very aware and sensitive to the fact that we are in a seismically active area. Any drilling that would go on, on the west

coast or up in the Arctic, would be subject to particular dangers that are simply not worth it.

I think I can safely speak on behalf of British Columbians when I say that they do not want to see drilling off the west coast. They do not want to see oil tanker traffic in sensitive waters off the west coast. They do not want to see any drilling up in the Arctic, where we all know weather and harsh conditions would make the kind of disaster we are seeing in the Gulf of Mexico utterly incomprehensible.

Moving major industrial projects from an agency that is dedicated to environmental protection and handing it over to an industry-friendly board, like the NEB, is simply irresponsible. It is the kind of issue that should not be in the budget. My friend is quite right that we should be examining that separately because I think members of this House would not want to see such a bad policy move. It is hard to do so when it is enveloped inside an 880-page budget bill.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all members of Parliament here in the House of Commons were elected to represent the constituents in their ridings. Representation can and, I believe, should take two forms.

First, we are elected to be the voice of our constituents and represent their interests here in Ottawa. Our constituents write to us, call us and send us emails. They tell us how they feel about certain issues. They chat with us at the farmers' market or at different community events, and they share their perspectives with us.

We have an obligation to take that feedback. We represent our constituents by bringing those perspectives, thoughts and opinions here. It helps guide us in how we vote, what we say in debates, and how we shape the policies of our parties as well as our government.

However, we are also elected to represent ideas and perspectives of our own, to take leadership on issues, to take positions, and to make decisions about the policies facing our country and our citizens. We are elected to take thoughtful and informed positions and even sometimes unpopular positions.

There is a tension here between what the individual constituents are saying and the mandate upon which an MP was elected to move forward. With respect to this budget and this budget speech, I would like to raise thoughts and ideas that come from individual constituents as well as perspectives of my own and perspectives of the NDP. Interestingly enough, the three are very much aligned.

Like many members of Parliament, I solicit feedback from my constituents with mail-back cards that are attached to my MP mail-outs and newsletters. I have a pretty engaged constituency. I am always thrilled to see a stack of cards in my office with feedback that my constituents want to share with me. I would like to share some of their responses with my colleagues here in the House. It is specifically feedback that I received regarding 2010 budget.

Tim Hosford wrote to me. He said, "Megan, we need a law to protect our pensions. As for the economy, we need to continue to put money into it, allocate monies for education and we need a plan for the next 10 years". A plan sounds like a good idea.

Government Orders

Halifax has the highest density of students of any city in Canada. It is often reflected in comments that I receive in my office. For example, Dustin Joldersma wrote, “University students!!! Make it easier to get student loans, for example, part-time students should be able to get student loans. Also making cuts to foreign aid is not an answer. Government and universities cannot overlook part-time students”.

Another constituent named Burton Coutts wrote that the Prime Minister is “giving us the worst government in my lifetime and I am 87. Recent priorities are return of money to cancelled and reduced women and children's issues, also CIDA and KAIROS, and it appears his cohorts want to cut funding for birth control and abortions here and in countries where women and children are at risk”.

Alan Matte provided great feedback on pharmacare that was pretty straightforward. J. Scott wrote to me and said, “A priority long overdue is better health care. More doctors available for faster and better service. More help to nurses in hospitals, better emergency service—”

M.T. Lynden from my riding has a really great list. It is a pretty big list, starting with free education. The letter continues, “It's important that everyone can access education, regardless of their income. University students often end up with a large debt. Interest should not be charged on their student loans, neither provincially nor federally...and health: dental and medication coverage...for those who don't have a benefits plan”.

That is a little snapshot of the mood of my riding. I am proud to stand here in this great House and share that feedback with my colleagues.

I would like to pick up on the last issue that came through in a couple of letters from my constituents: the issue of health care. As we heard, it is something that my constituents care quite a bit about. We keep hearing from the government about the need to cut spending, the need to trim the fat, and the need to tighten our belts.

However, the government and this budget fail to realize that while spending on health is growing, we can get a handle on health costs if we just turn the corner and start focusing on what Tommy Douglas referred to as phase two of his health care vision. We could actually control and reduce our costs when it comes to health spending.

● (1745)

Tommy Douglas described his original vision for health care. He described Canada as a country “where all can live free from fear, free from crippling debts when we fall ill”. We have seen a lot of that vision implemented since he established medicare in Saskatchewan half a century or so ago, but that vision is eroding due to a lack of leadership, a lack of vision, and neglect. It is time for us to move ahead with a new vision that is suited to our times and that is phase two.

Phase one was universal public insurance for physician and hospital care.

Phase two has two components. First, to extend medicare to cover services that are increasingly delivered outside of a hospital, services that have become an integral part of our modern health care system,

such as home care, long-term care, community care, drug therapy, and initiatives that address the social determinants of health. Again, this is about prevention. This is about reducing our costs.

Dennis Raphael, a professor at York University, put out an excellent report on the social determinants of health. The social determinants of health are a better indication of what one's level of health is going to be and how long one will live as compared to the kind of treatment one will get. We could actually save a lot of money by focusing on social determinants of health and things like home care.

The other component of phase two is managing health care better. Let us make better use of health human resources, wait list management, team practice, integration of services, sharing of best practices, evidence-based practice and other innovations.

I am looking forward to the report coming from the health committee about health human resources. The committee heard some amazing testimony about innovative ways to look at exactly how we can manage health care better, how we can make better use of health human resources and save money, and start controlling our health care costs, but perhaps more important, making sure that Canadians are healthy, happy, and doing well in our communities.

I have spoken before in this House about what I see as the failures of this budget, specifically its failure to seize opportunities in the world of science, technology and innovation. The last time I spoke to this bill that was the focus of my speech, particularly in the world of the green economy of the future. This lack of vision carries through the budget. It is not just the failure to grasp science, technology and innovation. It goes right through the budget on all kinds of issues, including health care.

The only vision that I see here is the sell off of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, gutting environmental protection, and killing successful projects like eco-energy renewables. That is quite the vision.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives put together a very well researched alternative federal budget and it has a vision in its alternative budget, a vision for health care, something that is missing from this budget. It says that, “Canada's public health care system is a fundamental pillar of our society, and it must be strengthened, especially in the wake of devastation caused by the economic crisis”. Its alternative budget says, “It's time to launch serious discussions with the provinces and territories to cost share pharmacare between the federal and provincial government and employers—”

The centre proposes a royal commission on the establishment and financing of a public drug plan, and funding the pharmacare of low income Canadians.

Government Orders

It also calls for a restoration of federal cash payments for extended health services, including nursing home intermediate care services, adult residential care services, home care services, and outpatient health care services.

It also talks about working with professional regulatory bodies, health care unions, and immigrant rights organizations to facilitate the recognition of international education.

Its plan calls for funding of post-secondary education in health programs, looking at health human resource strategies, innovative strategies.

This is a real plan. It is an alternative federal budget that actually has a vision for health care. It is a vision that is notably absent from Bill C-9 and it is not a bill that I can support.

● (1750)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague had quite a lot of substance in her speech. I just want to talk about two issues.

She spoke about the social determinants of health. Some of the new neuroscience is very compelling in terms of looking at how a child's brain develops, particularly in the first five years going back to the prenatal stage.

I wonder whether or not my colleague feels that a national headstart early learning program would be one of the most powerful things the federal government could do by working with the provinces, and enabling parents and children to have knowledge about the importance of literacy, proper nutrition, proper parenting, and physical activity.

I will reference the work by Dr. Mark Tremblay from Montreal, who did some groundwork research in terms of showing the decline of our children's health and establishing that this is the first generation of children who will actually have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, yes, absolutely.

I was so lucky in that during the election campaign I was able to carve out some time to attend a conference and listen to Dr. Charles Coffey talk specifically about this topic.

The age group of zero to five years is exactly when we need to be involved. That is when children's bodies and brains are growing at an incredible rate and they have such an opportunity to learn. They need to be given good, nutritious food in order to grow up to become healthy adults. We need to work with parents. Frankly I do not care what form that kind of program takes, but it is critical. If we expect to have a healthy, vibrant and productive workforce, we need to get involved when kids are in their early years.

I am absolutely in agreement with my colleague.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in what the member had to say regarding this file. I would like to ask her about electronic health records.

She probably knows that the United States is light years ahead of us in that area. It has certainly been developing electronic health record systems for the last 10 or 15 years now, and Canada is falling behind.

Another area is the idea of a common computer system where a hospital program is developed once and it is replicated across the country. The Canadian government, since the Paul Martin days, has been approached on that subject and has not done anything about it. For example, there is an SAP program in the member's province of Nova Scotia. The city of Halifax is on SAP. I believe the government is on SAP and the hospitals are on SAP as well. In Manitoba the city of Winnipeg headed off on its own with a different system.

Has the member spent any time looking at this area and what are her observations about getting systems online?

● (1755)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona has brought up a really good point. This is exactly the kind of role the federal government could play. There are many things that fall under provincial jurisdiction, but the role of the federal government is to provide leadership. The federal government also has the power of taxation; let us be honest.

We are falling behind when it comes to electronic records. We are falling behind when it comes to housing. We are falling behind when it comes to all kinds of things. We have a government that refuses to show leadership and say, "We are going to convene a meeting of federal, provincial, territorial and first nations representatives. We are going to lead and we will carve off money to help bring this forward".

With respect to first nations, we do not have a TB strategy. We do not have a national housing strategy. There are so many areas in which we need that kind of federal leadership. Where is it? Why are we not moving forward on electronic records, especially when we consider that, again back to the money issue, it could save us money? More importantly, it could save lives.

This is one of the best ways to make sure that we get accurate, up to date information about a person's health status. Why are we not implementing these innovative measures?

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the amendments that have been proposed by the New Democrats. I specifically want to acknowledge the member for Acadie—Bathurst, the member for Edmonton—Strathcona and the member for Hamilton Mountain, who proposed a series of amendments that would delete some of the more egregious clauses of the budget implementation bill.

Those amendments have been divided into two separate groups. Today we are specifically dealing with the amendments in Group No. 1 with regard to deleting the clauses pertaining to the airport security tax, changes to the easing of the rules for environmental assessments and changes to the EI fund. In the short 10 minutes that I have, I am going to deal with two of those areas.

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Listeners might wonder why we are debating deletions to the budget implementation bill. This legislation is an omnibus bill that is over 800 pages long. Buried in the bill are a number of items that normally would be stand-alone legislation. They would normally be bills that would be introduced in the House of Commons. They would have a fulsome debate here in the House. If they passed second reading, they would be referred to a parliamentary standing committee where members of the standing committees would call witnesses and examine the legislation in detail.

Instead, the government has chosen to cram some significant changes into an omnibus bill. That is normally not the way Canadians would expect those legislative agendas to be dealt with. They would expect the democratic process of a full parliamentary debate, that due diligence to ensure there would be no unintended consequences.

The New Democrats have been forced to attempt to amend the budget implementation bill. That is the only avenue open to us. Other members have pointed out for example that the part that deals with Canada Post has been introduced as legislation in the House at least twice before. The government had little hope of ramming that legislation through, so instead, it has buried it in a budget implementation bill and is calling it a matter of confidence.

It flies in the face of what we would consider to be a democratic process. I would urge all opposition members to support our amendments to delete the most egregious parts of the budget implementation bill.

I want to turn to two of these deletions.

What the government has done is essentially enshrined the theft of \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund. The Conservatives are continuing along the lines of what the Liberals did previously. They are using the premiums that workers and their employers have paid into the EI fund to pay down the deficit.

When workers and employers paid that money, they fully expected it to support the employment insurance fund but also to support other training initiatives. In these economic times, that would seem to be a reasonable use of that money. By including this in the budget implementation bill, the government is admitting that it has no intention of honouring those commitments to workers and their employers.

Let me tell the House why that is important. An article put out by the Citizens for Public Justice, entitled "Bearing the Brunt: How the 2008-2009 Recession Created Poverty for Canadian Families", states:

The recession revealed the inadequacy of the EI as a social safety net. Despite a rise in EI coverage, almost half of the unemployed did not receive benefits.

Canadians who did receive EI benefits were living in poverty unless they had other household sources of income.

As many as 500,000 Canadians have exhausted their EI benefits without finding new work.

Many of the Canadian men and women who have exhausted their EI benefits are in my own riding. Forestry workers have faced shutdowns in that industry off and on for the last four or five years and now. They have exhausted their EI benefits and many of them are now facing going on welfare.

● (1800)

The article also speaks about employment and income:

The recession increased the rate of precarious work, as part-time jobs replaced full-time jobs, and temporary jobs replaced permanent jobs.

Growth in average earnings for part-time workers did not keep pace with inflation.

Recessions increase the income gap between high income and low income Canadians. The poorest Canadians lose more of their income during a recession, and do not recover at the same rate between recessions.

Those numbers are being borne out. We often hear government members talk about the jobs they have created, but they fail to say that many of those jobs are part-time seasonal contract work and they simply cannot give a family a living wage. They cannot allow families to send their kids to school. In a country as rich as ours, it is absolutely shameful.

The Canadian Labour Congress made a statement to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. The Canadian Labour Congress, the New Democrats and other organizations in this country have some meaningful proposals on employment insurance reform. This includes uniform entrance requirements across the country of 360 hours so that more workers will qualify. It also looks at evening out the unemployment regions. I have talked about this in the House before. My region is tied to the Vancouver labour market. Despite the fact that unemployment is much higher in my area than it is in Vancouver, workers in my area exhaust their benefits far sooner than they should given the rate of unemployment. That simply should not happen.

The Canadian Labour Congress suggests that those differing rates of gaining access to benefits should be evened out. There should be longer benefit periods of at least 50 weeks in all regions so that fewer unemployed workers exhaust their claims. It also calls for higher benefit rates. Given that there was \$57 billion in the EI fund, it seems reasonable to make sure that workers in these tough times have access to that money.

I want to turn briefly to the changes to the regulations around the environmental assessment process. Today is the 20th anniversary of the Sparrow decision which was handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada. It set the foundation for treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Today, Sophie Pierre, the chief commissioner of the B.C. Treaty Commission was quoted in a news article as saying, "It put an end to 130 years of denial of aboriginal rights by the B.C. government". The article states:

The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled on May 31, 1990 that aboriginal rights exist and were not extinguished by federal fisheries regulations...."We recognize that litigation has informed treaty negotiations and continues to do so. But a government-to-government relationship, with all its complexities must be negotiated," said Pierre. "We understand that First Nations may feel forced to take legal action to protect interests they do not see being addressed at the treaty table. That's a delicate balance. All governments must recognize that relationships cannot be built in court."

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One might wonder why I bring that up in the context of the easing of environmental regulations. I predict that with the easing of environmental regulations, unless the government upholds the honour of the Crown and makes sure that consultation is in place when these major projects come through, we are going to see more court cases. Sadly, the Sparrow decision is an indicator of how many years it took the first nations to get some justice. There are aboriginal groups who have written to the Prime Minister warning him not to weaken those environmental laws.

On May 26, Duncan's First Nation took its case to the Supreme Court of Canada and the Hague. The case concerns the tar sands and the impact that project is having on first nations in Alberta. It is another example of even when there are environmental regulations in place, first nations are still forced to go to the courts, even internationally, to have their cases heard and their rights respected.

It would be lovely if the government would support these amendments, but I would urge the opposition parties to support our proposed amendments and delete these clauses from the budget implementation bill.

● (1805)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's comments and I commend her on her speech. I was very pleased that she referenced poverty and specifically the recent report from Citizens for Public Justice which confirms the belief that I and her colleague from Sault Ste. Marie and many others have that the recession has been taking a toll.

The government has talked about reductions in child poverty and poverty, but both poverty and child poverty have gone up 2.5% since the beginning of the recession. It is very serious and the government has not allowed the social infrastructure to be prepared for this.

I want to ask the member if she shares my concern. The poor in Canada received very little of the stimulus benefit. It went to higher income groups instead of to those who need it. The small changes made to EI and even social housing are temporary and are going to run out. Those who need help the most are going to be hurt the most. I wonder if the member shares that view and if she has any ideas about how we could remedy that.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, Citizens for Public Justice, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and many other organizations have rightly identified the fact that there is a growing income gap in our country. A recent report on first nations noted how first nations people were simply largely left out of the whole infrastructure's economic stimulus package.

We need a comprehensive approach. We need to ensure that the social safety net of employment insurance is in place so working families have access to that money in tough economic times and that it is an adequate amount of money. People cannot live or support a family on approximately \$300 a week. That is what the average EI benefit is right now.

We need to ensure that we have affordable housing available. We need to ensure that we are supporting early learning and child care. The list goes on and on. Those are investments in our economy.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have been debating these amendments to the budget bill for quite

some time now, both in committee and now at report stage. It seems to me there are two separate types of issues here. One is a process and the other one is substantive. Substantively, there is a lot at stake, and we have talked about that at great length, whether it is the privatization of Canada Post, the gutting of environmental assessments, the fire sale of AECL, the legalized theft of \$57 billion from the EI fund. All those issues are of grave concern to Canadians. However, what is equally of concern to them is they do not have an opportunity to participate in this process because all of these issues have been rolled into this omnibus budget bill.

I recognize we are at report stage, but surely it is not too late to sever those six critical areas from the budget bill, to deal with the budget bill on its own and to deal with these six individual items, if we have to, as stand-alone bills in the House. That would only require the Liberals to vote with us on this. With the Liberals, the Bloc and us, we could give Canadians that opportunity.

First, does the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan see that opportunity as a real one? Second, does she share my optimism that this is something we could do and should do?

● (1810)

Ms. Jean Crowder: Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain was also a mover of some of the amendments that we proposed.

If the Conservative government had faith that its suggestions for changes around AECL, employment insurance, easing of environmental rules, Canada Post and the airport tax, it would put those forward in separate legislation. If the government had confidence that Canadians supported that, it would put it forward and allow that kind of debate to happen. If the Conservative had confidence that they were on the right track, they would not be afraid to have a fulsome debate at committee and call in witnesses.

This is an opportunity for the opposition members in the House to demonstrate that they do not agree with where the Conservative government is going and for all members to be present in the House to support the NDP amendments.

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue to challenge the government regarding its approach to the difficult times we individual families and workers are facing. At the outset, I am alarmed at what seems to be a lack of understanding by the government to what is happening out there, the real challenges we are facing in the economy both nationally and globally.

Government Orders

I suppose it should not surprise me. When the government introduced its action plan back in November of 2008, an action plan that almost brought the House down and might have led to a better, more progressive government holding fort in the country, it did not understand either the depth and breadth of the recession we were in and that it had to deal with, so it brought nothing forward. It prorogued the House, as it has a habit of doing, and then brought forward a plan in January of the following year.

I am surprised that Conservatives have not learned anything. They are not doing as so many other countries are doing, which is looking realistically at what is going on in the economy and in their communities.

Let us look for a second at what is happening in the world. We are now looking at the kind of debt that we have not seen, I would guess, probably for centuries in this world. Every country is struggling with what has happened in the last year and a half, trying to come to terms with it and put in place programs and plans to restructure their economies. They are looking at some pretty significant and frightening levels of debt.

For example, this year Portugal is facing an equivalent of 8.8% of its GDP in debt. For Spain, the figure is 10.4%. In Ireland, the Celtic Tiger many will remember, is looking at a debt of 12.2% of GDP. These are staggering numbers. Yet, because of the global nature of the way the economy works these days and that we have bought into in such a significant way, we are affected and will be affected by this.

If there is in fact, as some economists are predicting, a second dip to this recession, we will be affected. We will have to take action. I wonder, because I do not see it, if Bill C-9 situates us as a country to deal with this very difficult reality. When we put that together with what has happened in our communities and to the families and workers we represent, I would challenge the government to rethink what is before us and the proposals it has put forward.

For example, we are in a time when we should be restructuring and reworking our own domestic economy, not talking about free trade as if nothing happened last year or the year before, as if it is just business as usual. In fact, we should be going back to our communities, going back to that which helped us to become one of the strongest countries in the world and, I would suggest, has situated us to deal with the recession in a more stable and better way than many other jurisdictions have dealt with it.

Believe it or not, some Canadians are running out of EI, if they qualified in the first place. Some of those people are getting work, but it is work at much lower wages, so their standard of living and their ability to look after themselves and their families is in jeopardy. People who have already run out of EI are having to resort to living on welfare.

•(1815)

When the stimulus runs out, as it will in a big hurry, as is indicated in the budget, even the few jobs that now exist, which are paying less than the industrial jobs people had before the recession, will also be gone and we will have more people on unemployment.

I will go back to the point I made earlier. As countries around the world were running up serious debt, many Canadians had no choice but to deal with our very difficult economy. Many are facing the

challenges of paying bills, paying rent and feeding their children. Some have gone into debt in a major way. As they have struggled with the difficult challenges, many have maxed out their credit cards and their lines of credit and have used up every bit of credit that is available to them. Now they are at a point where they have to deal with that.

I remember back in the middle of the recession attending a meeting in Sault Ste. Marie. An economist from Export Canada talked about the nature of the recession coming at us. He said that it was like a Tsunami, it would come in waves. He described three of the waves that had already hit, and we all identified with that. However, the wave that concerns me most is the one we are still waiting for, and in some instances it has already hit.

Those folks who have worked hard all their lives and have taken advantage of opportunities in their communities to put bread on the table and earn a decent living have maxed out their credit. Now they will have to default on that. Imagine what will happen when the stimulus money runs out, the jobs it created disappear and the economy still has not recovered and hundreds of thousands of people are unable to find jobs and start to default on their loans and credit. What do we do then? How do we respond to that? How do we help those folks? How do we restructure the financial world institutions that will be impacted in such a major way? It is the backing up of a system that I think we will have a very difficult time managing.

On a global level, countries will find it very difficult to deal with the rising amount of debt, together with much of our industry that is struggling at the moment with massive debt. Individuals and families will no longer be able to deal with the debt they have run up in order to keep body and soul together.

Short of Bill C-9, and I do not see anything in it that indicates any preparedness or even understanding of that reality coming at us, what does the government propose to do when that next wave, that next Tsunami hits, and we find ourselves at the beginning of what some economists have predicted that second dip?

I hope we will hear from the government at some point over the next few days just what its plans are.

•(1820)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a couple of simple questions on the issue of the government's lack of response to articulate a debt reduction strategy that is credible. The government said that it would cut \$17 billion over five years. To me that is voodoo economics in the face of a \$56 billion deficit.

Does my colleague accept the government's position that \$17 billion over five years will bring us back to a balanced budget, or does he feel the situation is much worse than that and the government will face structural deficit with its inability to deal more effectively with cutting more and elevating taxes a bit in a responsible way? That needs to be done to get us back to balanced budgets.

Government Orders

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I will confess that I am not an economist, nor am I an expert in financial matters. However, I do understand, from my own experience and from listening to my constituents, the difficulty that they are facing. All of them are heading toward a structural deficit in their life that they have never seen before.

I would suggest that the government needs to get real about what it is that we are facing. There are some things that it could do. We are inviting the Liberal Party caucus members to join us in challenging the government in away that does not allow it to take advantage of the road we are on.

I believe we do have some vehicles that we could use to manage this debt and deficit and to restructure our economy in Canada that would be way better than what is being proposed in Bill C-9.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege of working in one capacity or another with the member for Sault Ste. Marie for almost 20 years. In fact, on June 6 he will be coming up to his 20th anniversary in public service.

In all of those years, I can honestly say that I have never met a better advocate for trying to create an anti-poverty strategy, first in Ontario and now, of course, in the federal House. Knowing that record and knowing that deep personal commitment, I can only imagine how deeply disappointed the member for Sault Ste. Marie must be with this federal budget.

I will just focus on one part of it and that is the \$57 billion theft from the EI fund. For so many Canadians, EI is the very last defence, the very last hope, the very last income support that keeps them from falling into poverty. We know that 880,000 Canadians are about to run out of EI and the government is not helping those Canadians, even though they lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

It is not because the government does not have the money. There was a \$57 billion surplus in the EI fund and yet the government does not allocate a dime of that money to helping people who are losing their jobs. It is the workers' money. It was contributed by them and their employers. It is not the government's money.

I wonder if the member could comment about what an integral part of any poverty prevention strategy an effective EI program is in this country?

• (1825)

Mr. Tony Martin: Mr. Speaker, I could not agree with the member from Hamilton Mountain more in that she is absolutely right.

We have just done a two-year study of poverty at the HUMA committee. What we heard over and over again from people across the country was that they needed a number of things, such as a national housing program and a national child care program, but they also needed EI reform. We could do this immediately. We do not need to wait. This could be done tomorrow.

The government could have the support of everybody on this side of the House tomorrow to reform the EI system so that it worked better for people, so more people qualified, so that when they qualified they got more of the money they needed to pay those bills and so they could stay on EI longer, until the economy returns or

they get that job that will help them pay the rent and feed their family again.

EI has to be a central part of any anti-poverty strategy the federal government takes on. We encourage the government to take hold of that report when we table it in this House, run with it and do something good for those who are most at risk and marginalized in our communities.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak to the report stage of Bill C-9, the budget implementation act. This act may more properly be called the Godzilla act because it is a monster act.

The government has taken a budget implementation act and it has thrown in everything but the kitchen sink to make this monstrous, multi-headed act that it is now trying to bring through the House. Fortunately, in this corner of the House we in the NDP do not stand for bullying and we do not stand for these kinds of incredibly dishonest tactics. We are fighting this and bringing forward amendments that will split things off so that we do not have the Godzilla act in front of us.

As members know, Godzilla is a mythical creature in Japanese movies. At least we thought he was mythical until we saw the Prime Minister at work. Godzilla used to run roughshod over people. These report stage amendments address that running roughshod over people. Coupled in Bill C-9 is the removal of \$57 billion in employment insurance moneys that are properly owed to the unemployed workers of this country, the Canadians who paid into the fund.

The government is taking out the EI surplus and basically legalizing that theft. One has to wonder what the Conservatives did to replace that. They gave us the HST. In British Columbia, a record number of British Columbians are signing the referendum initiative. That is something that I believe British Columbians and many people in Ontario simply do not accept.

The other thing that Godzilla did was to be very destructive of institutions and buildings. What we see in the Godzilla act of 2010, Bill C-9, are things like Canada Post and the AECL offered up. They are fine Canadian institutions that are being slowly destroyed by the Conservative government. However, the one thing I should say in Godzilla's defence is that he came out of the sea because of the toxic wastes that were being dumped in the ocean. In this case, I think Godzilla was much more environmentally inclined than the government.

In this Godzilla act, Bill C-9, we see environmental assessment being gutted. That is fundamentally important. People around the world are focused on what is happening in the Gulf of Mexico. We have countries moving forward and saying that we have to tighten our environmental policies and the procedures to ensure this kind of thing never happens again.

What do the Conservatives do? They weaken the environmental assessment process, not strengthen it, in reaction to one of the greatest environmental and ecological catastrophes in human history. They are moving to phase out the kind of important environmental assessments that protect our environment and Canadians. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Adjournment Proceedings

We are bringing these report stage amendments forward because this Godzilla act needs to be pulled apart so that Parliament can vote in an appropriate fashion on each and every aspect of this Conservative hidden plan that it has tried to introduce with this monster legislation.

I know I will be speaking more on this later in the week but I will add that the idea that this HST would be imposed when British Columbians are saying no and up the taxes that are paid under the softwood lumber sellout is particularly reprehensible to British Columbians—

• (1830)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The member for Burnaby—New Westminster will have six minutes remaining when we return to this matter.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in early April, I asked the Minister of Finance to explain to Canadians why his party was choosing to pursue unnecessary corporate tax cuts rather than focusing on important priorities for Canadians.

I will put this in perspective. Before entering public life, I was a business leader. I remember during the 1990s us petitioning to try to bring down corporate taxes. I will share with the House some of KPMG's tax figures. I recall back in 2000 when the federal tax, including a surtax, was 29.1%. It went down in 2004 to 22.1%. In 2007, it was 22.1% again. In 2010, it is down to 18%.

I also recall in mid-2000 the business community saying that if it could only get to 17% it would be a good corporate tax rate. It is at 18% now and there have been a lot of changes to our economy and a lot of requirements that are needed for investments in our country to ensure we have the kind of country that we want to have going forward.

What the Liberal Party is advocating is that rather than continuing to decrease tax rates from 18%, possibly getting down to 15%, we press the pause button.

I asked the Minister of Finance a question about whether it would not be better to take some leadership as a country and make strategic investments in our country.

We know there is a perfect storm coming. We know, for example, that we have aging demographics, a pension crisis, a skilled labour shortage and our health care costs are sky-rocketing. In the future, 50% to 70% of provincial revenues may be used toward health care costs. We need to find some solutions to those issues.

We also have a change in our economy. We are moving from an industrial economy to a knowledge based economy. We need to make big investments to ensure we have the workers for the jobs of

tomorrow and to ensure we take care of some of the concerns that we have as Canadians.

Instead of pushing the pause button on decreasing corporate taxes, the Conservatives are actually increasing payroll taxes by some 35% over the next five years. They speak out of both sides of their mouths. They say in one sense that they will decrease corporate taxes and bring them down even below what the corporate community was calling for but on the other hand they will increase payroll taxes by some 35% over the next five years.

We need to make investments in innovations, in science and technology and in the jobs of tomorrow. We need to make investments in the care of Canadians, in learning, in early childhood education, in ensuring that everyone has access to post-secondary education and in ensuring that people have the right kinds of skills needed in our country.

We had a conference a couple of months ago where we engaged Canadians on the type of Canada they wanted to have by the time we reach our 150th anniversary. We talked about some of the changes that are occurring in Canadian society. Some of the knowledgeable speakers who came to see us spoke about the rising level of unemployment in our country. Another million people will be joining the unemployment ranks over the next number of years. By the time we reach 2017, over another million Canadians will be unemployed but at the same time there will be over 1.7 million job vacancies. That is because of the skill shortage in our country.

Why would the minister not consider making some very important leadership choices and decide to press the pause button on corporate taxes and make some very big investments in our communities?

• (1835)

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Speaking of choices, Mr. Speaker, we need to reflect on the choices that the former Liberal government made during the 1990s. In her comments, the hon. member spoke about education, so let me just reflect on a couple of comments.

The former Liberal government radically slashed transfer payments to provinces and territories. We all know that. It has been referred to in here many times. Let me quote some of the groups that were blindsided by this shortsighted policy.

The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations said the Liberal federal government:

chose to cut investment in education in the mid-1990s to reduce the deficit. Due to these cuts, Canada faced a brain drain.

Let me also quote the Federation of Canadian Municipalities when it said:

the mistakes of the nineties...pushed deficits off the balance sheets and onto the streets of cities and communities. The damage done to Canada's cities is still evident

On the other hand, our Conservative government has taken real action to support students and higher education. We are ensuring, and we will continue to ensure, that provinces and territories have the ability to provide the health care, educational and other social services that families need. But shamefully, each and every time, the Liberals have voted against that support.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Against? You've got to be kidding. Shameful. I cannot believe that.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Absolutely. They voted against it. I know my hon. colleague behind me cannot believe that.

We lowered taxes for students when we made post-secondary scholarships and bursary income a student receives tax-free. The Liberal opposition once again voted against that.

We announced \$45 million to establish new post-doctoral fellowships valued at \$70,000 per year.

We also provided additional funding to support world-class research and researchers, including new resources for the research granting councils. Unfortunately, the Liberal opposition voted against all that.

Since forming government in 2006, we have made landmark investments in Canada's educational system.

We made Canada number one in terms of research and development spending in higher education when compared to all other G7 countries. The Liberal opposition yet again voted against that.

Clearly, our Conservative government is providing positive support for higher education.

If the Liberal opposition does not take my word for it, they should talk to the presidents of the 13 leading Canadian universities, including the University of Ottawa's president Allan Rock, a name familiar to many of us, who wrote an open letter in newspapers right across Canada that praised budget 2010. Here is a small sampling:

In past debt-elimination drives, federal transfers to provinces were rapidly reduced. Provinces then passed the cuts on to universities and colleges, hospitals and municipalities. Budget 2010 reduces the chances that this adverse history will be repeated.

This budget has also given universities a clear signal to get on with the job of laying the foundations for a sustainable economic recovery. We welcome that signal and the support that goes with it in a period of tough choices.

These...are very positive initiatives.

For that vote of confidence in higher education and advanced research, we are indeed grateful to the government and to Canada's taxpayers.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Yes, Mr. Speaker, tough choices had to be made in the 1990s.

I recall as a business leader sitting around boardroom tables talking about the fiscal crisis in our country. The fiscal crisis was so bad that the International Monetary Fund was about to enter Canada. Can members believe our debt-to-GDP ratio was somewhere in the seventies? We are talking about a serious problem and the legacy of the former Conservative government. When we took over power in the early 1990s, we were \$42 billion in deficit, \$500 billion or more in debt.

It is unbelievable that the member who spoke did not credit the Liberals for having the solid banking system that Canada enjoys today, for ensuring that we have the room within our fiscal framework to ensure that we could make the investments. I am sure the member opposite would also agree that we made the investments during the 2000s. It is truly unfortunate that since the Conservative government has taken power, we have slipped back into deficit after

10 years of surplus where we could actually start making investments in our country.

I am sure that when we are given the opportunity again, should we ever be given the opportunity again, we will make sure that Canada once again is strong.

● (1840)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Well, Mr. Speaker, let us hope that never happens.

I know the hon. member is trying to avoid the fact that the Liberals did actually hurt education. They hurt Canada's economy, because they stalled the education of young people, and that is where our entire future depends.

Clearly the question today is why Liberals are pretending to support post-secondary education when they voted against all of our initiatives, including removing taxes from scholarships and bursaries.

We are doing this to help students get the education they need for the future. Helping students was clearly not a priority for the former Liberal government. As the Liberal member for Kings—Hants has publicly noted, the Liberal government:

balanced its books by slashing transfers to the provinces by forcing the provinces...to...face deficits, and health care systems and education systems in a crisis as a result of the its inability and irresponsibility to actually tighten its own belt more significantly.

CANADIAN FOOD INSPECTION AGENCY

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it relates to a question that I posed to the Minister of Agriculture a back some time ago concerning the Canadian Food Inspection Agency when it comes to Ms. Weatherill's report when it came to the CVS system.

Clearly, one of my questions will be, has the government indeed implemented the CVS and has that audit been completed?

Of course, I partially know the answer to that because the most recent report talks about a third-party review of CFIA food safety inspection resources that is under way and is expected to be completed by September 2010.

Unfortunately, in this House, last fall the minister said it would be this spring; this spring, he said this summer; and now, clearly, the ministry says it will be September.

Clearly, one of the questions is when, and if, the CVS audit will actually get completed, because to date it has not been done.

The other piece relates to the fact that U.S. decided to change its standards for what it needed to have in terms of inspection in Canadian plants and we had to comply if we wanted to export, which meant there was a differential between us for domestic product and international markets. We said we would try to cover that off, and we have been doing that with overtime.

Adjournment Proceedings

So the second question becomes, is the overtime still continuing? Clearly what we said in committee was the number of inspectors we were supposed to get. Mr. Cam Prince said, during committee, that it takes a while to get folks trained, and as of that time, they had 35 inspectors in the system.

So the third question is, are the 35 inspectors out of the system and on the front line? Are we making any progress in hiring the next 35 inspectors that Mr. Prince said, back in March, were needed and would probably happen in the next four to six months, who then said they got additional moneys from the ministry, which I believe to be correct, and said that would hire an additional 100 inspectors? However, of course, he said it is difficult to find these folks.

It seems to me that we needed 170 front-line inspectors for ready-to-eat meat plants. It was accepted that we needed to get that done last fall, and the government said that there would be money available to hire them. The dilemma becomes, as Mr. Prince, who is responsible for human resources, says, there are only 35 in the system, not inspecting but in the system, getting through the hiring process, through the training process, and not out there doing front-line meat inspection.

Clearly, if we have a need to inspect to ensure that the Americans are getting what they require for export, and we are saying from this side of the House, and this member is certainly saying, that if indeed what we need is to have the same compliance for the domestic market, then how are we doing that when it was accepted that we needed 170 new inspectors last fall before the Americans made the change? We are already short 135 inspectors, by Mr. Prince's own estimates of what he needs for manpower, and we now need more because we are working overtime to cover off the demand by the U. S. that we do something different. We have now said we will do it for the Canadian one. The minister clearly said, during committee, that we are not quite doing it yet domestically when it comes to the same standards to the U.S. He said we are doing it in the bigger plants but not quite in all the domestic plants yet.

So the fourth question for the parliamentary secretary is, do we have them all covered now, or are we still trying to do it with overtime?

• (1845)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly food safety is of key importance to Canadians. I think the member for raising these issues because Canadians want to know that our Conservative government is committed to continuous improvement in order to protect the safety of our Canadian food supply.

Since 2006, CFIA's inspection staff has increased by a net total of 538. Last week in the House, the Minister of Agriculture tabled a memo he received from CFIA that demonstrates the progress that CFIA has made in hiring inspectors since we formed government. I would invite this member to read that. It is a hiring process that the opposition has tried its best to undermine by voting, time and time again, against our budgets and the additional funding we allocate for food safety.

This is a very important point. This member rises in the House today. He has gone to all this trouble to raise these questions tonight in the House, and what does he do when it comes time to allocate

new money, new funding to food safety? He votes against it not once, but time and time again.

Our Conservative government is committed to implementing all 57 recommendations of the Weatherill report. I am happy to tell Canadians that many of the recommendations concerning the Canadian Food Inspection Agency have already been implemented. Actions taken to date have focused on prevention, surveillance, detection and better response.

These would include strengthening the CFIA directives regarding control of listeria and federally registered, ready-to-eat meat processing plants; equipping CFIA inspectors with better tools and technologies such as laptops, cell phones and better network connectivity; updating federal, provincial and territorial protocols for managing food-borne illness outbreaks and enhancing laboratory capacity and research into the development of rapid test methods.

The CFIA and Health Canada have developed a new screening method for listeria in meat that allows for a more rapid response during food safety investigations. Furthermore, we have launched a food safety portal on the web that is accessible to Canadians and provides Canadians with comprehensive food safety and food-borne illness information.

[*Translation*]

Ensuring that Canadians are not exposed to contaminated foods is the agency's top priority.

Canadians can rest assured that their food safety and public health networks are actively working on this. Canada is better able to target its actions because of the lessons we learned from the listeriosis outbreak in 2008.

[*English*]

What I have highlighted is that we have tougher food safety requirements than we have ever had before, but what we need and what Canadians need are members such as this one voting to support the measures that we take to improve food safety. As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, each and every time we allocate additional funding and additional resources to CFIA, to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to implement the Weatherill report, this member and all of his colleagues vote against it.

This member has an opportunity to vote for these measures when we pass the supplementary estimates in the budget coming up. He has one minute to address this. I would like to know how he will vote. Will he vote yes to improving food safety in Canada?

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has clearly decided that my voting record is more important than food safety. Ultimately, he still cannot answer the question about how many inspectors they have. They still do not know. Why do they not know? It is because they have not done the very thing that Sheila Weatherill said was the most important thing to do, and that was to get the CVS audit done.

That was her number one recommendation, to get it done and get it done immediately, because it is an absolute failure on behalf of the new system. What do we have? We have delay after delay. Now we are into next fall.

Here is the bottom line: If they want to make sure that the food in this country is safe, they need to get inspectors hired and they need the audit done. We needed it done last September, not September of this year. Of course, they are not there yet.

The question is clear. Will this parliamentary secretary confirm tonight that the audit will be done by September 2010?

• (1850)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I really have to go back to my previous point. The hon. member is speaking about food safety, but when it comes to concrete action, his voting record speaks for itself. He voted against our food safety agenda outlined in the Speech from the Throne. He voted against budget 2010, which provided \$13 million to hire 100 new inspectors. He voted against supplementary estimates C, which provided the first \$8 million out of the \$75 million for CFIA related to the Weatherill report.

He has a chance to redeem himself. The current supplementary estimates A includes an additional \$17 million in further response to the Weatherill report. How will this member vote? Will he stand up and put action behind his words? Will he vote in favour of food safety and additional funding for food safety?

ETHICS

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to raise an issue regarding the unethical behaviour of the government.

On April 9, the Prime Minister asked his former minister for the status of women to resign. The Prime Minister stated that it was related to matters of a criminal nature.

Then we heard about the former Conservative MP for Edmonton—Strathcona, who had been charged with driving under the influence and with possession of cocaine. He was using the Conservative logo on his website as well as the MP cards for his Green Power Generation, despite the fact that he was no longer a member of Parliament.

The former Conservative caucus chair also misused a special government passport to promote a green energy company in Cuba, leaving the impression that his overtures had government approval.

To add insult to this unethical or ethical injury, the Minister of Industry appeared in a promotional video for a chemical company owned by a prominent Conservative in his own riding. Where are the ethics? Where is transparency? Where is accountability?

We then have the Conservative member of Parliament for Calgary Northeast, who is linked to a mortgage fraud investigation and is currently being sued for ignoring repeated requests to turn over records related to five real estate transactions.

We have constant examples of unethical behaviour. The ministers of Labour and Natural Resources have declined to appear before the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates to discuss lobbying access to the green infrastructure fund, followed by a timely announcement from the Prime Minister that he would not allow staffers to attend and be questioned, especially when those staffers were interfering with the inquiry.

There is unaccountability, non-transparency, and the Prime Minister is the person who should be accountable and he should ensure that this accountability takes place.

The Prime Minister and his cabinet's effort to ban political staff from appearing before committees, after blaming them for recent cover-ups, is an attempt to avoid accountability to Parliament.

Then we have committees treated as circuses by the Minister of Transport, who shows up at committee meetings to stand in for the Prime Minister's spokesman.

One of the major problems we face when looking at ethics is that we are either ethical or not ethical, and the government just does not get it. It has so many examples of trying to circumvent ethics, it just does not know where to stop, and when questions are posed and ministers are asked to be accountable, the Prime Minister has shown no leadership. In fact, he obfuscates every time.

The Conservatives control how information is released. They control who releases information. They control the information that is being released, and that is not transparent, especially when the government brought forward the Federal Accountability Act. Governments have to walk the talk. The public deserves better.

Can the government please tell me how it will deal with the growing problem of the ethically-challenged decisions on behalf of the Conservative Party.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister passed the Federal Accountability Act, the toughest anti-corruption law in Canadian history. It included expansion of the access to information system, whistleblower protection, and more powers for the Auditor General. We will continue with our agenda of accountability.

I would like to note today though the exciting news that Canada's economy grew by 6.1% in the last quarter. I notice that the member did not raise that point. I wonder why she would not celebrate this news with us.

Business of Supply

This means more jobs, more hope and opportunity for families. Businesses will be able to reinvest more and hire, and expand, making customer service an even bigger priority. It means that the government will, we hope, receive more revenues to balance its budget quicker so that we will have the financial resources available to go ahead with scheduled tax reductions and to investment in the things that matter most to Canadians.

This success in our economy is due to Canada's economic action plan. We have lowered business taxes, also known as the tax on jobs, so that businesses can hire more. We have lowered the GST to keep costs down so that families can afford to stretch their dollars a little bit further.

We have lowered income taxes so that people keep more of what they earn. We have introduced special tax credits to help parents with the cost of kids' sports, students with the cost of textbooks, passengers with the cost of public transit passes, and tradesmen with the cost of tools. I could go on. I think the House is gathering that this is a government that has lowered taxes in order to generate prosperity.

We have also brought in the Conservative tax free savings account which allow people to put aside \$5,000 a year every single year. That number accumulates over time. All of the interest dividends and capital gains on those investments are tax free. That will attract billions of dollars in additional investment into Canada's enterprises. It will also help Canadians prepare for their retirement and save for a new home or other dreams that they may have for themselves and their families.

These are the exciting things that are happening in Canada. I wish the member would join with us, work with us, in order to build on that success and create a brighter future for all of us.

• (1855)

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that my colleague is totally ashamed of the government's record on accountability and transparency. It appears there is one rule for the Conservatives and another rule for the rest of Canadians.

This past fall Liberals filed a complain with the Ethics Commissioner regarding the presentation of government cheques from 12 Conservative MPs in excess of \$594 million in either their own name or that of the Prime Minister. She ruled this type of branding as inappropriate. However, the ethically-challenged government keeps on indulging in more unethical behaviour.

The Prime Minister has broken his promise to Canadians that he would never appoint senators. In one year the Prime Minister has made 32 such appointments, unequalled in Canadian history.

Also large numbers of more partisan appointments were made to the courts, government boards and agencies.

The Prime Minister is fixed on rewarding Conservative insiders rather than focusing on issues like job creation and health care.

Therefore, when will the government put its money where its mouth is and be accountable? Do not give us legislation which it cannot follow itself.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member talks about putting our money where our mouths are. In fact, we put money back in the pockets of taxpayers, the people who earned that money.

We have lowered the GST, cut income taxes, lowered the tax on jobs, also known as the business tax, instituted special tax credits for kids' sports, students' textbooks, passengers' bus passes, and tradesmen's tools. We have brought in a revolutionary idea in savings, called the tax free savings account allowing people to put aside \$5,000 every year and that number adds up. Every single year it accumulates. The interest, dividends and capital gains remain tax free.

That allows people to multiply their savings by taking advantage of the growth in the economy so they can have more to set aside for their own futures, more to invest in Canadian businesses that ultimately create jobs, hire people, and that great cycle keeps going. This is the exciting news that all of us should be celebrating today.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed withdrawn. The House will now go into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering votes under natural resources in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

I do now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

NATURAL RESOURCES—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2010-11

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Natural Resources in the main estimates, Ms. Denise Savoie in the chair)

The Deputy Chair: Order. Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes under Natural Resources. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes. The first round will begin with the official opposition followed by the government, the Bloc Québécois and the New Democratic Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

As provided in the motion adopted on Tuesday, May 25, 2010, parties may use each 15-minute slot for speeches or for questions and answers by one or more of their members.

Business of Supply

In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allotted may speak one after the other. The Chair would appreciate it if the first member speaking in each slot would indicate how the time will be used, particularly if it is to be shared.

[*Translation*]

When the time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question, since this time will be counted in the time originally allotted to the party.

[*English*]

I would remind hon. members that, pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 25, during this evening's debate no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be entertained.

[*Translation*]

We can now begin this evening's session. The hon. member for Halifax West.

[*English*]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Chair, all of our members will be asking questions. I will be splitting my time with the member for Yukon and the member for Vancouver Quadra in this first opening session.

I would like to know how much the Government of Canada is committed to carbon capture and storage? Has it increased from the \$850 million already earmarked? How much of the departmental budget is committed to research into a major oil spill? How much is committed to oil spill emergency response?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Madam Chair, there already was a \$1 billion clean energy fund, of which \$205 million was earmarked for energy efficiency and renovation projects. Currently, \$466 million is being invested in three major projects and \$166 million is being invested in 19 other carbon capture and storage projects.

As far as oil spill response is concerned, this is handled by the National Energy Board, which is responsible for regulating drilling and exploration.

[*English*]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, is the minister really saying that he does not know how much is dedicated to cleaning up a major oil spill? It seems to me that we do not know how much is committed to research in a major oil spill. Is the minister telling us that the NEB is responsible for that and he is not really interested in that question? Is that what the minister is telling us?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, that is completely false. The National Energy Board is a quasi-judicial body that runs on a cost recovery basis. It can also ask companies for money up front, as a guarantee in case something happens. This is done on a case-by-case basis and is not part of the core budget of the Government of Canada.

● (1905)

[*English*]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, the minister is saying that none of the budget is committed to research into a major oil spill. That astonishes me. And none of it I gather is assigned to oil spill emergency response. That would, I think, be very disconcerting to most Canadians. If the minister does not know the answer and there is other information, maybe he could provide it to us later.

On May 26, in question period, the minister said Canada has "the highest standards in the world". However, witnesses told the natural resources committee that Canada's regulatory process is, in fact, getting softer while the U.S., Greenland and Norway are getting tougher. Could the minister explain why we are falling behind the rest of the world?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, no, I do not agree. Canada has strong environmental laws and standards, a robust safety regime, and experienced independent regulatory agencies. The health and safety of Canadians and the protection of Canada's environment remain the Government of Canada's top priorities.

Canada and the United States must ensure that robust regimes are in place to protect the health and safety of workers and to protect the environment. Canada will review any findings related to the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico with a view to enhancing the safety and environmental performance of our regime.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us why exploration permits are being issued before the National Energy Board has a chance to regulate the drilling?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the National Energy Board announced on May 12 that it will be reviewing all procedures related to drilling and exploration. In the United States the situation is quite different. President Obama has rebuked the Minerals Management Service for its partiality, while here, we have a completely independent, quasi-judicial board that has had an excellent record for the past 50 years. That is why we have confidence in the process established by the National Energy Board.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, I hope that Canadians have the same confidence as the minister, but I am not convinced of that at the moment.

[*English*]

On May 3, the U.S. government unveiled the creation of a board to review offshore drilling safety and to tighten oversight of oil equipment testing. On May 27, President Obama ordered a number of changes to the regulatory process that are designed to ensure that offshore drilling is safer going forward.

Aside from the NEB plans to review Arctic safety, can he tell us of any other plans to improve safety and environmental protection from offshore oil and gas activity in Canada, including off the east coast?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, it was announced on May 12 that the National Energy Board, the organization in charge of Canadian regulations and project management, would review all procedures related to regulations.

[English]

I must add that on May 28, several additional measures were added to the robust regulatory oversight requirements already in place. I speak about the Canada-Newfoundland board.

The board has established a team to oversee the operation and will increase the frequency of its site inspections. Chevron is required to provide the board with ongoing reports on the safety mechanisms it has in place. Prior to penetrating any targets, Chevron must ensure that the board is satisfied that it is safe to proceed.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, does the government have any plans to review its weakening, in December 2009, of our drilling and production regulations in light of the BP disaster continuing now in the Gulf of Mexico?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, let me be clear. The Obama administration has serious concerns about its regulatory agencies. This is not the case here. They have disbanded them and are proposing a new arm's-length regime similar to what we already have here in Canada. They have 30 times as many deepwater offshore wells currently in operation in the United States.

I am happy to see that the American government has suspended drilling while they determine the cause of the spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Our government expects our on-site regulators to be prudent and to take action to protect the safety of the environment and the workers.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Madam Chair, the minister's government has claimed that this shift away from prescriptive regulations, from real, solid regulations, to a more goals-oriented approach resulted from advances in research into the causes of accidents in relation to injuries and spills.

In the U.S., the federal government is in charge when an oil spill occurs. Will the minister confirm whether the federal government here in Canada is now developing a contingency plan, including an emergency response plan, in the event of an offshore oil spill?

● (1910)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, that is completely untrue. Regulations are already in place. The Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations, under the Oil and Gas Operations Act, are very strict. A strict legal framework already exists. We know that operators are in charge of cleaning up after a spill. So, as I said earlier, the operators must provide a financial guarantee up front. They have to provide a contingency plan that contains a detailed description of the operations that would take place.

Let me be clear, if the board is not convinced that the project will both ensure the safety of workers and protect the environment, no projects will go ahead here in Canada. I would invite my colleague to consult the Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations. These plans have existed for a long time.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Chair, on May 26, in question period, the minister stated that no drilling permits had been issued for the Arctic or for the Beaufort Sea and that no projects will be undertaken unless and until the government is convinced that the environment and workers' safety will be protected.

Can the minister confirm that there are currently several companies bidding on new leases in the Arctic?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, allow me to clarify the situation. What we are saying is that there is no authorization for drilling.

[English]

There is no authorization to drill in the Beaufort Sea, nothing.

[Translation]

And in terms of arctic waters, there is no authorization for deep water drilling. That is the current state of affairs.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Chair, that was not the question. It was whether there are new companies bidding on new leases.

If he cannot answer that, try this one.

There appears to be an open call for bids for additional exploration licences in the north, including one in the deep offshore of the Beaufort Sea in a 205,946 hectare area named BSMD-5. This open call for bids has a closing date of July 6.

While it may be true that there are currently no drilling permits issued for the Beaufort Sea, would the minister tell us if there are any plans to halt all new leasing activity in Canada's Arctic?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, there are currently no authorizations to drill exploratory wells in the Beaufort Sea. Drilling does not and will not occur unless the National Energy Board is satisfied that drilling plans are safe for workers and the environment, period.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Chair, that is the second question he could not answer.

Would the minister tell us when the companies that currently hold leases in the Arctic will begin their exploration activities, since their exploration leases stipulate that they must begin work within five years of the contract being awarded?

Business of Supply

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I stated earlier, there is no authorization to drill in the Beaufort Sea, and there is no authorization to drill in deep water in Arctic waters. This is the fact now. There is no project that will go on, unless this government and the energy board office are convinced that the safety of the workers and the protection of the environment will be ensured.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Madam Chair, that is the third time the minister has not been able to answer a question about leases.

Does the minister agree with the Qikiqtani Inuit Association, which is asking for public hearings and consultations before seismic testing is allowed in the proposed marine park in Lancaster Sound?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, my colleague the Minister of the Environment announced that a project would be conducted in a safe manner. A marine mapping project will be carried out, as is done throughout Canada. Canadians can be proud of finally having a government that has made Arctic development a priority. Arctic sovereignty is important to all Canadians, and going ahead with marine mapping does not put marine protected areas in jeopardy. Let us not mix up the issues.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Chair, does the Conservative government support the moratorium on offshore drilling and the 1972 Trudeau oil tanker ban on B.C. coast inland waters?

• (1915)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, there is a moratorium on drilling in the offshore area on the west coast and that will not change. Our government does not intend to review these provisions.

[English]

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Chair, on May 14, 2010, in question period, the minister responded to a question regarding tanker traffic off the west coast, stating:

[T]here is a tanker exclusion zone in British Columbia. No oil tankers are allowed in the inside passage. That is the way it is, and it will not change.

Is the minister suggesting, through that comment, that the 1988 tanker exclusion zone on the outside waters west of Haida Gwaii and Vancouver Island includes and is the same as the moratorium on oil tanker traffic on the inside waters east of the islands? In other words, it is the ban brought about by a Liberal government in 1972.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the tanker exclusion zone negotiated between Canada and the United States applies only to loaded oil tankers travelling southbound with Alaska crude oil. A voluntary tanker route measure is in place off the west coast of B.C.

However, under federal and provincial law, tankers are free to travel to and from Canadian ports, including in B.C.

The government has no plans to reopen the exclusion zone.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Chair, the minister is just compounding the confusion caused by all the inaccurate answers he has given to these questions previously.

I would like to know whether this minister believes that the views of first nations who live along the pipeline route leading to Kitimat

and the coastal route of the oil tankers that will take oil to customers in the east are important.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, there is a joint review panel about the northern gateway project. This is the most severe way to make an environmental assessment, and the public will be heard. Let us have the process take its due course.

Ms. Joyce Murray: Madam Chair, is the minister aware that all the coastal first nations are standing together against this potential tanker traffic on the Pacific north coast that could do immeasurable damage to our ecosystems in north coast British Columbia—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I was saying, my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, announced the creation of a joint review panel when the project was still in its initial phases.

Now that the application has officially been filed, the joint review panel will examine the project and will consider any concerns that might be raised by the public or by first nations groups.

I repeat, this is the most severe way to make an environmental assessment. That shows that we are taking this process seriously.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I will share my time with the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

I am happy to be able to address the House in committee of the whole. To start, I would like to give the committee a brief overview of some of the things that Natural Resources Canada has done to ensure that our country maintains and improves its status as a natural resources powerhouse.

[English]

I do not use the word “powerhouse” lightly. Our natural resources sector employs some 755,000 Canadians. In 2009 the sector contributed up to \$70 billion to our trade balance and accounted for 11% of Canada's GDP, truly a cornerstone of our economy.

We want these massive contributions to our economy and quality of life to continue and grow. We will do that by working with the sector to create a sustainable resource advantage to make Canada a leader in clean energy sustainable resource development around the world.

Business of Supply

An immediate priority is to deliver the key commitments of the second year of Canada's action plan. Our economic action plan includes significant investments in the energy and other resource sectors, investments that are generating jobs and economic activity today and setting the foundation for greater and cleaner prosperity in the long term.

The \$795 million clean energy fund is one example. These funds are already being invested in clean energy technology projects, large and small, across Canada. This new fund is building on past investments, such as the eco-energy technology initiative, one of a suite of eco-energy initiatives we launched in 2007, with a total investment of \$4.2 billion. These programs are increasing energy efficiency and supporting clean energy research, development and demonstration.

The economic action plan saw increased funding for our own retrofit program, helping an additional 300,000 Canadian homeowners make their homes more efficient, reducing emissions and energy costs.

[Translation]

Over two years, the economic action plan has provided \$170 million in measures to help the struggling forestry sector and the workers and families who depend on it.

This amount is in addition to the \$209 million in funding for the community adjustment fund used for forestry projects.

These are important measures, but there is much more to be done to help make our resource sectors more competitive. We want to be able to take advantage of the recovery and the return of the markets. We must ensure that our resource industries are ready today for the markets of the future. They must be ready to support fluctuating commodity prices. These industries are facing increasingly intense international competition, and must face complex environmental and social challenges.

All of that is vital. Success will depend more and more on the ability of the sector to combine good business practices and increased productivity with a clear demonstration of its leadership in terms of environmental protection and social responsibility.

[English]

To support the sector's response to this new model of competitiveness, Natural Resources Canada will focus on five key priorities: improving the performance of the regulatory system for major project reviews, which will help ensure that Canada is the best country in which to invest; enabling a competitive resource sector; increasing innovation in the forest sector and green mining to enhance market opportunities and create the jobs and economy of tomorrow; advancing the clean energy agenda in Canada through science, technology advancement and program investments; and advancing sustainable resource development in the north to help Canada realize the vast potential of the region's people and resources and managing nuclear issues to meet Canada's energy and environmental needs, while reducing costs and risks to taxpayers and positioning Canada's nuclear industry to prosper.

● (1920)

[Translation]

Clean energy is and must remain a major consideration. Canada can count on vast reserves of fossil fuels. The oil sands constitute the second largest proven reserves in the world, and are crucial to North America's energy security and to Canada's prosperity.

We have heard time and time again that oil will remain the world's main source of energy for decades to come. So we must recognize how lucky we are to have so much here in Canada.

However, we must produce and consume cleaner forms of this resource. With our partners—the provinces and the private sector—we will invest in technologies that could help considerably reduce the environmental impact of oil sands development.

There can be no doubt that Canada's abundance of energy resources gives us a tremendous economic advantage. The challenge is to make the most of this advantage in order to ensure that Canada becomes a clean energy superpower and a leader in the creation of new green jobs.

[English]

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, we will review our energy efficiency and emission reduction programs to ensure they are effective and delivering results for Canadians. To date, we are seeing great success from the eco-energy programs we launched in 2007.

[Translation]

Over a million Canadian homeowners have already reduced their emissions and their energy costs through the ecoenergy retrofit—homes program. Our ecoenergy for renewable power program worth \$1.5 billion has given a real boost to Canada's renewable energy industry.

In 2009, nearly 1,000 megawatts of new wind power capacity came on line. There are now wind farms in every province, nearly 100 in total, and more are being built. We now have a capacity of nearly 3,500 megawatts of wind power, enough to power a million homes.

[English]

We are also seeing unprecedented success with integrated community energy systems. Natural Resources Canada designed and supported with several partners the Drake Landing Solar Community, a 52 home subdivision in Okotoks, Alberta. This community has recently become the first in the world to have 80% of its space heating needs met by solar thermal energy and it is on track to reach 90%.

Our \$1.5 billion eco-energy for biofuels program is seeing similar success as new production capacity, new opportunities for farmers and new jobs for Canadians gear up across the country.

Business of Supply

•(1925)

[Translation]

As part of our clean energy fund, we have supported 19 clean energy systems demonstration and pilot projects throughout Canada. These projects range from a small electricity network in New Brunswick to a wave energy development project on Vancouver Island. As part of the clean energy fund, we are also investing with private and public sector partners in large scale carbon capture and storage projects. This technology could reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by hundreds of millions of tonnes a year. One of the priorities of the U.S.-Canada clean energy dialogue has been greater co-operation to develop this technology.

[English]

I know I am quickly running out of time, so I will conclude with just a few words. Canada is a natural resources powerhouse. In all of the ways I have just outlined and many others, our government and NRCan are committed to delivering on our vision of improving the quality of life for Canadians by creating a sustainable resource advantage.

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Chair, the minister spoke about Canada being a natural resources powerhouse. It is clear that natural resources have been a cornerstone of Canada's economy since before Confederation.

Could he tell us more about the contribution natural resources sector makes to a Canadian economy of today and a little about its potential for the future?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I said in my remarks, our natural resources sector employs some 775,000 Canadians. In 2009 the sector contributed up to \$70 billion to our trade balance and accounted for 11% of Canada's GDP.

[Translation]

Moreover, resource-related projects have generated considerable investment in the neighbourhood of \$400 billion in potential capital investments expected over the coming decade.

Canada is a leader in energy production. For example, it is the world's largest uranium producer. Canada is also the world's seventh largest crude oil producer with the second largest proven reserves.

The forestry sector has gone through tough times recently, but there are signs of recovery. The prices of softwood lumber and pulpwood have gone up by 71% and 50%, respectively, since last year.

In 2010, we expect to see plants reopen or production ramp up to meet demand. The minerals and metals sector produced 3.3% of our GDP in 2008, and mineral production was estimated to be worth \$43.5 billion.

[English]

While all of these figures point to the importance of natural resources sectors to today's economy, we must also look to the future. This is why I said in my remarks that we wanted the contribution of natural resources to our economy and quality of life to grow. The government will do that by working with the sector to

make Canada a leader in clean energy and sustainable resource development around the world.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order. Numerous times, when the minister was speaking, the translation was tar sands when in fact it was the oil sands. It is very important that be made clear, that translation properly translate as oil sands and not tar sands.

The Deputy Chair: I thank the hon. member for the correction.

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Madam Chair, I would like to ask the minister a question so that we can review the measures we already have in place together with the National Energy Board to ensure that what is going on in the United States in the Gulf of Mexico can never happen in Canada.

I gather that the National Energy Board has already implemented strict measures. I would like the minister to provide more information about that.

•(1930)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, first of all, as I explained, we have a regulatory board here, the National Energy Board. It is a quasi-judicial, independent organization that has existed for 50 years. It is in charge of regulating and managing all gas and oil drilling and production projects in Canada.

We have regulations, known as the Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations, which state that the board requires the operators to provide information on contingency plans, resources, deadlines and emergency response procedures. The board can also require the operators to provide moneys up front as a guarantee.

It is a very strict system. However, given what has happened in the Gulf of Mexico, the board has also launched an extensive consultation that will be open to the public. It will be open and transparent. Those interested can contact the board with their concerns. The goal is to better understand what has happened in the Gulf of Mexico in order to advance our understanding and improve the regulations we already have in place here in Canada.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Madam Chair, a number of people have pointed out that Atomic Energy of Canada Limited has cost taxpayers more than \$20 billion since it was established in the 1950s. That is a lot of money when we think of how it could have been used to develop real green energy, such as wind, solar and geothermal energy.

Bill C-9, the reason we are here tonight, simply hands over the keys to AECL to the Minister of Natural Resources. He could decide the future of the crown corporation without even being accountable to Parliament. He could keep transactions secret for a period of 15 days under the pretext of commercial confidentiality.

Business of Supply

In view of the money invested in AECL, should the government not be more transparent with regard to the future of the crown corporation?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, one thing is clear. Everyone agrees that AECL should be reorganized, and that is what we are currently doing with the CANDU reactor division. We want to ensure that the industry is viable and that it can position itself to create and maintain high-level jobs here in Canada. At the same time, we want to reduce the burden on Canadian taxpayers, and that is why we are looking for a strategic investment.

We know that nuclear energy does not produce greenhouse gases. It is part of a robust mix of energy sources in Canada. The purpose of Bill C-9 is to ensure that we can move forward with diligence. Everyone agrees that we must move forward.

Bill C-9 has been before Parliament for three months, and I hope that the opposition will support it. Naturally, the final decision about AECL's restructuring will be approved by cabinet.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, the Minister just said it: nuclear technology is a cutting-edge industry that has been developed with the financial support of Canadian and Quebec taxpayers.

Nonetheless, the intellectual property and Canadian nuclear technology belong to all of us. What Canadian companies could acquire AECL? What will become of AECL if only foreign companies want to acquire it? What will become of the employees, who are very worried?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, this restructuring is unavoidable. We are seeking strategic investments to achieve the purposes I mentioned. Of course, conditions and intellectual property are issues we are taking into account. This is a Canadian asset, but there are also collective agreements in place. We expect the entity that emerges following the restructuring to comply with the obligations in those agreements.

Naturally, we cannot disclose the names of the companies themselves right now because of the sensitive and commercial nature of the restructuring process.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, at the very least, can the minister tell us whether any Canadian companies are in a position to buy AECL?

My second question is about the minister's commitments concerning isotope supply. We know that Bill C-9 does not provide any supply guarantees whatsoever. People, sick people in particular, are worried.

● (1935)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, there can be no doubt that the outcome of the restructuring process will benefit Canada in all of the ways I just mentioned.

With respect to isotope supply, we are not talking about the research sector or about the Chalk River labs. I made it clear that the CANDU division, the commercial division, is the one up for restructuring.

Our plan and our top priority in terms of isotopes is to bring the reactor on line as quickly as possible. That is what we have always

told AECL, which is making this a priority. I am personally monitoring this file week by week. That is why we are making strategic medium- and long-term investments. We want to find alternative sources, such as technetium-99m produced by linear accelerators or cyclotrons. This is a great solution that costs less and does not produce waste.

I encourage my colleague to support our budget because it may even have an impact on Quebec. We are leaders in this field.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, is the minister saying that isotope production will remain in the hands of the federal government or one of its corporations and will not be affected by privatization?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I was talking about the restructuring of CANDU Inc. I said that some strategic investments were being considered. There are several options. The Chalk River laboratory is a second part to be considered later, but currently we are dealing with CANDU Inc. Our immediate priority is to get the NRU reactor working again as quickly as possible to ensure our supply of isotopes. That is AECL's priority, and it is the priority of this government.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, the medical isotope crisis has been going on for more than a year now and has cost the provinces a considerable amount of money because they have had to purchase their supplies abroad.

Can the minister tell us whether he intends to compensate the provinces for the costs they have incurred as a result of the inept handling of the isotope crisis? Have any commitments been obtained from a future partner to supply isotopes and give priority to Canadian needs?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, there is a global crisis that requires a global solution. The world supply comes from five old reactors. That is why we want to get our reactor working again as quickly as possible. That is AECL's priority, and it is the priority of this government.

In the meantime, a high-level group has been constituted under Canadian leadership. It consists of researchers and scientists and will coordinate activities on a global level, which was not done before. Companies such as Covidien and Lantheus Medical Imaging were not in the habit of talking to each other. Now they want to collaborate more, and that is being done on the provincial level as well. My colleague the Minister of Health sat down with medical people and the relevant provincial representatives to ensure everyone was working together. That is what we need to do. That is also why we need to make targeted strategic investments and find alternate solutions in the future.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, MDS Nordion, a company with which the government has signed a contract to supply medical isotopes for more than 40 years, is currently involved in a dispute with the government.

How will the government settle its dispute with this company?

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Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the case referred to by the member is currently before the courts. We have a case based on contracts we signed. Given that this case is before the courts, I will make no further comments. I will let the courts decide this matter.

However, I would like to repeat that the main priority of the Canadian government and AECL is to get the NRU reactor back on line as quickly as possible to ensure the short-term supply of isotopes. Furthermore, we have a vision, we have a plan. My colleague should be pleased because we have not seen this for a long time. We are looking for alternative resources, which means a \$35 million investment in research on linear accelerators and cyclotrons, which do not produce waste and are much less expensive. They show great promise for the future.

• (1940)

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Exactly, Madam Chair. In that regard, the Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, in cooperation with the Molecular Imaging Centre of Sherbrooke, is developing a new alternative by using a cyclotron to provide isotopes.

Can the minister confirm that he will make the project of this centre—which hopes to become a leading research centre—a priority and that this centre will receive its share of the \$35 million envelope contained in the last federal budget?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I am aware of the project mentioned by my colleague and other projects here in Canada. What is important is having a viable solution for the future. I trust that the people of Sherbrooke, as well as others working on different projects, will bring forward their solutions and show how they could be useful in the future.

Before my colleague asks me to back a specific project, I would ask her to support our budget so that the \$35 million can be made available to move forward with projects such as the one she mentioned as well as other promising projects in Canada.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, I would like to talk to the minister about the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. In 2009, the Bloc Québécois participated in public consultations at the invitation of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. I was there. We had the opportunity to present a unanimous motion from the Quebec National Assembly, which called on the government to prohibit the burial, on Quebec territory, of waste and spent fuel from outside Quebec.

I would like to tell the minister that last week, at an information session given by that organization, I was very surprised to hear one of its representatives confirm that the organization planned on moving forward with a municipality in Quebec if it showed an interest in receiving the deep geologic repository, despite the motion from the National Assembly and despite the fact that the Government of Quebec is responsible for municipalities. That is one of its jurisdictions.

How can the minister explain that despite the will of the Quebec National Assembly, the province is still being considered as a potential burial site?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the Government of Canada supports the safe and responsible use of nuclear energy. It is committed to ensuring that an appropriate solution will be in place

for the long-term management of nuclear waste. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization was created by Canadian nuclear reactor owners. It was decided that we needed to develop and implement a plan for the long-term management of nuclear fuel in Canada.

Our government supports the efforts of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to involve Canadians as it develops a safe and secure plan for the long-term management of nuclear waste and fuel. The creation of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization is an important step in the development of a long-term solution. The projects my colleague mentioned are always carried out on a voluntary basis.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, I would like the minister to promise today to remove Quebec from the list of potential sites.

Can he make that promise here in this House this evening?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I was explaining earlier, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization has started its site selection process to find a community with an appropriate location that would agree to having a deep geologic repository for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste in Canada.

A process will be established through this organization on a voluntary basis. The municipalities that agree to this will work with the organization. It is the organization's responsibility.

My colleague should be asking the Nuclear Waste Management Organization these questions.

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Madam Chair, it seems to me that the minister cannot shirk his responsibility for the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. He is the minister after all.

I would like to talk to him about the energy efficiency program with regard to home renovations. The Standing Committee on Natural Resources had two sessions on the ecoenergy home retrofit program. The witnesses all agreed that this program produced nothing but positive results.

This begs the question: why discontinue the program so soon? Does the minister see a future for this program? How can he even question a program that is so very popular?

• (1945)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, we are pleased with the success of the ecoenergy home retrofit program. Some 500,000 Canadian homes will consume less and have better energy efficiency. The average savings is 22% per home. Imagine how many fewer tonnes of greenhouse gases will be emitted and how much energy will be saved. In our Speech from the Throne, we promised to review how the programs were doing in order to keep investing in clean energy in the years to come.

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[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Chair, I thank the minister for being here, and his fan club, too. I think if the minister were to announce the time, he would get a cheer. We have slightly higher standards on this side.

We have all been horrified by the British Petroleum leak. The government in the U.S. has decided to suspend all drilling for six months until it can be determined why the leak occurred in the first place. The minister said he was glad to see the U.S. suspend drilling. Is the government considering a similar measure here for Canada?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, it is unfortunate that my colleague does not have his fan club with him.

That being said, as I stated earlier, the National Energy Board has engaged in a review of the entire process. This is exactly what it is doing to better understand what happened in the Gulf of Mexico and how we can improve our regulations.

Let me be clear that Minerals Management Service in the United States will be reformed to make sure it is an independent body, which is already the case here with the NEB. The United States is headed toward the stage we are at right now.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, in the gulf, British Petroleum was exempted from detailed environmental study because it thought a spill was unlikely and the spill response capability was not sufficient. In Canada this is not the exemption, it is the rule.

In 2005, oil companies were given the right not to do a comprehensive study at the exploratory drilling stage, which is what the deepwater was at, but just to hand over a two-page screening to the government. Is the government comfortable with such a weak environmental assessment of the potential damage from the drilling process?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, Canada has legislation in place that provides a robust regulatory regime for all offshore oil and gas activities to ensure the highest standards for safety and protection of the environment and management of our petroleum resources.

As part of the application assessment process, Canada's regulators ensured that each company has an effective management system in place that addresses safety and environmental protection, ensures personnel are properly trained and facilities are safe, monitors companies' mandatory safety drills and emergency response exercises, and inspects drilling rigs before and during operations. Contingency plans must include emergency response procedures which address how the company will work with the local community and the other levels of government.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, that is simply not the case. When a company under Canadian law goes to do an exploratory well, just like the *Deepwater Horizon*, there is no regulatory requirement for an environmental assessment. There is no regulatory requirement for a cleanup plan. There are no specific regulatory requirements for any of these things. This is in fact the matter. This, in 2005, was given over by the NEB to say that these are objective based.

In 2009, the government moved to goal-based regulations from prescriptive ones. The terminology is important. In the U.S. the government requires the "best available and safety technology",

while in Canada the rules require that it be "adequate" and "reliably operating". These are guidelines, not regulations. There are no regulations guiding this. Is the minister concerned at all about that fact?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, with all due respect, Canada's oil and gas drilling and production regulations are very strict. The operators must follow a series of steps because, as we know, it is the responsibility of the operators.

The National Energy Board, an expert, quasi-judicial organization, also has the right to ask for a financial guarantee in advance, up front, to ensure that it is able to act immediately if there is a spill or damage. And it always works on a cost-recovery basis. It is an independent organization with very rigorous standards.

As I said before, if we look at the United States, President Obama has decided to divide the Minerals Management Service into three divisions in order to ensure impartiality and to create an independent organization, which is what we have had here for 50 years with the National Energy Board.

And the National Energy Board has decided to launch an in-depth study on the entire procedure. The public will be invited to submit comments, and the study will be open and transparent.

● (1950)

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, I have a very specific question for the minister.

In the U.S., there is a regulatory requirement that companies prove they have the fiscal capacity to drill a relief well in the case of a blowout. Is that the case in Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I invite my colleague to look at the act governing operations, the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. This act clearly establishes a liability regime. As I said earlier, the National Energy Board can require operators to provide both an up-front financial guarantee as well as a solvency plan. I invite my colleague to look at these provisions.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, I just want it to be clear for those watching. In the U.S., there is a regulatory requirement that companies have the fiscal capacity, the money on hand, to drill a relief well. In Canada there is no such requirement.

Second, the minister seems to have an unending faith in the oil and gas companies to regulate themselves. In the U.S., when a lease is taken out, as in the case of the Beaufort, on both sides of the border, an environmental assessment is required. Is this the case in Canada? Is an environmental assessment required at the leasing stage in offshore drilling in the Arctic?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, again, as I was saying earlier, when it comes to financial obligations, the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act is quite strict. Guarantees can be required by the National Energy Board.

The important thing that we ultimately want, and only the National Energy Board can provide, is the assurance that no project will see the light of day until the board is convinced that workers' safety and environmental protection are guaranteed.

We have the tools to do this in Canada and, again, a general review will be done shortly to which the public will be invited to submit comments.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, when contracts are signed for leases in Canada, the oil companies must commit to explore and spend money. Is there an environmental assessment required at this stage by Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, perhaps the member should address his questions to my colleague, the Minister of the Environment. What I can tell him is that the National Energy Board is in charge of managing the application process for drilling offshore or on land. And when it comes to drilling, strict regulations must be followed and no project will see the light of day until the board is convinced that there will be no harm to workers' health or the environment. And this requires response plans and contingency plans. The operators must prove that they are able to take action.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, I am concerned by the minister's unwillingness or lack of knowledge on this file. He asked me to refer to the Minister of the Environment. The Minister of the Environment has no purview over this whatsoever. It is under his watch and the Minister of Indian Affairs. That is it.

The requirement by the NEB to have these so-called stringent rules that the minister spoke of, in 2005, NEB Chair Caron said "to contribute to an innovation and economic growth and to reduce the administrative burden on business".

At the Nova Scotia level, the chair there said:

And we are considering allowing new technology [to reduce costs] for exploration. This might require regulatory changes. We're looking into that now. Flexible. Flexible. Flexible.

Does the minister feel that the NEB is in any conflict of interest whatsoever?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, it is unfortunate to be questioning the integrity of the National Energy Board. It is a quasi-judicial organization, independent from the Government of Canada,

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that has been in place for 50 years and whose history speaks for itself. This organization must work within a legislative context. Earlier, I referred to the Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations, which fall under the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act. The act sets out all sorts of conditions that must be met by the operators, including the fact that operators must assume responsibility for spills and damage. All of these conditions are studied beforehand by this expert board.

• (1955)

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, how many members of the NEB has the current government appointed?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I would encourage my colleague to take a look at the National Energy Board's 50-year record, which speaks for itself. It has always ensured environmental protection and public and worker safety. It is an independent, quasi-judicial organization. It does not report to the government. The board ensures that no project goes ahead unless environmental protection is—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, it is quite okay if the minister does not simply know the answer, rather than repeating general considerations of the NEB.

The government has appointed 10 of the 12 members to the NEB. The majority of members now sitting on the NEB have deep, long, close and personal ties to the oil and gas industry. Some 90% of the funding for the commission comes from the oil and gas industry. No one is casting aspersions. We simply wish the minister to actually know this file.

Could the minister answer as to how many of the NEB staff spend at least 75% or more of their time on environmental protection?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, it is unfortunate to hear such allegations. The NEB decisions are made by a team of seven full-time and four part-time board members. The board members are recruited through competition and through their expertise in the field. The NEB is independent, unbiased and operates at arm's length from the government. The NEB regulates more than 71,000 kilometres of pipeline, shipping approximately \$75 billion worth of oil and gas. This was the number in 2009. The NEB regulates 1,500 kilometres of power lines that transmitted \$3 billion of electricity in 2009 once again.

It is just unfortunate to hear those kinds of statements.

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Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, does the current government have any position on increasing the export of raw bitumen from the tar sands and the export of the process and jobs connected with it?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the government wants to position Canada as a clean energy superpower. The oil sands are part of a robust mix of energy sources. We want to make the oil sands an economic driver. They can also help us guarantee energy security for North America. They must be developed responsibly. That is our government's focus.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, does the government have any policy on the exporting of raw bitumen from the tar sands to be processed in other countries?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the oil sands are a key strategic resource that will contribute to energy security for Canada, North America and the world for decades to come. More than half of Canada's oil exports and some 125,000 direct and indirect jobs are associated with oil sands development. The government is committed to working with the Alberta government and industry to develop this resource in a sustainable way.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, it is strange to hear the members from Alberta cheering about the export of jobs from their own province.

Does the minister believe that the plan for supertankers filled with raw bitumen sailing through the tanker exclusion zone in fact breaks the tanker exclusion zone?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I would have a hard time agreeing with my NDP colleague, despite the fact that I like him personally. Our positions on the subject are diametrically opposed. He does not think we should exploit Canada's oil resources. I think that we can achieve a balance, and that is our government's position. This is an economic driver that we have to use to ensure our energy security and position Canada as a major player, as well as to ensure responsible development that respects the environment.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, by the time the National Energy Board becomes involved in regulating the offshore in the Arctic, companies have already signed the contracts obligating them to spend money. Does this not restrict the NEB's ability to ensure the safety of our coast?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, no drilling has been authorized in the Beaufort Sea. No authorization has been granted for any deepwater drilling in the Arctic waters in general. I repeat: the National Energy Board is an independent body. It is a quasi-judicial board with its own legislative framework that must be rigorously followed. That is the current situation.

• (2000)

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Chair, the National Energy Board has no mandate for environmental protection. Does the minister agree with the government's current position to move more

environmental protection to it and away from the environmental assessment office?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, that is false. The National Energy Board has environmental procedures that must be respected. I refer my colleague once again to the Canada Oil and Gas Drilling and Production Regulations, which include many conditions. In the past, the board has conducted environmental assessments that may have overlapped those of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. Our Bill C-9 aims to clarify the entire process to make it more user friendly, but more importantly, to better protect the environment. The public will have greater access to any assessments the board conducts.

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Madam Chair, it is good to be here this evening and it is good to have the debate that we are having. These are important issues for Canadians.

In keeping with the discussion, I would like to say a few words about the many good things that have been happening and are happening in our natural resource sector and in our resource-based communities, as well as some of the steps that the government is taking to ensure that Canada's status as a natural resource powerhouse continues to grow.

Our natural resource sectors are starting off this year better than last. In fact, they are leading the economic recovery that is now under way. For example, the mining sector is proving to be a real engine of economic success. Its real GDP grew by 3.3% in February, which is 1.6% above the level of February 2009. About 5,000 mining jobs have been created since January 2009.

Our forestry sector is benefiting from softwood lumber prices, which are up 71%, and pulp prices, which are up 50% since the same time last year. Several companies have started reopening idled mills, for example, in Boiestown in New Brunswick, Cornell in British Columbia and St-Séverin-de-Proulxville in Quebec.

As members will recall, with the launch of the economic action plan for Canada in budget 2009, the government made a commitment to support Canadians during the global economic downturn and to invest in measures to create jobs and economic activity today, while strengthening the foundation for prosperity in the future.

I will be splitting my time, Madam Chair, with the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

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As a cornerstone of our economy and feeling the impact of the downturn, many of these measures were directed at our resource sector. Natural Resources Canada continues to play a key role in delivering these successful measures. I would like to talk about a few of those.

For example, NRCan, in partnership with the government's regional development agencies, is closely involved in the delivery of the action plan's \$1 billion community adjustment fund. This is an unprecedented initiative to support workers in resource-dependent communities. The fund is creating jobs while supporting community-based initiatives to renew and diversify the economic base in communities across Canada, from exploring the tourism potential in Conception Bay North in Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrading wireless networks in Fort Steele, British Columbia.

NRCan is also leading the delivery of a two year \$170 million action plan investment in forestry related initiatives. This investment is supporting the development of new markets, new products and new processes that will allow Canada's forest sector to capitalize on emerging opportunities in the global marketplace.

Of the \$795 million clean energy fund, some \$466 million has already been committed to work with public and private sector partners in the development of three large-scale carbon capture and storage projects. These projects are creating high-skill green jobs today and they are advancing Canadian leadership in this key technology. As the minister has already noted, the clean energy fund is also supporting 19 smaller projects across the country, demonstrating a wide range of renewable and cleaner energy technologies.

We have heard about the tremendous response by homeowners to the expansion of our home retrofit program. Beyond allowing another 300,000 homeowners to participate in the program, this \$300 million action plan investment is generating an estimated \$2.4 billion in economic activity across the country. Just as important, homeowners participating in the program are saving an average of 23% on their energy bills and reducing their household greenhouse gas emissions by an average of more than three tonnes per years.

These investments are a complement in addition to our very substantial investments in renewable energy and renewable fuels, to which the minister has already alluded. Clean energy includes nuclear energy and our government has made proper and responsible management of nuclear issues a priority right from the beginning.

Natural Resources Canada leads this important file as part of the government's commitment to meet Canada's energy and environmental needs. We must address the need to reduce the financial risk for taxpayers and ensure that Canada's nuclear industry is in a strong position to compete, sustain and add to the thousands of high-skill jobs it provides for Canadians.

As the hon. members here are aware, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited is a central part of Canada's nuclear industry. Members are also aware that the government launched a review of AECL over two years ago. The review found that AECL's current structure was no longer appropriate to carry out its mandate. That is why we are moving forward with the restructuring of AECL.

The reactor division needs strategic investors to access new business opportunities, while reducing the financial risks carried by Canadian taxpayers. Restructuring will strengthen Canada's nuclear advantage and ensure that nuclear generation remains a viable option for emissions-free power at home and worldwide.

● (2005)

Addressing nuclear issues is part of building a stronger and more resilient resource sector. To achieve that goal, we must also look to our regulatory system. We want Canada to be the most attractive place in the world for new investment, investments that create jobs and prosperity for Canadians.

This is not only a concern for the Government of Canada, but stakeholders, including all of our provincial and territorial partners, agree that the system at this time is too cumbersome. I am pleased to say we have made significant advance in improving our regulatory regime. Two years ago, we established a major projects management office to provide overarching management of federal regulatory reviews. We are seeing real progress across departments in addressing systemic challenges.

Projects are monitored and tracked and deputy ministers receive weekly performance updates. Aggressive service standards are in place and these timelines are integrated into project agreements signed by deputy heads.

We are putting into practice a whole of government approach to aboriginal consultations. This emphasizes the importance of engaging aboriginal stakeholders in a meaningful way and doing it early in the process. The major project management office is also allowing for greater application of existing provisions of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act that can reduce duplication and overlap. Together all of these add up to a good start as the work continues.

Most recent, the Speech from the Throne committed the government to implementing simpler, clear processes that would improve environmental protection and provide a greater certainty to industry. We followed through in budget 2010 with a proposal for targeted amendments to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. These changes would allow assessments to begin sooner. It would reduce delays and duplication and they would result in better assessments overall.

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The goal of these changes is to take the focus away from the process and put it where it belongs, on results, results for our economy and for our environment. These changes would allow the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to conduct public hearings related to the environmental assessment of projects falling under their respective areas of expertise. This would make the process of negotiating formal agreements and organizing joint hearings with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency more efficient.

Certainly there is an efficiency to be gained, but tonight I would like to ask the minister this. What assurances can he offer Canadians that the changes we make will not compromise the effectiveness of environmental assessment for such projects?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, both the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission have a long history of conducting environmental assessments under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. They have demonstrated their independence and their commitment to safety and the protection of our environment time and again.

The proposed amendment will not change the heart of the law. Environmental assessments, led by the NEB and the CNSC, must meet all the standards of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, period. That includes the provisions for public participation.

We are giving the NEB and the CNSC the authority to establish participant funding programs. This will ensure that Canadians, including aboriginal Canadians, have the support they need to prepare for and participate in environmental assessments in a meaningful way. In fact, the opportunity for public participation will increase since these funding programs will support participation at all levels of the process, not just for public hearings.

I can assure Canadians that the requirements of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act will continue to be met and that Canadians will have even greater and more meaningful access to contribute to and be part of the process.

● (2010)

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Madam Chair, I would very much like to speak tonight about some of the important issues relating to Canada's north, in particular an issue that is dear to my heart, having previously worked in the NWT, Nunavut and Yukon as an exploration mining geophysicist.

We have tremendous potential in our natural resources in the north, but one of the first steps is to understand and assess the extent of these resources. The Government of Canada has a northern strategy that recognizes this untapped potential of the north. In particular, I am speaking of the geo-mapping for energy and minerals, which all provide public geological and scientific information to help the private exploration that already takes place there. This initiative is a lot more than the natural resource projects. We are looking for outcomes that will benefit northerners and Canadians in all fields of economic development, community well-being and sustainable development.

Canada is a global leader in natural resources. The sector accounts for 12% of our GDP and employs close to a million people. However, to fully realize the immense economic opportunities in the

north, we need to expand our ability to tap into the largely underutilized deposits of natural resources. Currently there is a lot of room to expand mineral and energy productivity in the north and one of the roadblocks to increasing our activity is that two-thirds of the sprawling land covering three territories lacks modern geological maps.

Unless one has been a geological professional, it may be hard to grasp. As my sedimentology professor who taught me mapping at the University of Saskatchewan, Dr. Brian Pratt, told me once, even the good maps need to be redone, or as Mel Stauffer, another one of my professors said, even maps he himself had done contained errors, not because they were problematic but that is the nature of the mapping.

In fact, one of the last projects I worked on before being elected here was the Salluit in northern Quebec. We worked on a particular site that had been explored by the Geological Survey of Canada, by Falconbridge and by a team of geologists for a couple of weeks before we got there. Yet it was a non-professionally trained geologist, one of the old-fashioned types who just sort of learned by doing, who went out there and found a nickel showing, which we nicknamed blind man's showing because everyone had been so blind in looking for it.

Therefore, even with very good geological mapping information, we need to look over and over again. The average layman may not understand just how important a comprehensive geological mapping is.

The geo-mapping for energy and minerals program is actually the first step in the exploration of natural resources in the north. This program is an extensive series of research projects designed to document the geological structure and potential of the north. These studies involve experts from leading research institutes who are involved in conducting the field work and in subsequent laboratory analysis and data integration.

This work is accomplished through air land surveys, with airplane and helicopters doing airborne geophysics, which are also used to develop preliminary geological and geophysical snapshots of the area. Land surveys are then conducted, some of which I have done myself, observing and analyzing from a variety of sources, such as mountains, glaciers and bedrock, using geological and geophysical data.

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Our government's priority is to build a vibrant economy in the north, while protecting its environment. We are currently reviewing and approving regulations so we can create an attractive investment climate for the sustainable development of natural resources. The goal is to make the project review more effective and efficient and to strengthen environmental safeguards at the same time. A number of improvements to the regulatory system have been made and work continues, in consultation with people in communities from all northern regions, on the northern regulatory improvement initiative, an important component of the northern strategy.

Geo-mapping for energy and mineral programs will deepen our understanding of the north and will provide opportunities for economic development for northerners.

While it is clear this program will contribute to the north's future, it also raises some questions about the involvement of northern communities. I would therefore like to ask the minister what is being done as part of this initiative to engage the peoples of northern Canada.

● (2015)

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources has about 40 seconds to respond.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, under the Prime Minister's leadership, our government has introduced the most ambitious northern strategy in the history of Canada, and promoting economic and social development is a crucial component of that strategy. Understandably, a project of this scale must be based on agreement and co-operation.

We are consulting northern communities on all aspects and all initiatives. We want people to become involved in achieving our shared vision of how the region's vast potential should be developed, while facing the challenges that are inherent in an initiative of this kind.

[*English*]

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Brossard—La Prairie.

On May 4 the minister wrote a letter to the clerk of the government operations committee stating that he had provided records to the Commissioner of Lobbying as well as to the committee. In fact, no documents from Natural Resources have been turned over to the committee. Can the minister clarify that statement, please?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Indeed, Madam Chair, I sent a letter to the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates indicating that there is no record of any meeting with either Mr. Glémaud or Mr. Jaffer. That is what the committee wanted to know. It received a response to the effect that there was no meeting or any indication of any such thing.

[*English*]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, in response to a Liberal access to information request, NRCan officials stated they do hold

documents related to either Mr. Jaffer, Mr. Glémaud or Green Power Generation. Why, despite the order, has the minister not turned that information over to the committee? Can the minister tell us to what those documents pertain?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Thank you, Madam Chair.

[*English*]

As I said, the department has informed me that the documents contained in the access to information request only pertain to Mr. Patrick Glémaud's role as Department of Justice legal counsel and the work he did with NRCan as a public servant.

[*Translation*]

There were no meetings between the political representatives in my office or the office of the former natural resources minister and Mr. Jaffer or Mr. Glémaud. Natural Resources Canada has not found any files at all indicating any meetings or anything of the kind. That is what I clearly told the committee chair.

[*English*]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, on May 6 the official for the minister's department stated that the information referred to a letter to the LRB and related only to Patrick Glémaud, as the minister has indicated, in his capacity as a former Justice Department lawyer. Now the production of papers motion refers to all documents about Mr. Glémaud. Why did the minister simply decide the information was not worthy to release?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I think I already gave a clear answer to this question but let me add that the department also looked through its files and determined that it did not give any funding to any companies that Messrs. Jaffer or Glémaud may have been promoting.

In regard to funding for clean energy, our government has spent more than \$10 billion since 2006 on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and a sustainable environment. To do this, we invested in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies, and the production of less polluting energy and fuels.

That is much more impressive action than what my colleague is talking about and to which I have responded three times.

[*English*]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, can the minister tell us the dates Mr. Glémaud was employed as a lawyer working at Natural Resources?

The Deputy Chair: To the parliamentary secretary, I apologize, I did not hear the comment.

● (2020)

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Chair, that is fine. I understand that we are here tonight to study the main estimates. The opposition may not know that or maybe the member is unaware of that. I do not know if the critic has told her or not, but this really has nothing to do with the main estimates.

Business of Supply

The minister has been kind enough actually to answer the question two or three times. I think we should get back to the main estimates. We want to talk about the things that have happened at Natural Resources. We are certainly willing to talk about the many things that we have done over the years and that we are planning to do this year.

We are here to study the main estimates, Madam Chair. I would ask that you direct the opposition back to the questions relating to them and then we can certainly move ahead.

The Deputy Chair: I do believe that the questions should relate to the estimates and so I ask the member to direct her questions to the estimates.

The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, this is about a \$1 billion fund that is available through Natural Resources and I am concerned about that fund. I would like to ask the minister questions about it. This is about the estimates. These are the estimates. It is a \$1 billion fund and it is very important for the discussion this evening. I do not know why the minister would not answer questions concerning this.

I will try the question again about Mr. Glémaud. Can the minister tell us what dates Mr. Glémaud was employed as a lawyer working at Natural Resources?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I said before in regard to the clean energy fund, another \$205 million were allocated to the ecoENERGY retrofit—homes program. The 500,000 Canadian families that took advantage of it will reduce their energy consumption by an average of 22%. That is quite something. Imagine the reduction in greenhouse gases this entails. One thing is certain: every dollar invested in the program generated some \$10 in economic activity. That is unbelievable. If my colleague wants to talk about the clean energy fund, I have good news like that which I will be happy to share.

[English]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, I would like to speak about the green energy fund, so I will refer back and help the minister along.

According to documents released by the government, Mr. Glémaud wrote an email on August 13, 2009 referring to himself as an employee at NRCan legal services. I would like to table the document that I just referred to.

I would also like to ask if Mr. Glémaud incorporated his company, Green Power Generation, in November of 2008 and, given that Mr. Glémaud was still an employee of the minister's department 10 months later, can the minister tell me if it is normal for an employee in his department to own and operate a private company that seeks government financing for clients?

Mr. Richard Harris: Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order. It is obvious that members had plenty of time to ask these questions during their so-called committee inquiry as opposed to wasting the minister's time tonight, who is here to discuss the main estimates in the budget. I am sure the people viewing would like to hear questions specifically surrounding the budget. That is, of course, what we are all here for, at least on this side, notwithstanding the

nonsense that the Liberal Party and the members opposite want to proceed with.

The Deputy Chair: I thank the hon. member for his comments, but I believe the minister has brought his answers back to the substance of the issue. I will ask the minister if he wants to respond to that question.

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, NRCAN administers the clean energy fund and not the green infrastructure fund. There seems to be some confusion in this regard.

Getting back to the clean energy fund, \$466 million of it were allocated for three major carbon capture and storage projects. An incredible number of megatons of greenhouse gases will not be emitted in the future. As I explained before, this is one of the challenges because we all know that fossil fuels will continue to be a source of supply for decades to come. We should use them, therefore, in a clean way in order to reduce their environmental footprint as much as possible.

[English]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, in that same email I referenced of August 13, 2009, Mr. Glémaud was seeking a security clearance at Public Works. Why was Patrick Glémaud, a Natural Resources employee, attempting to gain a security clearance at Public Works in the summer of 2009?

● (2025)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I cannot speak for Mr. Glémaud. I am not familiar with what my colleague is asking me here. What I can say in regard to the access to information request—and I will say it again—is that the department informed me because it is responsible for the application of the act. Powers were delegated to the department to administer the Access to Information Act. I was informed, therefore, that the documents in the access to information request concerned only Mr. Patrick Glémaud's role as legal counsel to the justice department. That is what he was doing as a public official, employed by the justice minister, working closely with the Department of Natural Resources.

Frankly, I would be happy to talk about the clean energy fund. As I was also saying, part of the envelope was invested in research and development. Some good demonstration projects were implemented and once again, at no time—

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

[English]

Ms. Siobhan Coady: Madam Chair, since I am sharing my time with my hon. colleague, I will turn it over to her after this question.

Business of Supply

Mr. Patrick Glémaud, who was an NRCan employee, was seeking security clearance in August 2009, the same very month that his business partner, Rahim Jaffer, sent an email to the minister's director of parliamentary affairs, Mr. Togneri, regarding Mr. Jaffer's proposal to install solar panels atop government buildings.

Was the minister aware that this email was sent?

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Chair, unfortunately, the member is off-track once again. She does not even know who the person she is talking about was actually employed by. I am not sure why she is going digging here.

We are here tonight to talk about, as I mentioned, the estimates. She has wandered away from that again. I am just asking you, Madam Chair, to bring her back to the main budget estimates. Then we can talk about the programs that the government has gotten approval for and is getting approval for, and wants to move ahead with.

The Deputy Chair: I thank the parliamentary secretary. The hon. minister can respond to the question, as he has been bringing it back to issues that relate to the estimates.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, as I said, our government is focusing heavily on the clean energy fund. Encouraging carbon capture and storage will greatly reduce our impact on the environment. As I said earlier, we have three large projects worth \$466 million, which has made Canada a leader in this area.

We can now exchange information with the United States through the clean energy dialogue. We are already seeing results. Our neighbours are interested in this technology. In April, we signed a declaration of intent with our American counterparts to continue these discussions.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Madam Chair, the email in question was sent on August 26, 2009. In it, Mr. Jaffer, an associate of Patrick Glémaud, who was working at the Department of Natural Resources, wrote that he had just spoken with the minister and that they would try to meet over a few beers when the minister returned to Ottawa the following week. The minister allegedly suggested that Mr. Jaffer coordinate with Mr. Glémaud in order to find someone, such as the deputy minister, to talk to about the proposal they were working on and the possibility of reaching an agreement.

Can the minister confirm to the committee that this conversation took place?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, again, the email in question has nothing to do with Natural Resources Canada. As I have been saying since I became Minister of Natural Resources, it was the department that handled the access to information request. There was no meeting with Mr. Glémaud and Mr. Jaffer. What is more, no funding was granted.

As I was saying earlier, as far as the clean energy fund is concerned, in the statement of intent we signed with the United States in April, we talked about carbon capture and storage. Nonetheless, a working group will be set up in the coming year to assess the possibility of developing renewable energy, such as biomass-based energy produced from algae. This is an innovative

approach. We are having this dialogue with our neighbours to the south.

● (2030)

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Madam Chair, the minister can refuse to answer all he wants, but we will keep going.

As part of his current or previous role, is or was it normal for the minister to ask the deputy minister himself to meet with potential suppliers, considering the fact that no proposal had been submitted and that the supplier in question was an employee of Natural Resources Canada? I am talking about Natural Resources.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson: Madam Chair, she thinks she is talking about Natural Resources, but she is actually talking about a completely different department. Her other colleague got the employment status of the person she was talking about confused. This member has the departments confused.

We are here tonight to actually talk about the estimates for Natural Resources. I think the minister would like to do that. I know he has even more good things that he can share with Canadians about what we are doing in terms of our projects and programs.

It is frustrating for Canadians to have to listen to this kind of thing tonight when they tuned in to hear us talk about the estimates for the Department of Natural Resources and to talk about our programs, our policies, and the things that are working for Canadians.

Mr. David McGuinty: Madam Chair, that is the third time in a row the parliamentary secretary rose without actually asking your permission to raise a point of order.

I would like to raise a point order. There is a series of questions that is being put to the minister that are directly relevant—

The Deputy Chair: I would interrupt the hon. member for a moment. It was my impression that the parliamentary secretary was responding for the minister in that exchange. I did not hear the hon. member's comment.

Mr. David McGuinty: Madam Chair, when someone is rising on a point of order could you please acknowledge it because there is mass confusion on the other side? This is the second or third time that the parliamentary secretary—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Mr. David McGuinty: Thank you, Madam Chair, for quieting the jackals. It is important for Canadians to know that when the parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order he should make it perfectly clear.

The Deputy Chair: The Chair will ensure that points of order are so recognized.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Madam Chair, I will be splitting my time tonight with my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain, as well as my hon. colleague from Cariboo—Prince George.

Business of Supply

[Translation]

I am very grateful to be able to discuss what is going on with our forestry industry.

[English]

Our government believes increasingly that success in world markets goes hand in hand with exemplary performance at the environmental level. Today we are concerned about the challenges faced by the forestry industry, forestry workers and the communities that rely on them.

The sector is undergoing a lot of changes. Change, by definition, does bring opportunity and we must seize those opportunities. We should develop and offer new products, upgrade our skills, generate value added from forest resources and conquer new markets.

Overall, our action on the economy is aimed at reducing the deficit, rebalancing the budget and implementing the measures needed to boost the economy and enhance prosperity. The Government of Canada has a prominent role to play in the renewal of the forestry sector, which is such an important sector for millions of our citizens.

We have taken unprecedented steps as part of Canada's economic action plan which allocates \$170 million for the development of new products and new processes and aims to capitalize on new business opportunities. We have also provided \$7.8 billion for the building of housing to stimulate construction and enhance energy efficiency. Given the importance of wood in construction and renovation, this investment led to a one million linear foot increase in internal demand for wood products in 2009 and 2010.

We know that credit is also a major issue faced by the forestry sector. As a result of our action plan, we have expanded the mandates of Export Development Canada and the Business Development Bank of Canada in a bid to reduce private market gaps. The results are clear: \$16 billion were provided last year by EDC to support the Canadian forestry sector and, last year, 1,110 Canadian forestry sector SMEs took advantage of loans provided by BDC.

[Translation]

The success of the forestry sector, like other sectors in our economy, is dependent on the sound management of our resources and the sustainability of the production process. Since 2006, the Government of Canada has spent over \$1 billion on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and protecting the environment, by investing in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies and the production of cleaner energies and fuels.

[English]

The 2010 budget dedicates \$100 million to help support the commercialization of market-ready technologies and new bio-products in the forestry sector to create a world-class industry able to compete in tomorrow's bio-economy. This initiative will be truly transformational for the sector.

The pulp and paper green transformation program, with a \$1 billion budget, is there to help pulp sector businesses producing black liquor to improve the energy efficiency of their plants. This

program will also give rise to new investment, which is a key factor in revitalizing the sector.

The industry is well aware of the competitive advantage it will enjoy and the benefits it will reap when Canadian clean energy technologies are implemented and commercialized.

The future of the wood industry is very promising. Emerging technologies offer extraordinary possibilities. Our investments are intended to speed up development in the implementation of these new technologies and to bring about substantial benefits for the entire value chain of the sector.

• (2035)

[Translation]

Canada must take advantage of its excellent place in the world as a major supplier of wood and wood products to offer products that can be sold on all markets. The government is continuing to put the conditions in place that will make the forestry sector more sustainable and competitive.

[English]

The forestry sector, in spite of all these efforts, is still experiencing difficulty, and I can say that from some of the challenges in small communities in my riding.

Could the minister lay out the government's global approach in terms of supporting this very important industry to Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, we have a three-pronged approach to supporting the recovery of Canada's wood industry.

The first is technology and innovation. We are investing \$120 million in the transformative technologies program. That funding will go directly to developing, commercializing and implementing cutting-edge technologies in fields such as bioenergy and next-generation building systems.

The second is value added products. Our economic action plan allocated \$8 million over two years to support research and technology transfer associated with value added projects. This initiative involves developing and enhancing our products to make them more competitive in Canada and abroad.

The third is expanding markets for wood products. We have set up three initiatives to stimulate market expansion for wood products.

The first is \$20 million over two years for the Canada wood program, which helps wood producers grow and diversify their export markets. The second is \$12 million over two years for the North American wood first initiative to promote the use of wood in non-residential construction in Canada and the United States. The third is \$10 million to support large-scale demonstrations of the use of Canadian wood in construction.

Taken together, these measures are thoroughly transforming the sector, which will now be ready to take advantage of new opportunities and conquer new markets.

Our actions are creating a world-class competitive industry that will perform very well in tomorrow's economy.

Business of Supply

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Chair, with the recent opening of the Vancouver pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010, Canadian expertise in wood construction is now on display for the world to see. The Vancouver pavilion significantly is located in the urban best practices theme of Shanghai Expo 2010. The building's interior will serve as an exhibition space. The first floor features the city of Vancouver, while the second floor is devoted to consumer focused displays, promoting wood as a natural, sustainable building product and wood frame construction as energy efficient and safe.

Importantly, the second floor display area and third floor meeting rooms will be used to host Chinese developers, engineers, architects and government officials as part of the program to market Canadian wood products and advance wood technology in China.

With all of this put together, the Vancouver pavilion in China provides the unique opportunity to showcase Canadian wood products and wood construction techniques to an international audience.

Would the Minister of Natural Resources tell us how much the government has invested in the Vancouver pavilion and what it hopes to achieve with that?

• (2040)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I would like to thank the member for his excellent question.

The Vancouver Pavilion is a collaboration of the Government of Canada, the province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver. The Government of Canada has invested \$2.5 million in the construction and operation of the Vancouver Pavilion.

This funding is part of a \$170 million economic action plan investment. As part of this investment, \$10 million has been allocated to projects that showcase Canadian wood products overseas, such as the Vancouver Pavilion.

China has rapidly emerged as one of Canada's most important lumber export markets. Canada's wood product exports to China are up eleven-fold from \$32 million in 2001 to \$385 million in 2009.

An estimated 70 million visitors, including several million international visitors, will attend Shanghai Expo 2010. Widespread media attention and access to prominent builders and large buyers of construction materials make Shanghai Expo 2010 the most important trade marketing event of the year in China.

With this investment, the government is helping the Canadian forestry sector benefit from these new opportunities and improve its long-term competitiveness.

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Chair, it is clear that the Major Project Management Office has been a major step forward in approving the regulatory process for major resource projects but I am sure the minister would agree that much more needs to be done.

Could the minister indicate whether and what future improvements are being proposed?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, once again I thank my colleague for his question.

Improving the regulatory system is a priority for our government and we are doing several things to make it better. There is the Major Projects Management Office. Federal departments and regulatory agencies work closely together to identify basic ways of improving the environmental assessment process and our methods of consulting aboriginals. This will improve the results thanks to changes to various aspects of the way in which projects are reviewed.

As a first key step, the 2010 budget introduced some targeted changes to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act that will improve environmental assessments in Canada by letting them start earlier, reducing delay and duplication, and getting better assessments in general.

The budget also announced the participant funding program for the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission and the National Energy Board to support the more active, selective participation of all Canadians, the intent being to build on these activities while the Government of Canada explores other ways of heading toward a process of reviewing every project.

The government obviously cannot do it all on its own, and in order to achieve the mutual objective of providing regulatory assessments in a foreseeable way, the federal framework must work as effectively as possible with the processes of the provinces and territories. I am looking forward to working with my counterparts to advance our common commitment to making basic improvements to the regulatory framework for major mining and energy projects in Canada. I want to emphasize, though, that we will not allow our efforts to improve effectiveness to compromise environmental protection. Quite to the contrary, environmental protection will be improved under the new process.

[English]

Ms. Candice Hooppner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Madam Chair, I was wondering if the minister could comment on the Arctic and the north. This is an area that unfortunately was neglected under previous governments and it is an area that our government made a priority from the very onset when we were first elected into government.

I am wondering if the minister could comment on our strategy for the north, specifically in two areas: the people in the north, as well as our natural resources. Could the minister tell us what our government is doing in regard to and in response to the north and the Arctic?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, NRCan has made great strides in the north through work with leading edge science to help Canada exercise our Arctic sovereignty, protect the north's environmental heritage and promote social and economic development.

Business of Supply

Through NRCan, we have invested \$100 million in the geo-mapping for energy and minerals program, or GEM, to better understand the potential for new energy and mineral deposits in the north. Northerners can expect to see the benefits of more economic opportunities and jobs as industry works to explore and develop oil, gas and mineral deposits. A key activity of the GEM program is collecting new field data and introducing innovative concepts that help improve our understanding of the resource potential.

As well, budget 2010 provided \$80 million to create the Canadian high Arctic research station. NRCan has provided significant technical advice on the science and technology goals, location analysis and logistical requirements, and \$85 million has been provided to maintain and upgrade key Arctic research facilities.

NRCan's polar continental shelf program will use \$11 million to better support more than 1,000 researchers from Canada and around the world. This funding will significantly boost the capacity of the polar continental shelf program in Resolute Bay and facilities to support field research throughout Canada's Arctic.

● (2045)

Mr. Richard Harris: Madam Chair, this government believes in the potential of all regions of the country. Hamilton, Ontario has been hit very hard by the economic downturn. During these times, the manufacturing and auto industries have been very tough.

Could the minister give an example of what this government is doing to help hard hit regions like Hamilton, Ontario?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the Government of Canada is moving its main materials research facility from Ottawa to Hamilton, the hub of the automobile and manufacturing industries. I am referring to the Materials Technology Centre of the Canada Centre for Mineral and Energy Technology, known as CANMET-MTL.

The proximity of the companies and universities that are very involved in leading-edge research on materials and their development, as well as their marketing, will stimulate innovation in Canada's manufacturing sector. It will also stimulate economic activity and ensure that high-quality jobs are maintained as well as created.

We know that our government recently launched the science and technology strategy, which recognizes the need to create synergies between industry, universities and government in order to promote innovation in science and technology.

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Chair, I am pleased to take part in this debate this evening. As we know, Quebec has been particularly affected by the forestry crisis that has been raging for too long, unfortunately. The people of our region are reaching the end of their rope. The minister must know this because he represents a rural area in Quebec. His government turned its back on forestry workers but did not hesitate to rush to the assistance of Ontario's auto industry. That is the reality.

The new Conservative government policy is: Give it all to Ontario. Give Ontario more MPs. Give Ontario the securities regulator. Give Ontario's automobile industry billions of dollars.

In the meantime, the Prime Minister's puppets from Quebec have quietly agreed to promote Ontario industry while loudly claiming to defend the Quebec nation.

The minister and the government know very well that the forestry industry needs loan guarantees to get back on track. Everyone knows that is the solution, but the government is still doing nothing.

Why does the government claim in the House that loan guarantees are illegal under the softwood lumber agreement while its lawyers are trying to prove the opposite to the London Court of International Arbitration and legal opinions establishing their validity have been issued by various law firms?

What will the minister do if the London Court of International Arbitration ruling in the Canada-U.S. dispute on loan guarantees for the forestry industry states that they are legal?

● (2050)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I thank my colleague for his question, but not for his jeers. That party jeers at the government far too often. It does not matter; we will have a constructive dialogue.

Indeed, part of my riding is an RCM that depends on the forestry industry. There are border mills in my region, and I am well aware of the problems facing that industry at this time.

Clearly, it is a question of markets. We need to both consolidate what we have and give the industry the boost it needs to advance into the economy of the future. That is why the latest investment announced in our budget—\$100 million over the next four years—says a great deal. The Forest Products Association of Canada welcomed this investment, which it described as the boost it needed to develop new markets for bioproducts. When a sawmill has logs to cut, they must be cut. However, we must use all the byproducts to create bioproducts in order to bring in additional revenue, instead of treating byproducts as waste.

We are also providing industries with support to deal with the market downturn. We are in the midst of a global economic crisis. I would remind my colleague that through EDC, nearly \$14 billion has gone towards financially supporting hundreds of forestry companies in Quebec. Between January 2009 and March 31, 2010, we invested \$14 billion. That is an enormous amount, representing significant support. Yes, we need to continue. We announced this new measure in budget 2010, in order to make even greater progress and better position ourselves in the economy of the future.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Chair, the minister very clearly said, once again, that the government had allocated \$100 million for the forestry crisis, but he did not mention that it had allocated \$9.7 billion for the crisis in the automotive industry in Ontario.

Business of Supply

Does the minister think that the government should influence the forest product market to make it easier for the industry to modernize and innovate new products, in light of the fact that this could be an excellent solution for the forestry industry in Quebec?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, everyone agrees that we must keep the softwood lumber agreement. Everyone knows that, including my colleague. The industry has said so and continues to say so. That is why we sat down with Quebec and with industry stakeholders to find out where investments could make a difference.

We invested \$200 million in Quebec to support silviculture work through agreements in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Nord-du-Québec, Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Saguenay-Côte-Nord. Then, we invested \$34.7 million to repair bridges and culverts on multipurpose routes.

My colleague, the Minister of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, recently announced \$100 million in assistance for forestry communities. I must point out that all of these commitments by the federal government have helped maintain or create 8,300 jobs in Quebec. That is significant.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Chair, 8,300 jobs were saved, but how many have been lost as a result of years of inaction? In light of the current situation, I have a hard time showing my gratitude to the minister for what he is telling us.

This might be a good time to point out to the minister that Bill C-429, introduced by my Bloc Québécois colleague, the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, is currently before the House. We think this bill is an excellent initiative to help the forestry industry by promoting the use of wood in the construction of federal buildings. The bill was supported by all of the opposition parties. Only the Conservatives opposed it.

What will the minister do when the majority of this House is calling for the implementation of this bill? What will he do when the time comes to once again vote on this bill?

• (2055)

The Deputy Chair: I would ask all hon. members to address the minister through the Chair.

The hon. minister has the floor.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, let me tell the House what we are doing for the industry. Economic recovery is on the horizon although it is still fragile. However, the fact remains that the price for softwood lumber has increased by 71% over the same period last year and the price of pulp has gone up by 50%.

A number of companies have started resuming operations in some plants, such as Quesnel and Crofton. Thanks to the community adjustment fund alone, labs in Quebec will receive \$78 million in support for innovation and the development of new technologies in the forestry sector in areas such as bioenergy and next generation construction systems, and they will receive more than \$1 million to develop a business plan and a technical design for a pilot demonstration project for the production of nanocrystalline cellulose.

In 2009, EDC provided services to more than 200 forestry businesses in Quebec, which resulted in roughly \$14 billion in

exports. Recently, I went to Quebec City to meet with the Quebec Forest Industry Council and announce funding for cecobois and for QWEB to help them better develop markets. Not only do we respect all the efforts being made, but we support them as well.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Chair, I was at the same meeting as the minister in Quebec City recently, and what the people in attendance were also asking for was, once again, loans and loan guarantees.

Although sustainable development and environmental protection have become imperative and the more enlightened among us know that we must focus on renewable energy, the Conservatives continue to focus on traditional sectors that are major polluters. Since Canada draws some of its wealth from the highly polluting oil sands, the government is reluctant to follow the lead of countries that are entering the 21st century. Quite the opposite is true in Quebec. Along with Norway, Quebec is the only industrialized society in which oil is not the primary energy source.

Instead of pitting economic growth against environmental protection, as successive federal governments have always done so well, it is time to give sustainable development the stimulus it needs. Solutions related to sustainable development abound. For instance, a business from my riding, the Coopérative forestière Haut Plan Vert in Lac-des-Aigles, recently appeared before my colleagues and me on the Standing Committee on Natural Resources. The company's goal is to revive rural communities by redeveloping abandoned agricultural lands in order to produce energy that the community can use to meet its own needs. What a great project. There is no shortage of great ideas like this one. The problem is that there is not enough money to carry out such projects.

Under these circumstances, how can the minister explain that out of \$1 billion earmarked for the clean energy fund, \$800 million was allocated to carbon capture and storage projects in western Canada?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, I believe that the main energy source that my colleague was referring to is electricity. We know that hydroelectricity is the main source of electric energy in Quebec, but when it comes to transportation, it is fossil fuels, as it is everywhere else. We know that here in Canada, transportation is responsible for 27% of all greenhouse gas emissions. That is why my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, is working with the United States to align our regulations in order to reduce our environmental footprint on that front. That is why we, at Natural Resources Canada, are putting effort and energy into ensuring that the oil sands can be exploited in such a way that the environmental impact can be reduced as much as possible, be it in relation to rehabilitating the land, recycling water or reducing greenhouse gases.

Business of Supply

I was in Chicago, in the United States, as part of the clean energy dialogue and it was suggested that hydroelectricity is a clean energy source that should be exported to the United States. It is a major plan for a player such as Hydro-Québec and we may be able to help in that sense. We are aiming to have 90% of our electricity produced by non-emitting sources by 2020. We are presently at 75%.

Yes, Quebec plays a very important role given that the electricity produced is predominantly hydroelectricity. However, we will continue to improve in that area to encourage investment in clean energy. In Quebec, the \$100 million that was announced in the 2010 budget is very good news. Our people can begin to focus on opportunities such as biomass. We have been asked about that for a long time and the Forest Products Association of Canada and Quebec's forest products association are happy about this good news.

• (2100)

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Chair, speaking of biomass, earlier I was talking about the Haut Plan Vert forestry cooperative in my riding, which will be using a new energy plant to play a part in the green economy. I would like to know if the minister can find a way to fund projects like that.

Does the minister have programs to provide funding for small projects like the Haut Plan Vert forestry cooperative in Lac-des-Aigles in my riding?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, the member is capable of doing his work without asking me for help. He was elected as an MP to take care of his riding and to provide direction to the people in his riding. There is the clean energy fund, the green infrastructure fund and CED programs. There are lots of programs, but it is not up to me to go through those programs to find out what applies to projects that people in his riding bring to his constituency office.

However, if he has questions about Natural Resources Canada's programs in general, I would be happy to respond that what he should focus on right now is the fact that \$100 million was set aside in the 2010 budget to produce biomass and bioproducts. We will keep a close eye on this.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Chair, is the minister aware that the \$800 million he is giving to the oil companies over two years for carbon capture and storage is simply veiled subsidies for this billion dollar industry, compared to little projects like the one I just mentioned by the Coopérative forestière Haut Plan Vert in Lac-des-Aigles?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Madam Chair, this is the problem we are facing. One does not exclude the other. The green economy, yes, but fossil fuels for transportation are here to stay for years to come.

The government is making strategic, targeted investments to reduce our environmental footprint in terms of air, water and land. This does not mean that renewable energy projects cannot be carried out in different parts of Canada. That is why we have programs and why our government has invested \$10 billion since 2006 in clean energy alone.

[English]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to take a moment to congratulate the minister for the superb leadership he has given to this important portfolio and the

most explanatory response to questions about the estimates that he has given tonight. I am sure the people of Canada appreciate that, as we do in the House.

I would be remiss if I did not say of the deputy minister and her departmental officials that we are all very proud of the great job they have done in the management of their department and in support for the minister.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide to the House a perspective on some of the challenges that the forest sector has and is facing and on the actions that our government is taking to help create a more sustainable and competitive sector for the future.

The Canadian pulp and paper industry is going through a period of major reconstruction. Challenges in recent years include the declining demand for newsprint, the high Canadian dollar, and increased competition from low-cost producers. The negative effects of these have been further intensified by the recent global recession.

While these challenges still exist, there is a great potential for new opportunities to drive the Canadian forest sector towards a renewed, more sustainable and competitive future.

The Government of Canada recognizes this under the leadership of our Prime Minister and our Minister of Natural Resources. We recognize this and that is why we are making well-targeted, quality investments that will improve energy efficiency and promote market diversification by developing new renewable energy products and processes, all of which will create significant economic and environmental benefits.

Since 2006, the Government of Canada has allocated over \$10 billion, I repeat that, \$10 billion to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and protect our environment by investing in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies, and the production of energy products that pollute less.

Most recently, the 2010 budget provides \$100 million to help support the commercialization of market-ready technologies in the forest sector to create a world-class industry able to compete in tomorrow's bioeconomy.

Let me talk for a moment about the pulp and paper green transformation program. The Canadian pulp and paper sector has made great strides in reducing its environmental footprint.

This effort must continue. This is why our government has established the pulp and paper green transformation program.

Under this program, Canadian pulp mills that produce black liquor are eligible to access up to \$1 billion to undertake capital investments that improve the energy efficiency of their facilities, their capacity to generate renewable bioenergy, and their overall environmental performance.

The program will also generate new investments in pulp and paper mills throughout the country, making them greener, more sustainable and more competitive, and positioning them at the forefront of the bioeconomy.

These are monumental steps that this government has taken in the last three or four years, steps that the previous Liberal government had no idea to take in the 13 years it was in power. I congratulate our Prime Minister and this government for that foresight.

I would like to cite some examples among the 24 pulp and paper companies in Canada that have received funding under this program. One is Celgar in the Kootenays of British Columbia. The Government of Canada is investing \$40 million in the Celgar pulp mill, one of Canada's largest and most modern pulp mills, in Castlegar, British Columbia. This investment will allow the mill to generate clean, green energy from forest biomass.

•(2105)

It will also enable the mill to take advantage of waste heat, increase the production of steam from wood waste, and increase capacity to generate bioenergy, something we all strive for. With these improvements in place, the mill will generate enough renewable electricity to meet its own needs and supply some energy to the B.C. grid by late 2010.

Another pulp mill taking advantage of this program is Domtar. Our government is investing \$57 million in two capital projects at Domtar Corporation in Kamloops, British Columbia. The projects will allow the mill to acquire new equipment and modify existing equipment in order to increase its capacity to produce renewable energy and reduce particulate emissions. With this investment, Domtar will improve its environmental performance and contribute to a more sustainable pulp and paper industry in Canada.

Another pulp company in British Columbia is Howe Sound Pulp and Paper. A \$6 million investment by the Government of Canada will allow Howe Sound Pulp and Paper to invest in a series of upgrades to its evaporator to redirect more steam for the production of electricity. By increasing its renewable energy production, the mill is reducing its reliance on natural gas, which will lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

The upgrades are also expected to produce in excess of 8,200 megawatt hours of electrical power, enough energy to power 800 homes a year, which the mill can sell to B.C. Hydro. This is a well-planned development.

This is only the beginning. The federal government has received over 40 applications from companies that want to launch projects in all parts of Canada, right from coast to coast to coast. A number of new announcements will take place in the next few months.

This is a government with a vision of cleaning up the environment, reducing greenhouse gases, and this is just one of the programs that is making huge steps toward that goal.

If I might add at this time, I am going to share my time with the members for Tobique—Mactaquac and Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

Business of Supply

In conclusion, by supporting the Canadian pulp and paper sector in its ability to become more energy efficient and generate renewable bioenergy, this Conservative government is also helping to save jobs and enhance our capacity to take advantage of future market opportunities.

This Conservative government is proud to be a partner with companies that are at the forefront of the green transformation taking place throughout the pulp and paper industry.

I think it is just the most obvious thing that these represent significant investments by this government, billions of dollars by this government in a short, four-year period, when the previous Liberal government had 13 years to tune into the greening of our world and bioenergy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They chose not to get involved in a program like this. In fact, the Liberals chose to increase greenhouse gas emissions. They chose to do nothing and let the greenhouse gas emissions increase. That is a shameful example of environmental stewardship.

What this Conservative government has done in just the last four years under our Prime Minister and this minister has been significant investment.

I would like to ask the minister who has led us down this path to bioenergy and greener transformation to expand on how these—

•(2110)

The Chair: Order, please. I wish to inform the hon. member for Cariboo—Prince George that he has taken up 10 minutes of his slot. If he intends to share his time, he may want to put his question quickly so that his colleagues can speak.

Mr. Richard Harris: Mr. Chair, could I ask the minister to expand on how these sorts of measures will benefit the forest industry and ensure a successful sector for the future?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his excellent speech, which of course I listened to very carefully.

[*English*]

I will be happy to respond to the hon. member's question. Our government's investment in the pulp and paper green transformation program is one of the many steps we have taken to support forestry workers in communities right now, while securing a stable and competitive sector for the future. This program allows pulp and paper mills across Canada to further reduce their environmental footprint, while establishing themselves as world leaders in renewable energy production. The example of funded projects mentioned by my colleague demonstrates that this program is delivering real results for communities, for Canadians and for the forest industry as a whole.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that we are also building on past investments to drag the industry toward the next generation of renewable energy products and processes.

In addition to the pulp and paper green transformation program, \$170 million is being provided to help our forestry industry develop new products and processes and capitalize on new market opportunities.

Business of Supply

The \$100 million recently announced in budget 2010 will help accelerate the development of new technologies to create a more diversified and stronger forest sector that offers a range of new, high volume products in the form of renewable energy. This clearly shows that our government is looking to tomorrow's markets today, working now to drive growth and ensure that Canada emerges a leader in the clean energy economy of tomorrow.

We understand the importance of Canada's forestry industry to local communities and our national economy. The record shows that right from the beginning our government has taken decisive action to assist Canada's forestry industry, while recognizing its important role in tomorrow's bio-economy.

• (2115)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Chair, I want to follow-up on that. Pulp and paper mills across Canada are looking for new ways to maintain their environmental and economic sustainability. One of those is turning the black liquor product, a byproduct of the pulping processes, into heat and power. AV Nackawic in my riding received money for this recently. It makes dissolving pulp to be used in rayon for clothes.

Recently, J.D. Irving's Lake Utopia Paper in New Brunswick received \$22 million in funding under the pulp and paper green transformation program to install a new biomass boiler that will reduce the mill's reliance on fossil fuels to power its manufacturing operations and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Could the Minister of Natural Resources tell us more about how this pulp and paper green transformation program is working in reality?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the pulp and paper green transformation program is laying the groundwork for a greener, more sustainable future for Canada's pulp and paper sector. The program supports innovation and environmentally friendly investments in areas such as energy efficiency and renewable energy production. It will allow pulp and paper mills in Canada to further reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, while helping to position them as leaders in the production of renewable energy from forest biomass. The pulp and paper green transformation program will provide up to \$1 billion to projects such as the one the hon. member spoke about in New Brunswick.

Further, by meeting market demands for sustainably manufactured pulp and paper products, mills like Lake Utopia will remain economically viable, enabling them to maintain jobs within the community.

The pulp and paper green transformation program complements the \$100 million in budget 2010 being delivered over four years to support the development, commercialization and implementation of advanced technology in the forest sector, helping create a world-class industry able to compete in the clean energy economy of tomorrow.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time this evening with the member for Kings—Hants.

Could I ask the minister a questions, going back to the eco-energy program for Canadians who are watching. He mentioned earlier that over one million Canadians have taken up the program. I am not sure

what timeline he had in place. However, could he tell us what has been the increase in uptake on that program in the last three years?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I will clarify what I said. At the end of 2011, we expect that half a million Canadians, half a million families, will get that program.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, there have been many increases. To begin with, \$160 million was set aside in budget 2007 to introduce the program.

Then our economic action plan included an additional investment of \$300 million. Another \$205 million was added from the clean energy fund. Finally, another \$80 million has been added. This means a total investment of \$745 million in this 2007 program.

• (2120)

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, I did not get an answer to the question. I asked the minister specifically what the percentage increase has been in three years. He has no answer.

In 2006 the government killed \$5.6 billion of climate change funding, including a commercial buildings retrofit program to help our companies and our commercial operations achieve energy efficiency. Now we learn the government is killing an eco-energy program for everyday Canadian householders, everyday Canadian homeowners, co-op and condo owners who want to do the right thing and become more energy efficient.

Let me ask the minister this next question. He is very big on metrics. He says he is doing an assessment of the program. What has been the net effect of the eco-energy program on driving energy efficiency retrofits out of the underground economy?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we were clear in our Speech from the Throne that we would review the entire program. That being said, it is the responsibility to ensure that the applicants will have their money. This is why we stopped taking any additional applications since March 31.

What is important is \$300 million will continue to flow this year. That is a lot of money. As I said, we will review the entire suite of programs to ensure we better invest in the economy of tomorrow and how we can have strategic investments in clean energy. We are committed to that.

Business of Supply

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, the net effect of what the government and the minister are doing is abandoning the provinces. There was a federal-provincial agreement across the country to actually come together and partner on energy efficiency measures for homeowners. The federal government pulled out unilaterally without reason. Now we have millions of Canadians who are left behind, wanting to do the right thing. That is the real net effect.

Let me turn to subject number two on environmental assessment. The minister said that there were 755,000 Canadians employed, thousands of companies, he said himself, 11% of the economy. Let me ask the minister this. How many of his companies that he represents, how many trade associations, industrial sectors were consulted for the environmental assessment changes brought in, in the dark of night, hidden in the budget bill?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, let me just address the issue of eco-energy that my colleague raised. The government encourages energy efficiency for low income Canadians in a variety of ways, and \$1 billion was included in budget 2009 to provide funds for renovation and energy retrofits for social housing up to 200,000 units. This new funding is flowing through the existing agreements administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on a fifty-fifty cost share basis with provinces and territories, which are primarily responsible for providing social and low-income housing.

The government also supports low-income Canadians to energy retrofit their homes in collaboration with six provinces. Over 4,000 homes have received approved retrofit assessment and over 40 persons have been retrofitted to date, resulting in an energy savings of about \$512 a year per household.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, here is the answer to the question I asked, because the minister does not know it.

First, there was no consultation whatsoever on environmental assessment changes. The executive vice-president of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency has confirmed that. Second, no analysis has been provided by the government or by CEAA for anyone to justify these changes. Third, the provinces never asked for piecemeal changes. They asked for a complete re-examination of the environmental assessment regime in Canada. Fourth, there has been no legislative scrutiny in the House from committee. Fifth, it is the second time the government hides environmental changes in budget-making processes.

Let me turn to subject number three, if I could. There was a leaked secret memo released last week from the Department of Finance's deputy minister. It was made public just several days ago. The minister is referred to several times in the memo. Is he familiar with the memo and what is in it?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, improving the regulatory system for project reviews is critical to our economic recovery and future prosperity. Providing Canadians with clearer, simpler processes that offer improved environmental production is a key step in building a sustainable future, where our natural resources are developed responsibly. These changes will allow assessments to start sooner, reduce delays and duplication and deliver on the Speech from the Throne commitment to implement "simpler, clearer process that offer improved environmental production and greater certainty to industry".

● (2125)

[*Translation*]

Let us be clear. This provides assurance to both the industry and the public. Thanks to the Nuclear Safety Commission and the National Energy Board, we will be able to hold public consultations as part of environmental assessments. This is currently not being done on such a wide scale. These processes will be open and transparent. I think this is good news for all Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, let me go then to what I asked the minister about, which is the memo. In the memo the minister is supposed to be preparing for his Prime Minister for a promise his Prime Minister made in Pittsburgh for the G20. He is supposed to deliver within 25 days a detailed memorandum in advance of the G20 of what fossil fuel subsidies he proposes to be phased out from Canada.

Could he stand here tonight and tell the clients of his constituents, the oil and gas and energy companies in the country that report directly to him statutorily, could he tell those companies tonight exactly what fossil fuel subsidies he has written to the Prime Minister to phase out, or is he in abdication of his responsibility as put forward in the memo from the deputy minister of Finance Canada?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, yes, unlike some other countries, Canada does not have a general policy of subsidizing the price of fossil fuels, which can encourage over-consumption. The government has announced that it is phasing out the accelerated capital cost allowance for assets in the oil sands projects. Draft income tax regulations to implement the phase-out were released on May 3. This initiative builds on actions that Canada has taken in the past to rationalize tax preferences for fossil fuel producers. Discussions among the G20 countries on this issue are ongoing as a part of the G20 process and countries are at different stages of eliminating inefficient subsidies.

Mr. David McGuinty: Mr. Chair, we know the Minister of the Environment, the minister's colleague, put forward a prebudget submission to the Minister of Finance in which he supported the deputy minister of finance's calls for the phasing out of these subsidies. Now he lost that fight. The minister has yet to answer this. Has he put forward a prebudget submission to the Minister of Finance calling for the removal of these subsidies? He is named in this memo directly. He is being asked to comment on this memo.

Business of Supply

The Prime Minister, by the way, has been formally briefed by PCO according to this memo and told that there are a whole series of fossil fuel subsidies that should be eliminated or should be considered for elimination in the next 25 days.

Once again, will the minister stand tonight in this place, tell the Canadian people what his recommendations are for the elimination of fossil fuel subsidies as he is committed to doing in terms of the promise made by the Prime Minister?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, as I just said clearly, the government has announced that it is phasing out the accelerated capital cost allowance for assets in oil sands projects. Draft income tax regulations to implement the phase-out were released on May 3. This initiative builds on action that Canada has taken in the past to rationalize tax preferences for fossil fuel producers.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Chair, could the minister name the country that is the largest producer of wind turbines in the world? Could the minister also name the country that is the largest producer of solar panels in the world?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I do not know what kind of cross-examination that is, but what I can tell the member is we invested so far \$10 billion since 2007 on all forms of clean energy. This says a lot. Also, our investment in the \$1.48 billion eco-energy for renewable power initiatives is sharing resources by supporting the production of more wind, biomass, hydro, geothermal, solar and ocean—

The Chair: I will have to interrupt the minister. I have to keep the balance of time, so I will give the floor back to the member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, any competent minister of energy for Canada ought to know that the largest producer of wind turbines and solar panels in the world—

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the questions from across the way have to be relevant. Of course, the member well knows the questions are mischievous and are not relevant. I would encourage the member to ensure that the questions are relevant.

• (2130)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, it is clear that renewable energy is not relevant to the Conservative government.

Other countries are investing in green jobs of tomorrow. Does the minister know how much China spent on green projects in its stimulus package?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the member is not in China. The member is in Canada. The questions have to be relevant to Canada and what is in the interest of Canada. The questions relating to China are not relevant.

The Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary does raise a good point, so I will encourage the member for Kings—Hants to keep his questions relative to the estimates that are before the House. If he is making a point, he should get to that point quickly in the time he has left.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, China has invested \$218 billion in clean energy. That is 100 times more than Canada has as part of its stimulus package.

The greening of China's energy system represents a huge opportunity for Canada, particularly in terms of CO₂ sequestration. Canada is a leader in CCS. Forty per cent of the world's carbon that is stored is sequestered in Weyburn, Saskatchewan.

The U.S. and China signed a multi-billion dollar deal on carbon sequestration. Why was Canada left out of that deal?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I will not be submitting my application to the hon. member for Kings—Hants to take part in his little quiz.

He seems to be neglecting the fact that since 2006, our government has invested more than \$10 billion in clean energy.

[*English*]

This includes \$1.48 billion to support the development of new wind, biomass, solar and hydroelectric projects across the country through the eco-energy for renewable power program. We have—

The Chair: I will have to give the floor back to the member for Kings—Hants to maintain a balance.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, the question that the minister refused to or was unable to answer is when the U.S. and China signed a multi-billion dollar deal on carbon sequestration, why was Canada left out of that deal? Why were we not at the table?

Has the minister met or spoken with the chair of the Chinese energy commission about Canada's CCS capacity and our clean energy potential?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, it is unbelievable that a member is standing up who voted against our 2007 budget, the suite of eco-energy. These are big amounts invested. Obviously, the U.S. and China are trying to catch up to us because we are leaders. We have been up front since 2007. We are leaders in renewable energy. We are leaders in CCS. We have clean energy dialogues with our partners.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, the minister clearly has not met with his counterpart in China about Canada's clean energy potential. Has he met with Dr. Farooq Abdullah, his Indian counterpart, India's energy minister, on Canada's clean energy potential?

Business of Supply

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we are very active in the clean energy dialogue which was set up by the Prime Minister and President Obama. We are very active on that. There is a task force which for the next year will exchange information about CCS, renewable energy—

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Chair, on a point of order, the minister is refusing to answer any of these questions and, in fact, it is entirely material to Canada's potential in the world and our capacity to create the green jobs of tomorrow. The minister has refused to answer any of these questions because the fact is he does not know the answers and he is one of the reasons the government is leaving—

The Chair: Order. On the same point, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, you were not here earlier and someone else was in the chair, but she actually had to bring the Liberals back to the topic at hand earlier. They were talking about people's employment status. They did not know what they were talking about in terms of process. The member opposite did not even understand that people other than the minister could answer. They are clearly off here, trying to ask these obscure questions and think that they somehow have scored somewhere, when Canada is actually leading in these technologies. They should be congratulating the minister, not standing and complaining.

• (2135)

The Chair: Order. I am going to suggest we move on. I do not think that was a point of order. It seemed that it was a continuance of debate.

I believe we should proceed, and I will recognize the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am honoured to stand to talk about our government's leadership role in the area of eco-energy initiatives.

I will be sharing my time with my colleagues, the member for Souris—Moose Mountain and the member for Prince Albert.

As hon. members are aware, the Government of Canada has committed to reduce greenhouse emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. This is an aggressive target and the Government of Canada is moving aggressively to meet it.

Since 2006, our government has invested more than \$10 billion to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a more sustainable environment. It is investing in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies and the production of cleaner energy and cleaner fuels.

Natural Resources Canada is playing a key role in the delivery of many of these initiatives, including several of the eco-energy programs launched in 2007.

In total, the government has committed more than \$4.1 billion to the eco-energy initiatives. For example, the eco-energy retrofit programs for homes and small businesses have been a tremendous success. To date, over 326,000 individuals, businesses and companies have applied for grants to help them make their homes and buildings more energy efficient, generating billions of dollars in economic activity in the process.

The results speak for themselves. Homeowners participating in the program have reduced their energy consumption by an average of 22% and have cut their household greenhouse gas emissions by an average of more than three tonnes a year.

Under the small and medium size organizations component of the program, more than 950 projects worth close to \$17 million in grants have been approved, recommended for approval, or completed since April 2007.

The eco-energy initiatives administered by Natural Resources Canada are also helping to ensure the energy we consume is as clean as possible.

The Government of Canada has invested close to \$1.5 billion in the eco-energy for renewable power program. This production incentive is encouraging the development of new sources of clean renewable energy, including wind, biomass, hydro, geothermal, solar and ocean energy.

This program, too, has been an overwhelming success, registering over 200 renewable power projects and helping to make wind power the fastest growing form of electricity generation in Canada.

A further \$1.5 billion is being invested over nine years through the eco-energy for biofuels program to increase our supply of cleaner fuels. To date, Natural Resources Canada has signed contribution agreements with 21 companies across Canada.

Furthermore, the eco-energy for renewable heat program is investing \$36 million to encourage greater use of solar, air and water heating systems in commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. So far, some 700 applications for solar heating systems have been approved for grants, ranging from \$2,000 to \$400,000.

This initiative also has a residential component and so far is supporting 14 projects in partnership with energy utilities, developers and non-governmental organizations across Canada. Through these pilot projects, solar water heating systems are being installed in several thousand homes across Canada.

This program is also helping to build the expertise we need to carry this industry into the future, including investment in skills training and in developing standards and certification processes for equipment and industry professionals.

Through its eco-energy technology initiative, the Government of Canada is investing \$230 million to advance promising technologies to increase our supply of clean energy, increase energy efficiency and reduce emissions from conventional energy sources.

These funds have been committed to a number of projects both in the public and private sectors, including \$151 million allocated for the development and demonstration of carbon capture and storage technologies.

This initiative is also supporting projects to advance the development and demonstration of hydrogen and fuel cell technologies, among others.

Business of Supply

● (2140)

We all will agree that transportation is the source of more than a quarter of Canada's annual greenhouse gas emissions, but eco-energy for fleets and eco-energy for personal vehicle initiatives are helping Canadian drivers reduce their fuel costs and their emissions as well. Information, training and workshops are being provided to commercial drivers and fleet operators. Public awareness initiatives are helping Canadians choose the most fuel efficient vehicles that meet their needs and develop more efficient driving and vehicle maintenance habits.

These are important initiatives in which our government has taken a leadership role. These initiatives are providing immediate economic and environmental benefits. Can the minister tell the House how these initiatives will contribute to achieving our longer term economic and aggressive environmental laws?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, it is essential that all of our investments contribute to Canada's long-term prosperity and environmental well-being. Our eco-energy investments will have long-term benefits. Improving energy efficiency, whether in our homes, buildings or vehicles does not result in a one-time reduction in energy costs, but as savings that will continue year after year. It puts more money in our pockets, reduces costs and increases the competitiveness of business and industry. The emissions reductions will also continue year after year.

Our investment in increasing our supply of renewable energy and renewable fuels is generating economic activity and creating jobs now.

We are also setting the foundation for a new clean energy industry that will provide more jobs and more clean energy for Canada in the future. Our investments in technology are advancing our understanding of exceptionally promising technologies, such as carbon capture and storage technologies that will allow us to minimize the environmental impact of producing and consuming fossil fuels.

This is essential to our long-term energy, economic and environmental security. This is the focus of everything we do as government to position Canada for long-term growth and sustainable prosperity for future generations to come.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Chair, there is no doubt that in addition to renewable energy, we can and must become cleaner producers and consumers of our fossil fuel resources. It is clear that technology will play a key role in meeting this challenge. One very promising technology to achieve large emission reductions is carbon capture and storage, known as CCS.

In total, the Government of Canada and the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia have provided \$3.5 billion in funding for carbon capture and storage. This does not include the contributions of industry partners. In fact in budget 2008, the Government of Canada committed \$240 million to the Boundary Dam clean coal project in my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain in the southeast part of Saskatchewan. The province of Saskatchewan will invest about \$1 billion. This will be one of the world's first and largest commercial-scale clean coal and carbon capture and storage demonstration projects.

We also collaborate internationally to accelerate the development of technology. As I have said, my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain is on the leading edge of implementing world-class CCS technology. We also collaborate through the United States-Canada clean energy dialogue signed by the Prime Minister and President Obama last year. Remarkably, a reference was made to work that is being done with the North Dakota-Weyburn carbon capture and storage project in my riding near Weyburn, Saskatchewan. I certainly invite the member for Kings—Hants to visit Weyburn, Saskatchewan to see first-hand what is being done.

The Weyburn and Midale oil fields are hosts to a decade long international study examining CO₂ geological storage. This project near Weyburn, Saskatchewan is one of the largest international CO₂ measuring and monitoring projects in the world. It is world class.

I would like to ask the minister what steps have been taken under the dialogue with the United States to advance the development of carbon capture and storage.

● (2145)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

[*English*]

I am pleased to report a number of significant developments relating to carbon capture and storage under the Canada-U.S. clean energy dialogue. A joint CCS working group has been established and is in the process of developing a North American carbon capture and storage atlas. This will detail both the major sources of CO₂ emissions and potential CO₂ storage reservoirs. This information will help to ensure that future investments in technology are well targeted.

We continue to reinforce and expand the links among researchers in our two countries. We are working with the U.S. to develop and demonstrate CO₂ measuring, monitoring, and verification methods. This will help to confirm that CO₂ storage is both safe and effective. It will build on the research under way at the successful Weyburn-Midale carbon capture and storage research project in Saskatchewan.

Mindful of the close energy connections between our two countries, we are also working toward developing compatible carbon capture and storage regulations to minimize business barriers and to facilitate possible future cross-border CCS projects.

We have also agreed to hold an annual joint conference on carbon capture and storage to facilitate information sharing on an ongoing basis. In fact, the first conference was held earlier this month in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Business of Supply

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Chair, there are many key issues in the nuclear industry that require ongoing attention. They include matters such as ensuring that the industry is properly regulated; taking steps to ensure the safe, secure, long-term management of spent nuclear fuel; keeping Canada's nuclear liability legislation in line with international standards; and of course, taking action to deal with our so-called nuclear legacy.

I would like to ask the minister what steps are being taken to address these key issues. Specifically, what is the government doing to ensure both the health and safety of Canadians and the long-term economic viability of this important industry?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for asking such an important question.

The Government of Canada recognizes that a strong nuclear industry brings great economic and environmental benefits to Canadians. However, it also has a responsibility to ensure that the public interest, including health, safety, and the environment, is protected through strong legislation and regulations and that the legal framework is in place to allow nuclear development to proceed efficiently.

Canada's nuclear safety record is second to none in the world. We have a robust technology, a well-trained workforce, and stringent regulatory requirements. The three main pieces of legislation that govern Canada's nuclear industry are the Nuclear Safety and Control Act, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act, and the Nuclear Liability Act. Both the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act are modern pieces of legislation that put Canada at the forefront of nuclear regulation.

Backing up our legislative efforts is a strong nuclear regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. The commission operates at arm's length from the government, and its independence is paramount.

With Bill C-15, Nuclear Liability and Compensation Act, we are taking a measured step forward in the comprehensive modernization of Canada's nuclear liability legislation. This legislation will put Canada in line with internationally accepted compensation levels. It clarifies the definition of compensation and the process for claiming it.

The bill is the culmination of years of consultation involving extensive discussions with major stakeholders, including nuclear facilities, the governments of nuclear power generating provinces, and the Nuclear Insurance Association of Canada. It has received broad support.

We look forward to the speedy passage of this legislation through this House.

• (2150)

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada is investing up to \$1.5 billion to increase the supply and availability of clean, renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel.

The ecoenergy program for biofuels provides incentives for development that will stimulate the production of renewable fuels.

Compared with gasoline, grain-based ethanol can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 40% on a life cycle basis. For biodiesel, the emissions reduction can be as much as 60%. The coming regulation for renewable content in gasoline alone could reduce Canada's annual greenhouse gas emissions by four megatonnes.

Can the minister tell us more about the ecoenergy program for biofuels and what investment is being made in Quebec?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. He is very active in his region with respect to bioproducts and bioenergy. The increased use of cleaner, renewable energy is an integral part of our strategy to reduce the release of pollutants into the atmosphere and the production of greenhouse gases in order to help protect our environment. For that reason, we—

The Chair: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to know from the minister how much money has been allocated to wind energy in the 2009 budget.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, we want some clarity on what the member is asking. Is he talking about this fiscal year or last year?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, I do not know if this is going toward my time, but to be clear, in the budget 2009 clean energy fund, how much money was allocated to wind energy?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, since 2007, \$1.48 billion has been invested in the production of clean energy. Investments began in 2007 and will continue through March 31, 2011 inclusive, and this includes clean energy produced by wind.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, that was not my question. In the budget 2009 clean energy fund, how much money was invested in wind energy? I think the minister does not know, or they are looking for it. These are estimates. This is what we are dealing with. I will also ask what amount of money was allocated toward solar energy.

Mr. Chair, I do not know how we go about this. If the deputies need more time to look up numbers, I am not sure what the procedure is for the committee of the whole—

The Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Business of Supply

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, in the past, if a member has wanted specific numbers, I think we have been given the time to find them. We can take that time to find them, or we can get them to him later. It is up to him. If he wants to use his time having us look up those numbers, we can do that. If he wants to go on to something else, we can get those numbers to him.

The Chair: I would suggest that maybe the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley ask some other questions while they are looking.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, it is a bit concerning to me that those are not more ready. This is the budgetary estimates. We are looking at energy. Eco-energy is clearly one of the things we are looking at. It's the clean energy fund. Maybe I can ask this: How much money in the clean energy fund was allocated toward carbon capture and storage?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, there have been many projects, including three in Alberta. The Quest project, by Shell, received \$120 million and the TransAlta Pioneer project received \$343 million from the federal government. The third project, Enhance Energy, has received \$363 million from the federal government.

[English]

The Chair: I have to interrupt the minister there. I am just trying to preserve the balance of time.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, I am looking for those three figures. If at some point in the answers proceeding the officials can give the three figures, we want to know how much money in budget 2009, through the clean energy fund, was allocated toward wind, solar, and CCS. We believe that the approximate number for CCS was somewhere just shy of \$1 billion. Is any of the money used for CCS used for what the industry calls enhanced oil recovery?

• (2155)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the answer is no. To go back to the question, I could continue to list the projects. I do not wish to needlessly take up my colleague's time. I can obtain the list of all CCS projects awarded to date.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, very specifically, I want to give the minister the space to have the numbers at hand, but this is a principle of the CCS fund writ large. He does not need specific projects.

Has the use of CCS funding from the federal government gone toward the use of what the industry calls enhanced oil recovery? That is when carbon is sequestered and oil that would not otherwise have been brought to the surface is brought back up in an enhanced way.

That is my question. It is not a particular project question. It's overall. Can the funds be applied for enhanced oil recovery?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Once again, Mr. Chair, I have answered this question and the answer is no. No such projects were awarded for the purpose indicated by my colleague in his question.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, I am concerned as much by the lack of information as I am by that last answer. I think what we will find is that it is contrary. Industry has come before us at committee and said that they have used CCS funding from the federal government from Canadian taxpayers to augment enhanced oil recovery. That is when they sequester carbon and bring up more oil.

My question was going to be whether the government sees this as a subsidy, but I am not sure that the government knows that it is spending the money. I am not sure which is more concerning.

Does the government have an estimate of the cost per tonne for sequestering greenhouse gases under its current CCS program?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the department is currently assessing that. As I said a little earlier in my remarks, we have to look at long term results. This is not a one shot deal. This is not about knowing how much they will make per tonne. We have to look at this from a more general perspective.

The department is now working on finding the best way to do these calculations so that it can be accountable to Canadian taxpayers.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, I am not necessarily looking for calculations. There are a few principles we have asked about that I am concerned we do not have the answers to.

Oil companies and utilities that testified at committee told us that they will not invest fully in CCS until there is a price on carbon. Does the government have any notion at all what price on carbon would make CCS viable under the current terms?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, there have been major investments.

There were three projects for a total of \$466 million. Then there were investments in 19 other projects. These investments leveraged a further \$3 billion. That is where things stand now.

The industry may have raised specific questions, but I cannot comment on that. I was not at that committee meeting. However, it is clear that \$500 million leveraged another \$3 billion in investments.

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[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, the Government of Alberta released its study last year that said that the price of carbon would need to be somewhere in the range of \$100 to \$250 per tonne to make CCS viable. That is the specific question I asked the minister: Does the government have any study on this?

Turning to the renewable energy portfolio, at what point will the government make a decision to return to investing in wind and solar energy for Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, with respect to carbon capture and storage, I also explained earlier that there are ongoing discussions as part of the clean energy dialogue with the United States for a North American atlas to figure out where appropriate geological formations are located so we can do this at the lowest possible cost. That is what is going on right now. We are researching the issue.

Furthermore, we announced in the throne speech that we would proceed with a comprehensive review of current programs to ensure targeted strategic investment. We are also operating under certain fiscal constraints. We want to work toward a balanced budget while making strategic investments.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, in June 2009, the government introduced a black liquor subsidy, to match the United States, to level the playing field. It was the minister's predecessor who announced this.

I want to check whether the minister is aware of the program.

• (2200)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Absolutely, Mr. Chair.

The industry in Canada was very happy to see this program introduced. The pulp and paper green transformation program will now generate more investments. Investments have been announced, and others are under review, but we will move forward.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, I know that the minister is encouraged by that program, because it is about competitiveness across the border.

My question now is on the renewable energy side. At the current rate, the U.S. is spending, on a per capita basis, \$18 for every \$1 Canada spends on renewables. Is the minister satisfied with that level of competitiveness for Canada's clean energy market?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, first of all, the numbers my colleague mentioned are incorrect. I do not think he took several investments into account. He is comparing apples to oranges. Some \$2 billion was invested his year. Second of all, I must add that we have been on top of this issue since 2007. We launched a series of programs in 2007 that will end in 2011. The investment of \$4.2 billion—

The Chair: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, the report from the Conference Board of Canada of March of this year said, “The global market for technologies which can reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is exploding, however, Canadian businesses are not responding to the opportunities to sell new or even existing ‘climate-friendly’ technologies globally”.

Is the minister willing to express any concern at all that there is an \$18 to \$1 gap in spending compared to our U.S. competitors? That gap is going to widen to \$22 to \$1 per capita between us and the United States. Every \$1 we put in, it puts in \$22. Is that a concern at all for the minister in keeping Canada competitive?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, my colleague is speaking about a gap that is not correct. We have been putting money up front since 2007 and the United States has tried to catch up to us because we were there when it was not there.

Let me be clear. There is a program of \$1.48 billion to support the development of new wind, biomass, solar and electric projects across the country through the eco-energy for renewable power program. This program is leveraging about \$14 billion of private investments over 20 years. This includes both the development and operation of renewable projects. It is estimated that the eco-energy for renewable power program will support—

The Chair: Order. I will have to stop the minister there. I am trying to keep the answers approximately even to the questions.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, the government has claimed that it needed to cancel the eco-energy retrofit for homes program while it was reviewing it. Is there any other program that was cancelled while the review was being conducted?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we have been very clear regarding funds for the program. There are enough applications to ensure that \$300 million will be allocated this year as part of this initiative. There will be sound management with fiscal responsibility, because we want to return to a balanced budget. We said that we would now review things to see—

The Chair: Order. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, departmental officials told us that the government is reviewing the program. There is no other program that the government has that, while under review, gets cancelled. Is there any other program that the minister has that has an investment ratio of \$10 for every \$1? That means for every \$1 the Canadian government put into the retrofit program, Canadians matched it with \$10 of their own. Is there any program that comes close to competing with that?

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[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, once again, we are not talking about cancelling programs. We stopped taking applications for the current year, and \$300 million will be spent this year through the end of 2011. After that, we will review all of the programs for the coming years.

Programs provide a boost. Earlier I was talking about carbon capture and storage. Over \$3 billion has been raised, and there is more.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, when the minister was minister of public works, he authorized the spending of millions of dollars to remove asbestos from the Parliament Buildings. Is this correct?

• (2205)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the insulation was a problem in West Block, and we determined that it was due to unsafe use of asbestos. So yes, the government had to remove that asbestos from West Block.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, the World Health Organization, the Quebec Cancer Society and the Canadian Medical Association have all called for an end to the use and export of asbestos. Will the government answer that question?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, since 1979, our approach has been to support the safe use of chrysotile asbestos. We must be clear on this and distinguish between the fibres. We know that the amphibole fibre, which unfortunately was used in the past, is dangerous and has been banned. In fact, the chrysotile fibre currently —

The Chair: The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Chair, is the minister recommending the safe use of chrysotile asbestos in any of the government's buildings?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, since 1979, our approach has been clear. We support the safe use of chrysotile. We now know that spray-applied asbestos insulation, used in the past, is not safe because it allows fibres to be released into the air. However, chrysotile can be encapsulated in cement or other such materials, and that is the type of use—

The Chair: The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

[English]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with—

The Chair: The hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I do not know if this should be a point of order, but I did want to give the information to the member in regard to his initial questions. We can do that later, or is there time to do that now?

The Chair: We are in the Liberal slot, so if it comes back to the Conservative slot, the member could make that information available.

The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the members for Halifax West, Mississauga—Streetsville and St. Paul's.

[Translation]

Does the minister believe in climate change?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the Liberals' questions are a type of personal interrogation. I do believe in climate change. It is obvious, there is international consensus. Will they ask me if I am married or if I have children? What else will they ask about my personal life?

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Chair, I had a question about the lack of funds in the main estimates. That is why I asked him that question.

Let us move on to forestry and the forestry industry. Last year, the Conservative government spent \$13 billion to help the auto industry. It did nothing to help Quebec's forestry industry, which only asked for one thing: loan guarantees to help it find the money for revitalization. However, the minister refused.

Thousands of Quebec forestry workers have now lost their jobs. Why has the cruel and insensitive Conservative government abandoned Quebec forestry workers?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the forestry crisis dragged on for years before we came to power. The Liberal Party was completely off base when it did not support signing a softwood lumber agreement. The entire industry said that the softwood lumber crisis needed to be resolved. This industry's economy is not integrated like those of other manufacturing sectors. It is a competitive economy, which means that there has to be a softwood lumber agreement.

By signing this agreement when we came to power, \$1 billion in overpayments was put back into the pockets of our industries. No one complained except the Liberal Party and the NDP—

The Chair: The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes: Mr. Chair, the Conservative government cancelled a \$1.6 billion plan that was announced by the Liberal government in 2005. As a consequence, thousands of people lost their jobs. That is what we are talking about.

Why is the government still refusing to give Quebec's forestry companies the loan guarantees they have requested?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, it is ridiculous to say that we cancelled a \$1.5 billion plan. We signed a softwood lumber agreement that will reassure the industry for the years to come and will put \$1 billion in cash back into the pockets of our industries.

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[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimates provide \$4.9 million for AECL's restructuring to “—procure advisory services and support Natural Resources’ operations to advance the next steps in the restructuring process of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited”. Does this include payments to Rothschild for conducting the sale of AECL? If so, how much? How much in total has Rothschild been paid since being retained to conduct this sale?

• (2210)

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we are restructuring AECL. The figures my colleague mentioned include funds for a payment to Rothschild.

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, the minister cannot tell me, in other words, how much, as I asked, has been paid to Rothschild since it was retained to conduct this sale.

Can he tell us perhaps whether it is being paid through a flat fee arrangement or will it also receive, in addition to that, a percentage of the final sale price? If a percentage is going to be added, how much in total does Rothschild stand to make from this deal?

If this \$4.9 million is for advisory services and support for the department, how much is the department actually spending on this restructuring over and above this amount?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, one of the transactions is ongoing. It is premature to say how much it will cost. When one deals with professionals, one has to wait until the end. That being said, I must remind the member that the contract was commercially tendered and these are the facts.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, I think Canadians will be concerned that the minister seems to have no actual idea of how much this is costing in terms of the contract with Rothschild.

[Translation]

The main estimates indicate that \$102 million was set aside for AECL's 2010-11 budget. Why was that number lower than the \$109 million allocated in 2009-10?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier, AECL needs to be restructured. That is very important. We promised Canadians we would restructure that corporation. We need to make targeted investments to reduce the burden on Canadian taxpayers. Canadians are worried about doing business with an industry that is overburdened in its ability to pay. We need to ensure that the industry remains viable. We need to save good jobs and create more. That is the goal of the restructuring. That is what we hope to achieve.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Chair, is the \$6 million cut the reason for the additional layoffs in Chalk River? We received information to the effect that at least another 30 jobs will be lost because of the budget constraints AECL is facing.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, it is quite interesting to see my colleague asking questions about cuts when we know that in 1995-96, the appropriations were on the order of \$172 million. Now we are talking about \$106 million compared to \$102 million. I think the rhetoric surrounding these numbers is meant to be a trap. What

do we expect from the restructuring? We want to provide a viable solution that is not too costly for taxpayers and that, at the same time, ensures viability—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

[English]

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Chair, in the supplementary estimates A for 2010-2011, how much of the additional \$300 million for AECL is for new reactor technology development? How much of it is to support the bid to build new reactors at Darlington and how much is earmarked for a new reactor to replace the NRU at Chalk River?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the \$300 million will be provided for four different purposes: first, repairs to the NRU; second, refurbishments of the Chalk River laboratories infrastructure; third, nuclear reactor refurbishment project cost overruns; and fourth, new reactor technology development. So indeed, there is money for—

The Chair: The hon. member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Chair, I do not think any of that is new.

I also note that some of the \$300 million is for one time employee reduction. How much is going to job cuts? How many jobs does the minister intend to cut? Will those all come from Chalk River or will they be spread around the corporation? Is this employee reduction connected to the sale of AECL assets?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we are stating it very clearly from the beginning. The intention is not to cut jobs, as the member opposite is saying. The intent is to provide a viable industry to ensure that we are still a leader in the nuclear industry. We keep our high skill jobs. We create high skill jobs and we reduce the burden on taxpayers.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Chair, obviously, he cannot be a leader in the industry if he plans to privatize it and sell it off, now can he?

Thomas from Mississauga recently wrote to make the following comment about the sale of AECL. He said, “As a Canadian, I am deeply offended by the very thought of the fire sale of Canada's largest remaining crown corporation. If Bill C-9 is passed, not only will Canada no longer be capable of manufacturing nuclear reactors for people to use at home and abroad, but a significant engineering achievement by Canadians will be lost forever. AECL has contributed to Canadian technological innovation for over 50 years with the public interest in mind. Please do not allow this legacy to come to an unfitting and unjust end”.

What are the minister's plan with respect to AECL? Will it be a fire sale, minister?

Business of Supply

• (2215)

The Chair: I remind the hon. member to address comments through the Chair, not directly at members.

The hon. minister.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the hon. member that it was her party that underfunded AECL over the years. This is the situation that we are in today. We are willing to seek strategic investments to ensure the viability of that industry.

Let me be clear. The Government of Canada strongly believes in nuclear energy and the future of the Canadian nuclear industry. Sixty years of investment in nuclear science has resulted in a multi-billion dollar Canadian industry with leading edge and innovative technology. AECL's workforce comprising of almost 4,900 full-time employees is made up of highly skilled and innovative individuals.

These people are well positioned to participate in the growth of the nuclear industry, both domestically and abroad. Everybody should be happy that we are restructuring it now to ensure its viability, to reduce the burden on taxpayers, and to ensure that Canada will be positioned as a leader in the nuclear industry.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Chair, this is Canadian legacy and proprietary technology at stake.

How much of the additional \$300 million is for refurbishment project shortfalls? How much of that is for the work at Point Lepreau and does this include any funding to compensate New Brunswick for Point Lepreau's refurbishment delays, and if so, how much?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, let me be clear. A quote about the proposal for the Candu reactor division states:

AECL needs markets. ...it certainly needs sophisticated full-time global marketing, which the government of Canada cannot easily give it.

This is why we are now restructuring and seeking a strategic investment. The government undertook to restructure Atomic Energy of Canada against three policy objectives—

The Chair: Order, please. I am going to have to stop the minister there just to ensure the times are about equal.

The hon. member for St. Paul's.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Chair, last week the nuclear medicine physicians told us that they were at 10% supply of technetium. Lantheus had negotiated a supply deal with Israel to get the doctors the isotopes that they needed but it was turned down by Health Canada.

Why was this turned down and why did the minister not have influence over the health minister in that I believe it is the minister's responsibility to source the isotopes during this crisis? Why, after two and a half years of this crisis, has the minister still failed to secure a stable supply?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the government has made it clear that AECL's absolute priority is returning the NRU to service as quickly as possible while maintaining the highest standards of safety and security. The government has asked AECL to pursue an extension of the NRU operating licence beyond 2011. This is a global problem that needs a global solution. This is why, under our

leadership, we created a high level group to ensure we optimized the collaboration from everyone around the world.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Chair, both the expert review panels on medical isotopes had a main recommendation, which was that there needed to be a new multipurpose research reactor as the best primary option. Instead, the government chose risk over known in solely advocating for research into new and unproven technologies that have never been able to produce a commercial supply of isotopes.

Why is the minister keen to experiment on the backs of Canadian patients?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, we responded publicly to the expert review panel. However, I must remind members that our top priority is to have the NRU up and running. We announced \$48 million in our 2010 budget to support research, development and demonstration of new technologies and alternatives, establish a clinical trials network and optimize the use of isotopes in the health system. These initiatives are consistent with the recommendations of the panel.

What the hon. member does not say is that it is with a new multipurpose research reactor. The expert panel said that we would be provided with a business case, which is not the fact now. We cannot build a new reactor on the isotope production itself. It is not viable, which is what the experts said.

• (2220)

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Chair, everyone knows that the Chalk River reactor will not last forever and yet the government has refused to provide a plan B.

The Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine issued a press release in response to the government's response to the NRCAN expert panel report. It expressed concern with the emphasis and substantial funding for research on the production of isotopes with cyclotrons and linear accelerators. They noted that these approaches have been unsuccessfully tested and abandoned by the European countries due to poor yield, unreliability of production and quality control assurances.

Why did the government decide to ignore the advice and the evidence of the rest of the world? Does the minister even know about the concerns of the medical community?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Yes, Mr. Chair, we are more than concerned about that, which is why we promised to right the mistakes made in the past by Liberal governments and ensure Canadians have access to an affordable and stable supply of medical isotopes. That being said, NRU up and running is the top priority of AECL and this government.

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Again, we are investing \$48 million for alternatives. In the meantime, we assume a leadership with a high level group around the world. My colleague, the Minister of Health, is working very closely with the medical community to ensure the efforts and the collaboration are optimized in the scheduled supply chain of isotopes.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett: Mr. Chair, I want to remind the minister that the Liberal government had a plan B with the MAPLEs, which the Conservative government cancelled without putting in place a plan B. Chalk River will not last forever. What is the plan B and why is the government listening to the PMO instead of—

The Chair: Order, please. I am going to stop the member there. There are 10 seconds left for the minister.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the MAPLE project was eight years behind schedule, never delivered an isotope to market and was facing significant technical and regulatory challenges. With plan Bs like that, I prefer to go with the alternatives and I prefer to have the NRU up and running now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: Order, please. Unfortunately that time slot has expired. I will give the floor to the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright but I see the hon. parliamentary secretary is rising on a point of order.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, earlier you had suggested we could use a couple of minutes of our time to give the numbers to the opposition that they had asked for earlier, if that is okay with you, and then I will turn it over to the member for Vegreville—Wainwright.

I will give this information to my colleague tomorrow as I notice that he may not be here right now.

However, in terms of the clean energy fund, the renewables and clean energy, these are the projects that are announced: wind storage has received \$18 million; tidal offshore winds, small hydro received \$35.3 million; hybrid and the northern projects received \$31 million; communities and buildings received about \$8.7 million; biomass received \$22 million; and the smart grid received \$31 million; for the total of \$146 million that we mentioned earlier.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am delighted to be here tonight to take part in this very fascinating and important debate.

Before I begin, I would like to say that I will share my time with the member for Lethbridge and the member for Prince Albert.

It is certainly true that Canada is a natural resources powerhouse. It is also clear that Canada is rapidly becoming a leader in sustainable resource development. I am proud to be a part of a government that shows such a powerful commitment to developing our natural resources in a way that supports both our economic and our environmental goals. This is especially true of our energy resources.

Canada is truly blessed in this regard. We have enough fossil fuels, uranium, hydro power and other renewable resources to qualify as an energy superpower. Our goal is to be a clean energy superpower.

To reach that goal, our government is making substantial investments that are accelerating the growth of a strong, domestic, clean energy industry. Wind is now the fastest growing part of our electricity sector, our biofuels industry is expanding rapidly and we are leaders in the development of next generation biofuels.

I am proud to say that in my constituency of Vegreville—Wainwright, we have, just across the border in Llyodminster, a very large ethanol project and two biodiesel projects planned for my constituency. I know that there will be expansion in this sector as time goes on. This growth will continue but, as the International Energy Agency and others have stated, fossil fuels will continue to be the primary source of the world energy for decades to come. That is simply a reality, whether we like it or not. This puts Canada in a position that is both advantageous and strategic.

We have an estimated 10 billion tonnes of coal reserves. We have large deposits of natural gas and we are only beginning to understand how much we may have in the north. We have substantial conventional oil reserves and, as we know, the oil sands is the second largest proven reserve on Earth.

It is worth considering, for a moment, just how much oil that represents. The 170 billion barrels in the oil sands is six times the conventional oil reserves of the United States and Canada combined. The known reserves of 170 billion barrels in the oil sands is six times the combined conventional oil reserves of Canada and the United States. And, as technology to extract oil improves, the yield may almost double to 315 billion barrels.

The oil sands also represents more than 40% of the world's non-OPEC oil and 60% of the world's non-sovereign oil. In short, in addition to the massive economic benefit they bring to Canada, the oil sands are a major strategic resource for all of North America.

The challenge, of course, is to minimize the environmental impact of producing this critical resource. With our partners in other levels of government, in the research community and with industry itself we are making progress.

Up to 90% of the water used in the oil sands drilling operations is now being recycled. As well, drilling operations, also known as in situ operations, are increasingly moving to the use of underground sources of water, that is saline and brackish water that is unsuitable for drinking and agriculture use. Less than 1% of the average annual flow of the Athabasca River is used in the oil sands, and a water management framework limits, monitors and adjusts freshwater withdrawal from the river on a weekly basis.

Listening to the opposition and listening to some of the radical environmental elements, one would think that half of the flow or more of the Athabasca River is being used in the oil sands when it is in fact less than 1%. That is something that certainly is not well-known because there are a lot of people, some across the aisle in this House, who give less than factual information on this. It is important that we correct the record.

Business of Supply

• (2225)

We continue to seek better ways to manage tailings. The ultimate goal is to replace the tailings pond with new technology like dry stackable tailings. This could eliminate the need for tailings ponds altogether and further reduce water consumption. A lot of the work on this is being done by Natural Resources Canada labs in Devon, Alberta, which is near Edmonton, just outside of my constituency.

Regulations impose a strict requirement for land reclamation and remediation, and extensive research continues to develop new methods to improve both the effectiveness and the speed of land reclamation efforts.

Investments by our government in other technologies such as carbon capture and storage will also help reduce emissions from the production of crude oil and from the oil sands and other fossil fuels.

Together with our partners in the public and private sectors, Canada is the world leader in carbon capture and storage and many other leading technologies that will reduce the environmental impact of our fossil fuel industries.

I want to close with a question for the minister. The Government of Canada, as I think everyone knows, has stated its concern about the environmental impacts associated with oil sands development. I want the minister, if he would, to lay out some of the specific things that this government is doing to address the environmental impacts of the oil sands development.

• (2230)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the oil sands are a key strategic resource that will contribute to energy security for Canada, North America and the world for decades to come. The oil sands are also an important economic driver. The industry provides substantial employment and GDP across Canada.

Most forecasters, including the International Energy Agency, believe oil will likely remain the dominant fuel for decades to come.

There are challenges with oil sands development, specifically in the areas of land, air and water. While improvements have been made, we continue to seek further improvement in environmental performance. We believe new technologies will provide the solutions that we are seeking.

Governments and industry are investing in new, innovative technologies to help address the challenges of oil sands development. Scientists at Natural Resources Canada are leading federal efforts to reduce the environmental issues in the oil sands, such as air emissions and water use.

We are also investing in carbon capture and storage, which has the potential to make major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from large industrial facilities, including coal-fired electricity plants in the oil sands sector.

All of these investments are contributing to help Canada meet its greenhouse gas emissions target. The Government of Canada believes the oil sands have the potential to be a secure, stable and environmentally responsible source of energy for Canada, North America and the world for decades to come.

We have a robust regulatory framework to address environmental challenges associated with oil sands development. Projects to develop the oil sands are subject to extensive environmental and regulatory review, and permits are only granted once concerns have been addressed.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Chair, green mining promotes the use of green technologies and practices to reduce the environmental impacts of mining, while at the same time ensuring Canada's place as a global mining leader.

Green mining spurs a new burst of innovation, promotes responsible mining practices at every stage of the mine life cycle, and helps create and take advantage of new markets and new market opportunities.

Canada's mining sector depends on success both at home and abroad. Would the Minister of Natural Resources please tell members of the House about the government's efforts to enhance the position of Canada's mining internationally?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his question.

[*English*]

As the House knows, Canada's rich mineral resources represent significant economic opportunities both domestically and internationally.

Canada's mining sector is global, operating in over 100 countries, with approximately \$110 billion in mining assets worldwide.

Domestically, we must combine the best of our intellectual and natural resources to create jobs and stimulate growth and opportunities.

Our government's key investments, in innovation, in infrastructure, in a sound financial system, in progressive taxation measures, and in working with provinces and territories to improve the regulatory system, are all helping to improve the competitiveness of Canada's mining sector.

Our commitment is whole-hearted because we want Canada to be the best place in the world to invest. We also want to maintain our status as a global mining leader and capture the world's interest.

A big part of this will be joint efforts on behalf of government and industry to improve the social and environmental performance of mining. In this regard, the Government of Canada is strongly committed to implementing Canada's corporate social responsibility strategy, which aims to enhance the reputation of Canadian mining companies worldwide.

This is clearly the right path to take in the new global economy. Some financial and regulatory systems ensure a competitive sector, but equally important is operating in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Business of Supply

Corporate social responsibility is not just a catchphrase. Our public profile and reputation for integrity have a direct impact on our competitiveness and how we are seen as a nation.

The mining industry must continue to promote environmentally and socially responsible operations, both domestically and abroad. Expectations are rising, and performance must continue to improve to meet these expectations. At the same time, we need to communicate the good work that is already under way and our accomplishments to date.

We have a corporate social responsibility strategy in place, and the response so far has been outstanding.

Mining has been a cornerstone of the Canadian economy for many, many years. We are taking concrete measures to ensure that this important industry remains a cornerstone for many more years to come.

• (2235)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Chair, the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has truly been a wake-up call for the global oil industry, for governments and for the regulators. Indeed, all Canadians are disturbed by the environmental and economic impacts of the gulf spill.

The reason for concern is obvious. We do not want to see a repeat of this disaster here. Therefore, it is only right that we take a good, long look at our own situation and that we ask hard questions about the safety and security when it comes to offshore activities in Canada.

Would the Minister of Natural Resources please enlighten the House as to current levels of Canadian safety preparedness when it comes to offshore exploring and drilling?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, the Government of Canada recognizes that accidents can happen anywhere regardless of laws and safety measures, but we are also very confident in our safeguards. We have very strong environmental laws and standards and a robust and well-developed safety regime for offshore exploration and drilling.

Oil and gas rigs used in the Canadian offshore industry as well as the equipment and training required to operate them must meet strict regulatory standards that are among the highest in the world. The NEB evaluates each drilling application in the northern offshore for compliance with federal regulations.

For our east coast, the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board and Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board have similar responsibilities. Drilling cannot occur unless the responsible board is fully satisfied that drilling plans are safe for workers and the environment. Beyond high standards for training, safety and equipment, oil and gas companies are required to maintain environmental production and spill response plans.

As the member mentioned, there is currently a moratorium on oil and gas exploration and production off the coast of British Columbia and the northern Hudson Bay. A moratorium on Georges Bank off the coast of Nova Scotia has just been extended to the end of 2015.

At present, there is no drilling or production occurring in the offshore in northern Canada. If something did go wrong, Environ-

ment Canada's skill and expertise would play an important role. Environment Canada is our expert in the detection of spills. Using aerial surveillance and satellite imagery for detection and tracking, it can provide advice about spill trajectory modelling, weather in sea state forecasts and warnings, location of wildlife-sensitive ecosystems and cleanup and remediation options.

Of course, responses to oil spills in Canada are always a combined effort of industry, federal, provincial and municipal government regulators and non-government organizations. If an oil platform incident were to occur, the Canadian Coast Guard would also play an important supporting role in the Government of Canada's overall environmental response. Other federal departments or agencies such as Public Safety Canada or Fisheries and Oceans could be involved as needed.

My department, Natural Resources Canada, has oversight responsibilities for federal petroleum legislation and regulation, applicable in Atlantic Canada and south of the 60th parallel. Natural Resources Canada is also responsible for oil and gas lands management for offshore areas south of the 60th parallel and outside offshore Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. NRCan has an important liaison function with the offshore boards and the National Energy Board, which reports to Parliament through the department.

The Government of Canada has always taken a very cautious, safe approach to offshore drilling. We will continue to act in a responsible manner on behalf of the best interests of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Chair, since we are talking about the estimates this evening, I have a few suggestions of investments for the minister.

First, I would like to address some comments that were made by the NDP member, the party's natural resources critic, regarding chrysotile. It is always the same old thing when the NDP talks about this issue. I just want to mention to the House that when attacks are made against us, as politicians, they do not affect only us. The minister and I are the only members who have chrysotile mines in our ridings. This affects all of the workers there and our constituents to the point where things can sometimes get completely crazy.

Business of Supply

For example, there are exchanges between teachers from France and Quebec. The Government of France barred a teacher from taking part in an exchange with a teacher from Thetford Mines because there is a chrysotile mine there. There has been asbestos in that municipality forever. I remember speaking to the French ambassador regarding this issue. Things have gotten to that point. We are shooting ourselves in the foot. Earlier, we heard comments, though fortunately they were brief, regarding this issue.

I want to share some interesting points with my colleagues. In March, the Geological Society of America held its annual meeting in Baltimore. After the meeting, there was a debate in a workshop on asbestos. There were health scientists present, but also scientists who specialized in mineralogy. One of these experts, André Lalonde, a mineralogist and dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of Ottawa, came from the region. He said the following in response to the debate: "Historically, doctors have misunderstood asbestos. We cannot blame them, since they did not study mineralogy...[however,] all of these minerals have different chemical formulae and crystalline structures...and the proof that [the misunderstanding] is still present today is that people still talk about asbestos instead of talking about amphibole or chrysotile", which are different fibres. I am not an expert, but that is what an expert had to say about this topic.

Mr. Lalonde tells us that amphibole is a highly carcinogenic type of asbestos, but a number of studies have proven that chrysotile, the type of asbestos used in Quebec, is not. I say that in response to what we heard earlier and what we hear quite regularly, from the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre in particular.

A recent CBC report—which is odd, because there have been all sorts of other reports—talked about chrysotile. It said that the U.S. Department of Health had a list of dangerous products showing that chrysotile ranked 119th out of a total of 275. Nickel, which we find a lot of in Canada, in Ontario in particular, ranked 53rd on the list of most dangerous products. Lead, which Canada also exports, is second on the list. On a list of dangerous products, we can add lead and nickel. Aluminum, phosphate and oil are also on the list, as is mercury.

I wonder whether the NDP will one day want to eliminate the development of those natural resources as well. Obviously, they are not here to answer that.

I would like the minister to say a few words about that and then I will continue speaking.

• (2240)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, Canada has favoured safe, controlled use of chrysotile asbestos both nationally and internationally since 1979. That is the distinction I made to the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley earlier when he was speaking about asbestos in general.

First of all, there is a difference between the fibres that must be understood. Second, we also need to evaluate safe use. The example given previously was spraying insulation in the open air, which is unsafe. That has not been done for years. Currently, the safe approach is to encapsulate the fibre in a material such as cement.

Exposure is one example that I am giving, but that is just to say that there is a safe approach in place. We know that exposure to

chrysotile is strictly controlled by exposure limits in workplaces and that these limits are set by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. Exposure is also controlled by banning certain categories of consumer products and products in the workplace under Canada's Hazardous Products Act. Moreover, this use was developed in the past with the input and collaboration of unions and workers.

Canada continues to work with other countries on issues related to the safe use of chrysotile through the Chrysotile Institute, a not-for-profit organization that is mandated to promote controlled use, here in Canada and internationally and better understanding of how to use this mineral.

• (2245)

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Chair, earlier I was talking about how bad reputations, unfortunately, are often caused by the hon. members of this House. The minister mentioned that we used chrysotile in the past as well, just as we used other natural resources without knowing their inherent danger to human health or the environment. This has also created a certain reputation. Nonetheless, we have corrected that situation.

The minister talked about the Chrysotile Institute. I have talked to many stakeholders from the Chrysotile Institute and to restore this reputation, many of them have formed a coalition quite recently. The chambers of commerce—in the minister's region and in my region—and the three main unions in Quebec have also joined this coalition for the safe use of chrysotile. That was how the idea for rebuilding the reputation of chrysotile in the world got started. We must push the spirit of the existing memorandum of understanding on the safe use of chrysotile further. This could eliminate any doubt on its safe use in the export markets.

My suggestion to the minister—and I would like him to comment on this—would be to broaden the Chrysotile Institute's mandate to include more concrete action abroad. Many people say that countries that buy and import chrysotile should be responsible for the safety of their workers. Some developing countries have ultramodern plants. That is the case in India, where Mr. Coulombe, president of the Jeffrey mine, visited a number of factories. However, it is not the case in other countries. Workers are still at risk, and that has to change.

I believe that the Chrysotile Institute could ensure that teams of experts are set up on the ground over there, without doing this itself, to supervise the production of materials using chrysotile at the importer's site.

Business of Supply

I wonder if the minister is open to this possibility. It would require sufficient funding, of course, from Chrysotile Institute backers, the federal government, the industry itself and the Government of Quebec, which could all increase their contributions to the Chrysotile Institute to help fund its new mandate to go train experts on site, thereby ensuring more supervision and restoring chrysotile's reputation.

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. In the past, there have been a number of criticisms about this mineral and for that reason Canada's position is clear. We have always argued in favour of a controlled-use approach, not just for argument's sake, but because recent scientific studies show that this mineral can be used in a controlled fashion without any health risks, unlike substitutes for which there are not yet any studies.

Banning a natural resource in its present unprocessed state would perhaps create a false sense of security. For that reason we continue to support its safe use. Production of the fibre is governed by standards and regulations, but its use by the client is an important factor. The institute's role is to ensure that agreements are signed to ensure its appropriate use.

That being said, the Government of Canada obviously does not have the authority to impose its regulations elsewhere, in importing countries, and those countries must ensure that it is used safely. Thus, we have always supported its safe use through our policies and through the institute in order to show that the fibre can be used safely in Canada and around the world as well.

• (2250)

Mr. André Bellavance: Mr. Chair, I would like the minister to respond to this question more specifically because we cannot leave things as they are. Some countries have already banned chrysotile. Several groups in Canada are against chrysotile, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for that industry to show its worth and demonstrate that chrysotile can be used safely.

Is it not time to be more proactive and demand greater accountability from the users and importers of chrysotile? Expanding the Chrysotile Institute's mandate could prove that stakeholders in this industry recognize the importance of using chrysotile safely and that they are taking concrete action abroad to ensure that it is being used safely. This could go as far as being presented as an additional service provided by Canadian exporters at the time of sale.

In the course of negotiations with countries that are often developing countries, we could even provide added value by offering to go to those countries to train the workers in order to ensure that chrysotile is being used safely. It is not enough to say that chrysotile can be used safely; it must actually be used safely, both for the workers in this industry and for the people who will have it.

Is the minister prepared to consider any investments in that regard?

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, as I already told my colleague, stakeholders and users are looking at safe usage, which our government has supported since 1979. This approach was developed together with workers, unions, the industry and other levels of government. We have to begin by distinguishing the fibre, then make sure that strict rules for safe usage are being followed.

In general, this is a challenge for Canada's mining sector, which is vital to our economy. The mining sector accounts for \$40 billion of our GDP. It is the economic driver for more than 150 communities, including my own home town. That is why our government has introduced several measures, including the corporate social responsibility program for companies operating mines elsewhere.

This is an example of an initiative undertaken to restore the reputation of the mining sector, which has been falsely accused by environmental groups that take extreme stances, unfortunately. We have to set the record straight in some cases. That is why our government is proud to present tangible programs like those ones, as well as institutes to provide a factual demonstration of how chrysotile can be used cleanly and sustainably without sacrificing the health of users and miners.

Natural Resources Canada has invested lots of money, including \$8 million in the green mines initiative, which is a relatively new program. We are turning to such initiatives more and more. That is the key to economic recovery. We have to do it sustainably, and we are aware of the needs. That is the way we are heading.

[English]

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Lethbridge.

The matters we are discussing this evening are of real importance to Canadians. Canada is a natural resources powerhouse, an abundance that continues to make a tremendous contribution to our economy and to the quality of life we enjoy in this country.

Although members on opposite sides of the House may not always agree on some issues, I am confident there is unanimous support for a Canadian natural resources sector that is both economically competitive and environmentally sustainable. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to draw hon. members' attention to the valuable and ongoing contributions of the House Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

Although there will always be healthy debate and dissenting opinions, members of the committee show a consistent ability to set aside partisan differences in order to do what is best for Canada and to better inform government decision making. The committee's 2009 report on integrated community energy systems, for example, known as ICES, continues to play an important role in guiding the government's strategy for advancing the implementation of this innovative approach to energy production and use at the community level.

Business of Supply

As the Minister of Natural Resources stated in the government's response to the committee, the "report does an excellent job of framing the issue and rightly points out the importance of cross-jurisdictional collaboration that respects each jurisdiction's responsibilities". The government has taken this advice to heart and continues to explore ways to co-operate and collaborate with the provinces and territories, as well as the large number of stakeholders that have essential roles to play.

With support from the committee, the government moved forward quickly with the modernization of the Energy Efficiency Act. Important amendments to the act set the standards for additional products that affect energy consumption, including windows and doors, and thermostats and other devices that control energy systems.

The changes also allow the government to proceed with standards for so-called standby power, the energy used by everything from televisions to computers even when they are turned off, further helping Canadians reduce their energy consumption, reduce harmful emissions and control their energy costs.

The standing committee also continues to play a key role in building awareness and understanding among parliamentarians and Canadians alike of the complex issues of the day. Its examination of the situation surrounding the supply of medical isotopes is an excellent example. By hearing from a wide variety of witnesses representing a broad cross-section of views and expert opinion, the committee's work allowed Canadians greater insight into the issue, in particular the understanding that assuring a reliable, long-term supply of medical isotopes is indeed a global issue that requires a global solution.

The committee has also provided valuable input into the government's effort to modernize Canada's nuclear liability legislation. The committee's June 2008 report on Canada's forestry industry gave new insight into the challenges and opportunities facing a sector that is so important to thousands of Canadians in hundreds of communities across the country.

The government has already implemented many of the committee's recommendations to improve the sector's economic and environmental performance. In budget 2010, for example, the government announced an investment of \$100 million over four years to support the development, commercialization and implementation of advanced clean energy technologies in the forest sector.

The government has also endorsed the committee's recommendations on the importance of good marketing to the future prosperity of

Canada's forest sector, launching and extending key programs that help to raise the industry's profile in both traditional and emerging markets.

There are many more examples of the excellent work and commitment shown by the members of the House Standing Committee on Natural Resources, but I would like to pose a question to the minister. What assurance can he offer that he will continue to work closely with the committee to ensure Canada remains a natural resources powerhouse?

● (2255)

Hon. Christian Paradis: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for that great question and for drawing the attention of the House to the valuable and conscientious work of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources.

I would like to add my personal acknowledgement of the committee's reports and thank the members for their valuable contributions.

As members are aware, the global market for natural resources is changing rapidly and the vast simple volume was enough to exert our dominance in the world's commodity markets, but we know that it is no longer enough.

Today the emphasis is on value on innovative products produced in an environmentally sustainable manner. Meeting this challenge and seizing the opportunities it presents is a complex and demanding job. It requires all of us to work together at all government levels and within our academic and research communities, our industry associations and our research industries themselves. It also requires that we base our policy and program decisions on the best information and the best advice we can find.

I can assure the House that I view the Standing Committee on Natural Resources as one of the most important resources available to me and to the Government of Canada. I look forward to working closely with the committee in the months and years ahead.

● (2300)

The Chair: It being 11 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) all votes are deemed reported. The committee will rise and I will now leave the chair.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:01 p.m.)

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