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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, June 8, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)
[English]

PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the application of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the year 2009.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

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[English]

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE PROTECTION ACT

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): 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 Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association, respecting its participation in the second part of the 2010 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France, on April 26 to 30.

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HEALTH

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth

report of the Standing Committee on Health, entitled “The Way Forward: Addressing the Elevated Rates of Tuberculosis Infection in on Reserve First Nations and Inuit Communities”, and the fifth report in relation to a motion adopted at the committee on Tuesday, June 1, on product safety legislation.

* * *

OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-528, An Act to amend the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (poverty reduction).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to introduce legislation that would require Canada to contribute at least 0.7% of our gross national product to official development assistance.

This bill was drafted based upon an idea from a high school student in Vancouver Kingsway, Puneet Riar, one of the winning ideas from the contest I ran called Create Your Canada. This contest engaged high school students from my riding to suggest ideas to improve Canada and the world. Our office received over 50 submissions and the winners were picked by a panel of community judges.

Ms. Riar's idea was an entry that would require Canada to meet the target of 0.7% of our gross national product to be used for development assistance. Puneet is on the Hill today to watch her idea be introduced as legislation in Parliament. I am going to quote from Puneet's submission:

We who are fortunate enough to live in Canada cannot imagine the hardships that people in developing countries face...It is a tradition for Canada to be a donor. It has been a moral obligation for Canada to give aid to those who need it.

I congratulate Puneet from Windermere Secondary School for her compassion and for her vision of Canadian leadership in global poverty reduction. I also want to acknowledge her grade 12 history teacher, Jeff Mazo, who promoted the Create Your Canada contest, as well as principal Rob Schindel, and social studies department head, Corrie Clutchey, who offered their support for this program.

Routine Proceedings

I urge all members of the House to support this important piece of legislation and congratulate Puneet Riar and all the students from Windermere Secondary School for their care and concern to help make Canada a better place for everyone.

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

* * *

• (1005)

EXCISE TAX ACT

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-529, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act and the Income Tax Act (extra-energy-efficient products).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise again to introduce a bill inspired by the second winner of the Vancouver Kingsway Create Your Canada contest, Hansel Fung, from Eric Hamber Secondary School. Hansel's winning entry proposed a system of tax incentives to encourage Canadian families to lower their energy consumption.

This bill would provide financial incentives for individual families to take action to lower their carbon footprint by reducing their energy consumption and use. It would create a GST exemption to lower the price on household appliances deemed by regulation to be extra energy efficient. The existing energy star program helps consumers make informed choices by highlighting energy efficient products, but this bill would go one step further by exempting such products from the GST.

Families would be rewarded for making green choices when they purchase low-energy household appliances and products such as compact fluorescent light bulbs. This bill would also create a tax credit to be claimed at the end of the year, where families could deduct 10% of the cost of the purchase of low-energy appliances.

In his submission, Hansel stated:

With this Bill, I am trying to encourage Canadians to think "green". This is just an encouragement to think about the environment. This Bill would make Canada "greener", but not just Canada, the entire world as well. This would give Canada a very good image and set an example for other countries to follow.

I commend Hansel Fung from Eric Hamber Secondary School for his innovative idea and his concern for the future of our planet. I also want to acknowledge the head of the social studies department, Mr. David Smith, for his help and collaboration in promoting the Create Your Canada contest at Eric Hamber Secondary. I ask my hon. colleagues to give Hansel's idea and this bill the support they both deserve.

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

* * *

MICROCREDIT LENDING

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among House leaders of all four parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should consider providing additional funding, within the next 12 months, to competent organizations for the purpose of carrying out microcredit lending targeted at people living on less than \$1.25 per day in least developed countries.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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PETITIONS

PRISON FARMS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning. The first is a call to stop the closing of the six Canadian prison farms. Dozens of Canadians have signed this petition demanding that the government reconsider its decision.

The six prison farms, including Rockwood Institution in Manitoba, have been functioning farms for many decades, providing food to prisons and the community. The prison farm operations provide rehabilitation and training for prisoners through work with and caring for plants and animals. The work ethic and rehabilitation benefit of waking up at 6 a.m. and working outdoors is a discipline that Canadians can appreciate.

Closing these farms would mean a loss of the infrastructure and would make it too expensive to replace them sometime in the future. Therefore, the petitioners call on the Government of Canada to stop the closure of the six Canadian prison farm operations across Canada, and to produce a report on the work and rehabilitative benefit to prisoners of the farm operations and on how the program could be adapted to meet the agriculture needs of the 21st century.

• (1010)

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by dozens of Canadians. They are calling on the government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada to the victims of the earthquake in Chile. On February 27, 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile. The Chilean-Canadian community has mobilized. They have had many socials in Winnipeg and across the country.

People keep asking me, when will the Prime Minister give the same treatment to the earthquake victims in Chile that he did for the earthquake victims in Haiti and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

SEEDS REGULATIONS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition from a couple hundred people from my riding and other ridings in support of Bill C-474.

*Government Orders***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. 218, 220, 222, and 224 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 218—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to advertising in video games for Canada's Economic Action Plan: (a) in what video games did the government purchase advertising space; (b) for which video game systems was the advertising space purchased; (c) which aspect of the Action Plan was advertised; (d) what is the total value of the ads purchased in (a) and (b); and (e) for what length of time did the ads run?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 220—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With respect to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport: (a) who has the Parliamentary Secretary met with in his capacity as Parliamentary Secretary since October of 2008; (b) what were the dates and locations of each meeting; (c) what was discussed at each meeting; (d) which funds or programs were discussed; and (e) what were the names of all individuals present at each meeting?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 222—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With respect to the North American Free Trade Agreement Technical Working Group on Pesticides that was established in 1997: (a) in how many cases have Canadian pesticide standards been lowered in order to harmonize regulations with the United States; (b) in how many cases have Canadian pesticide standards been raised in order to harmonize regulations with the United States; (c) how many products have been affected by the lowering of Canadian pesticide standards in order to harmonize regulations with the United States; (d) how many products have been affected by the raising of Canadian standards in order to harmonize regulations with the United States; (e) what criteria do Canadian officials use to determine whether or not to lower pesticide standards; (f) what percentage of Canadian pesticide residue levels standards are stricter than American standards; and (g) what percentage of products in Canada are found to exceed legal residue limits?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 224—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With respect to the budget of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada for each of the past ten fiscal years, up to and including this one: (a) what was the overall budget for Indian and Northern Affairs; (b) what amount was spent on or budgeted for salaries; (c) what amount was spent on or budgeted for non-salary expenditures; and (d) what was the difference between money budgeted and money spent?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

HAITI

The Speaker: The chair has received a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île. I will hear her submission now.

[Translation]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I know that you can be uncompromising on such matters, but I want to emphasize the fact that five days from today, five months will have passed since the terrible earthquake in Haiti, and Canada's Parliament has not done anything about the crisis. Canada's Parliament must formally acknowledge the crisis and exert pressure where it can and must.

In Haiti, over a million people are living in camps lacking all modern conveniences. And now the rain may trigger epidemics and landslides. This catastrophe is about to become even more catastrophic.

We need to know what the government has done and how much money it has spent. I decided to ask because last week, I found out that two months ago, the international community promised \$10 billion. So far, only \$55 million of that pledge has been paid out, and only by Venezuela.

Parliament must acknowledge the situation immediately, find out what is going on, and ensure that it can take action and intervene because it has not yet done so. Haiti is a special responsibility, as Paul Martin said. It is Canada's special responsibility because of the close links between Haiti and Quebec and between Haiti and the many Canadians of Haitian origin and their friends.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to listen to the voice of reason.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for La Pointe-de-l'Île for her remarks. She has presented compelling arguments on the subject, but the problem is that this situation has been going on for several months. If a crisis truly meets the criteria in the Standing Orders for an emergency debate, that is one thing, but I do not believe that the member has made a strong enough case for us to consider this the type of crisis to which we can apply the Standing Orders.

In my opinion, this matter is not proper to be discussed at this moment. I would point out that there is an opposition day this week. Perhaps this matter could be the subject of a discussion during the opposition's allotted supply day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1015)

[English]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

Hon. Jason Kenney (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Government Orders

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to speak in strong support of the jobs and economic growth act.

The jobs and economic growth act and budget 2010 are key components of Canada's aggressive plan to protect and grow our economy through Canada's economic action plan. As everyone in the chamber would agree, our economic action plan is on the right track in getting results for Canada's economy and Canadians.

Indeed, Statistics Canada recently reported that over 24,000 net new jobs had been created in May. That was the fifth straight month of job gains in Canada and helped show yet again that Canada's economic action plan is working.

Clearly, our Conservative government is on the right track for Canadian families. Since July 2009, employment in Canada has increased by 310,000 jobs. We have seen eight months of solid gains in the past 10 months.

What is more, under our Conservative government, Canada's economy is leading the way internationally. Statistics Canada also recently announced that Canada's economy grew 6.1% in the first quarter of 2010, the strongest in the G7. Even better news is that both the IMF and the OECD are forecasting Canada to have the strongest economic growth among the G7 and all major advanced economies this year and next.

In the words of John Manley, the former deputy prime minister under the former Liberal government and the current president of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives:

It used to be said that when the United States sneezes, Canada catches a cold. This time it was different: the impact of the recession was not as severe in Canada as it was on the other side of the border. Nor have we suffered as badly as Europe....

Meanwhile, the consensus among international forecasters is that Canada will lead the G7 this year and next in economic growth.

Clearly, we have a lot going for us....

Nevertheless, we must remain cautious. The larger global recovery remains fragile. While Canada's recovery appears strong, we cannot lose focus. The economy must remain our number one priority.

As a recent *Toronto Sun* editorial noted:

—the job growth numbers support [the] Prime Minister[s]...contention Canada's economic recovery is among the strongest in the world. You only have to look at the economic carnage in Greece...to appreciate that. What politicians of all stripes on Parliament Hill need to remember is that for average Canadians, the economy is job one.

Our Conservative government agrees. That is why we are working to fully implement Canada's economic action plan through the jobs and economic growth act and helping ensure a sustained recovery continues throughout the country. That is why I would like to spend my time today stressing the importance of the many budget 2010 items that are being implemented through the jobs and economic growth act.

As we know, budget 2010 delivers year two of Canada's economic action plan, a plan that has delivered and will continue to deliver \$61 billion in effective stimulus, boosting economic growth and supporting Canadians and their families during the most severe

global economic recession since the 1930s. At the same time, the plan is helping build Canada's economic advantage well into the future.

The economic action plan, including budget 2010, is making a real difference in communities across Canada. It is protecting and creating jobs, building and improving vital infrastructure and housing, and further strengthening our highly competitive tax system.

Let me spotlight some specific budget 2010 measures in the jobs and economic growth act, measures that Canadian families are relying on and that underscore the need for all parliamentarians to support this act.

As we recently celebrated tax freedom day on June 5, I would like to highlight certain tax breaks we are implementing through this important legislation. Before that, let me note for the information of the chamber that tax freedom day was three weeks earlier under our Conservative government than under the tax and spend Liberals when it was June 26.

• (1020)

Since taking office in 2006, our Conservative government has cut over 100 taxes and reduced the overall burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years. All that translates into total savings for a typical Canadian family of over \$3,000 per year.

We are building on our proud record of tax relief in the jobs and economic growth act and will help more and more Canadian families keep more of their hard-earned money where it belongs, in their own pockets.

One such measure seeks to improve the universal child care benefit by ensuring single parents receive comparable tax treatment to single-earner two-parent families. This change will ensure that single parents are not disadvantaged. Moreover, and more importantly, it will provide nearly \$200 in tax relief for each child under six that a single parent may have.

The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada has applauded this tax relief as well by stating:

I am pleased that the government has recognized that single parent families have been unfairly penalized through an excessive tax clawback....

I further note that this also fulfills a promise our Prime Minister and the Conservative Party made during the most recent election campaign.

Government Orders

We are also building on our proud record of tax relief for job-creating businesses in the jobs and economic growth act with measures such as extending the mineral exploration tax credit. Canada's mining sector and the people it employs represent a key economic sector. By supporting the ongoing development of Canada's mining sector, we are supporting important benefits in terms of employment and investment in infrastructure, especially for Canada's more rural and remote communities.

As noted in budget 2010, flow-through shares permit businesses to relinquish or flow through tax expenses associated with their Canadian exploration activities to investors, who can then deduct the expenses in calculating their own taxes. This allows job-creating businesses to attract the investment they need to grow and expand.

The mineral exploration tax credit is an additional benefit available to individuals who invest in flow-through shares equal to 15% of specified mineral exploration expenses incurred in Canada and renounced to flow-through share investors.

Through the jobs and economic growth act, our Conservative government is proposing to extend the eligibility for the mineral exploration tax credit for one year to flow-through share agreements entered into on or before March 31, 2011. I note that this particular measure has been very well received throughout Canada.

The mayor of Timmins, Ontario, Tom Laughren, has noted it "will definitely benefit our region".

The Mining Association of British Columbia, or MABC, welcomed the extension and other budget 2010 measures, noting:

With British Columbia's mining industry emerging from recent economic challenges, MABC is encouraged by this federal budget's initiatives that will help ensure that recovery does not falter.

The Mining Association of Canada, MAC, also added its support, remarking:

These continue to be economically challenging times for our industry, and MAC is encouraged by budget initiatives aimed at maintaining the course....MAC views the federal budget 2010 as being appropriate for the times as global economies recover from turbulence.

The Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada also added its voice extolling the extension as it promotes exploration which is critical to Canada's economic recovery and long-term growth.

Finally, even the NDP member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay was forced to admit it was positive for northeastern Ontario. The member also told his local paper, the *Northern News* that the retention of flow-through mining tax credits continues, and that is something he has been pushing for. For that reason alone, one would think the NDP member of Parliament for Timmins—James Bay would reconsider his opposition to the jobs and economic growth act.

On top of supporting our mining sector, this bill also takes a step to assist Canada's manufacturing sector and the many Canadians whose jobs depend on its continued health.

The jobs and economic growth act implements the budget 2010 pledge to make Canada a tariff-free zone for manufacturers by eliminating all remaining tariffs on productivity-improving machin-

ery and equipment, and goods imported for further manufacturing in Canada.

• (1025)

I am proud to say that this will make Canada the first country in the entire G7 and G20 to be able to make this claim. This important initiative will be a significant incentive for our manufacturing sector.

It is estimated that this commitment alone will create 12,000 jobs, diversify trade and boost Canada's manufacturing sector as well as its overall productivity. It means that Canadian manufacturers will be able to import goods for further production in Canada by Canadian workers without the red tape and paperwork of tariffs and the costs of complying with discouraging customs rules.

Our Conservative government's campaign against tariffs will give our manufacturers across the country a competitive advantage in the global marketplace by lowering production costs, increasing competitiveness and enhancing innovation and productivity. With that said, it is little wonder we have heard such overwhelming positive reaction to it across Canada. I would like to take a moment to share a small sampling of that reaction.

The C.D. Howe Institute explained:

Eliminating all tariffs on inputs is an absolutely brilliant move. Tariffs are just plain dumb in imposing costs on businesses. It certainly inhibits productivity growth and the ability to compete. And it is a superb message...in terms of attracting investors but also in taking a leadership role in establishing an agenda aimed at trade liberalization and broad-based economic growth.

The Belleville and District Chamber of Commerce in Ontario applauded the move as a positive step that will allow manufacturers to be competitive, and stated:

Our local manufacturers work on global competitiveness. They have to be competitive and this will allow that to happen.

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council added its praise as well, because it will help manufacturers by "reducing their input costs and therefore improve their productivity and competitiveness".

The Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership called it "a big deal" and stated:

This is just a fabulous story. Improving productivity is key for Canadian manufacturers seeking to sell on the international market. Much high technology equipment must be imported from Europe and Asia, so eliminating tariffs helps to make it more affordable for Canadian manufacturers.

The Canadian Apparel Federation welcomed the move as well. It said:

Canadian firms can be successful in an increasingly competitive marketplace because they have a proven record of delivering quality, fashionable merchandise on a quick replenishment basis to their retail customers throughout North America. Eliminating duties on our raw materials allows Canadian apparel manufacturers to do so on a cost-effective basis.

Even the Canadian Meat Council, which represents Canada's meat processing industry, praised the announcement, saying:

[It] helps Canada's meat processing industry modernize their operations and better compete globally through the elimination of tariffs on a range of machinery and equipment....

Government Orders

Finally, the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters had the most glowing reaction to this important announcement. I will quote it at length:

Removing tariffs is a good thing for Canada. Eliminating manufacturing tariffs is a bold move by the government. Tariffs tie up goods at the border and cost importers time and money. With the removal of tariffs it frees up that time and saves importers big money. Tariff reduction would make it easier to bring in internationally imported machinery used in the manufacturing sector and allow Canadian businesses to update or replace older models and become more effective.

Again, that was but a small sampling of the extremely positive reaction to the landmark measures in the jobs and economic growth act, to make Canada a tariff-free zone for manufacturers.

I could literally have spent my entire 20 minutes for this speech relaying the outpouring of positive accolades. However, there is more in the jobs and economic growth act. While the economic action plan is without a doubt a measured and powerful response to an extraordinary challenge, it was never meant to be a permanent one. The action plan contains a built-in exit strategy to ensure that its measures are temporary.

● (1030)

Moreover, our government is committed to winding down temporary stimulus spending by March 31, 2011, as scheduled, as the first step in the government's strategy to return to balance.

Even more, our Conservative government will lead by example through belt-tightening of its own. As noted in budget 2010, we are freezing the operating budgets of the bureaucracy. To build on that, the jobs and economic growth act would freeze the salaries of the Prime Minister, all ministers and members of Parliament, and senators.

As the Canadian Taxpayers Federation noted, "It's good to see politicians leading by example".

In my remarks here today I have presented only a few highlights of the jobs and economic growth act. Clearly, we need to fully implement Canada's economic action plan. We must ensure that it stays on track, and we can, with the passage of this important legislation.

I call on all members to put aside partisanship and to help enable us to have a stronger economy well into the future. I call on members to help to ensure that in every region of Canada families and businesses are paying less tax and that unemployed workers are receiving better support and new training and can see hope for more jobs in the very near future.

That is why I urge the House to support the jobs and economic growth act as the next step in Canada's economic recovery.

[*Translation*]

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Madam Speaker, does the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar believe that her Conservative government has the constitutional power to remove from the public treasury the estimated \$57 billion that employees and employers have paid into the employment insurance account? Does her government think it has the right to do that?

[*English*]

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I think the real issue here, and what is most important to Canadians, is that they see that our government is delivering on a two-year plan, Canada's economic action plan. It is a plan that is working. It is a plan that is without doubt a measured and powerful response to an extraordinary challenge. Our government is moving to implement the remaining stimulus measures in Canada's economic action plan to help secure our country's economic recovery, to encourage growth, and to create jobs.

This legislation contains measures to restrain and focus spending, to create a more competitive environment for business, and to help ensure tax fairness for Canadian families. The jobs and economic growth act aims to contribute to Canada's advantage now and in the future.

I could go on, but I believe that all of the proposed changes I just mentioned are great reasons to support Bill C-9.

● (1035)

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I commend the hon. member for her remarks, and I am confident that as Parliament's rising star, she will have a very substantive answer to my question.

While she talks a lot about cutting taxes, and while certain taxes have been cut, there has been one massive tax hike undertaken by the current Conservative government, which is four years in a row of employment insurance premiums rising at the maximum amount permitted by law. This is often referred to as a job-killing tax hike, to the point where the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that this will cost the Canadian economy 200,000 jobs.

I would ask her, then, at this time of a weak economy and in recessionary conditions, how she can justify such a massive job-killing tax hike.

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, our Conservative government understands that Canadians expect this government to keep our economy growing and balanced. Canadians understand that the economic action plan is helping to secure our country's economic recovery. It is helping to encourage growth and to create jobs.

Bill C-9 contains excellent measures that restrain and focus spending. If the member would like a reason to support this legislation, then perhaps he would like to know that Bill C-9 proposes many good things. For example, it proposes to regulate national payment card networks and their operators, if necessary; to enable credit unions to incorporate federally and operate as banks; to streamline environmental assessments for infrastructure projects; to increase competition in telecommunications by removing existing restrictions on foreign ownership of Canadian satellites; and to stimulate the mining industry, as I mentioned in my speech, by extending the mineral exploration tax credit for just one year.

This list surely provides an excellent rationale for supporting this important piece of legislation.

Government Orders

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that the member would be talking about competitiveness in relation to Bill C-9, when the bill and the government have increased the air travellers security charge by 50%, making the charge the highest in the world. What this is doing, at \$25 for international flights versus \$5 for the Americans, is making our airlines uncompetitive vis-à-vis American airlines. The government is actually helping American airlines at Canadian airlines' expense as Canadians book with American airlines for their flights.

How in the world can the member claim that the government is keeping Canada competitive when it does things like this?

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, all one has to do is read through the proposed legislation, to read through Bill C-9, to see that we are introducing a number of proposals that will keep Canada very competitive. Again, the Conservative government understands that Canadians expect this government to keep our economy growing and balanced, which is why we have included so many important measures in Bill C-9.

The bill contains excellent measures that restrain and focus spending. The list I went through in my speech surely should provide an excellent rationale for supporting this excellent piece of legislation.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, Bill C-9 is a very important bill that makes sure that this country keeps on the growth path that this government has created through our economic action plan. Everyone in the House has to admit that this country is doing much better economically than most countries around the world, and it is because of this government. I want to thank the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar for her hard work on the finance committee. She is doing a great job.

We are making some changes to the universal child tax benefit to allow greater fairness between single-parent and two-parent families. I would like the member to explain why that is important to Canadian families.

• (1040)

Mrs. Kelly Block: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer my colleague's question. Once again, this measure seeks to improve the universal child care benefit by ensuring that single parents receive the same tax treatment as single-earner, two-parent families. This measure ensures that single parents are no longer treated unfairly and that they are not disadvantaged. It will, more importantly, provide nearly \$200 in tax relief for each child under the age of six a single parent may have. I believe that this is such an important measure that it would behoove all members of Parliament to support this very important legislation.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill, which the Liberal Party will oppose.

I notice that the member for Burlington just a few minutes ago spoke about Canada doing relatively well compared to some other countries, and certainly that is true. Compared with, for example, Greece and other countries, Canada is doing well. The point I would make is that to the extent that we are doing better than other countries, it is despite the actions of the Conservatives. It has all to do with the legacy of the previous Liberal government.

There are two reasons why Canada is doing relatively well. First, we have relatively strong banks. Second, we have a relatively favourable fiscal position. Members should ask themselves why each of these two points is true. If they were to go back a few years, they would notice that the previous Liberal government said no to the trend toward deregulation of banks that was taking place in the U.K. and the U.S. The Conservatives of the day said to deregulate. The Liberal government also said do not. The Liberal government also said no to bank mergers, and the Conservatives of the day pushed us to allow those bank mergers.

Because the Liberals stood firm on bank deregulation and said no to bank mergers, both things the Conservatives had the opposite view on, our banks today are relatively strong and solvent.

Second is the fiscal position.

As we all know, the Liberals in the mid-nineties inherited a \$43-billion Conservative deficit. We proceeded to eliminate that deficit and paid down the debt over 10 long years. The Conservatives came to power, inherited a \$13-billion surplus, and frittered it away by overspending, such that we were in deficit or approaching deficit before the recession even hit. Notwithstanding Conservative mismanagement, the fiscal legacy they inherited was so strong as to leave Canada in a relatively good position compared with other countries. Yes, Canada is doing better than Greece and certain other countries, but it has nothing to do with the Conservative government and everything to do with the legacy it inherited from Mr. Chrétien and Mr. Martin.

I would now like to turn to a quote from the current public safety minister, when he was in opposition. It appears that he did not like bills that contained many disparate, unrelated items. Here is what he had to say:

While past practice has often demonstrated that logic is not essential to the legislative process or for the legislative provisions themselves, there is a clear logic to grouping together the diverse provisions of this bill. It is a Machiavellian logic motivated by the politics of cynicism. It is a logic that raises the spectre of the worst of the American legislative process.

I remind the House that this was said by the current public safety minister when he was in opposition.

Maybe the Liberal Party pushed the envelope a bit far in the bill on which the public safety minister was commenting, Bill C-15 at the time, but in the end, we split the bill into two distinct sections and allowed all MPs to vote their conscience. In fact, the Liberal Party split that bill despite having a majority government at the time.

Bill C-9, the bill we are currently debating, is exactly as the public safety minister once put it. This bill does have a clear logic. It is a Machiavellian logic motivated by the politics of cynicism. It is a logic that raises the spectre of the worst of the American legislative process. However, this is by no means a recent problem.

Government Orders

Recently, and this will appeal to those in the House who have an interest in history, I came across a paper called "The Vote", which was published around the time of the first world war in England. One article from 1917 lamented the diminishing power of the House of Commons as the cabinet assumed more of that power.

● (1045)

Specifically, the article, written in 1917 in Britain, stated:

The chief cause of the diminishing power of the House was the growth of the Convention regarding every proposal brought forward by the Government as one of confidence.

The article continued:

Sixty years ago the Government frequently accepted defeat on matters of detail and continued in office, amending its proposals in accordance with the will of the House. The present habit is seriously harmful. When Members now go into the division lobby, it is not a question whether a proposal is good or bad but whether or not they shall defeat the Government.

Today, 93 years after that article was published, we have a similar, in fact, only slightly different debate in Canada. Today, there are some bills which the government accepts defeat on and does not resign, but instead the government has crammed a whole series of unrelated measures into a 972 page budget bill, which it knows is treated as a confidence measure. It wanted the debate to be about whether we would go to the polls rather than about whether the measures were good or bad for Canada. It is this kind of cynical tactic that would make the younger version of our Prime Minister turn his back on the current version.

This is one reason why the Liberal Party opposes the bill, because it has so many unrelated items crammed together into one package. However, the budget also provides a clear contrast between a Liberal approach to the Canadian economy versus the Conservative approach. Unlike the Conservatives, the Liberal policy is to freeze corporate taxes going forward.

It is true that in the past, when we ran surpluses, Liberals brought down the corporate tax rate substantially. However, that does not mean at a time when Canada is already relatively competitive, we should go deeper into deficit to further cut corporate tax rates. This is why we have a clear policy, in contrast to the Conservatives, that we would freeze the corporate tax rate, thereby generating some \$6 billion dollars in additional revenue. Part of the revenue would go to reduce the deficit and part of it would go to support middle-class families that live in extreme difficulty and anxiety today because of these difficult economic times.

How would we provide support to these middle-class families? Let me mention briefly four ways that we would do this.

First, post-secondary education is key to Canada's productivity, key to equality of opportunity, key to filling the jobs of tomorrow. Today, with the youth unemployment rate at something like twice the national average, young people are having increasing difficulty finding summer jobs to support their studies. We believe it is critical that the government provide support to those Canadians pursuing post-secondary education. Indeed, as our leader has said for years now, if they have the grades, they get to go. Therefore, support for post-secondary education is a top priority of this party, unlike the Conservatives, who would let middle-class families, including post-secondary students, simply fend for themselves.

A second source of anxiety, which at this time of aging population that will become increasingly an issue, is care for aging parents. We believe the Conservative government is not doing nearly enough to support those Canadians who are increasingly burdened by looking after their aging parents. By definition, as our whole society ages, this issue will become more and more important as time goes by. Rather than further cuts to corporate taxes, we believe some of that funding released should be used to support Canadians in their efforts to care for aging parents.

A third area is at the other end, not only care for aging parents, but care for young children. We have committed ourselves, as in the past, to a system of affordable early learning and child care. The previous Liberal government had implemented that plan with signed agreements with all of the provinces, only to see those agreements torn up by the present government.

● (1050)

The final area in which we distinguish ourselves from the Conservatives on the economic front has to do with pensions. There are significant problems with the Canadian pension system. A substantial number of Canadians fear, often with good reason, that they will have inadequate resources to support themselves and their families in their retirement years.

Strong action has to be taken by the federal government to improve our pension system and to take measures to enable Canadians to save more so they will have adequate income during their retirement years. The Conservatives are ideologically opposed to any kind of supplement to the Canada and Quebec pension plan. They do not like it.

The Prime Minister, when in opposition, spoke of privatizing the existing Canada pension plan. If that is his ideological starting point, how could we possibly expect him to support a strengthening or expansion of the Canada pension plan? I simply do not believe that it will happen. Such changes have to be done in coordination with provinces. Our proposal is that we move to create a supplementary Canada pension plan in consultation and negotiation with provincial governments.

In the recent past, two provincial governments proposed such systems, but it went nowhere. Nothing to do with the Canada pension plan ever goes anywhere without strong federal leadership, which has been totally absent in the case of the government. Under a future Liberal government, we would take the bull by the horns and work very hard to provide the federal leadership necessary, in conjunction with the provinces, to improve and strengthen the Canada pension plan.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Canadians will have a very clear choice. They can choose the Conservatives, who insist on taking corporate taxes lower and lower while failing to provide any assistance for the middle class, or they can choose us, the Liberals, who will temporarily freeze the tax rate, because there are more important priorities, and it is not a good idea to increase the deficit in order to reduce corporate tax rates. We will offer more assistance for the middle class in terms of post-secondary education, care for seniors, day care and a reform of the pension system in Canada. Too many Canadians are worried that they will not have enough resources once they retire.

[English]

We are at a crossroads. Come the next election, whenever that might be, the Conservatives will stand for further reductions in corporate taxes and leave the beleaguered middle class to fend for itself, whereas the Liberals will freeze corporate taxes at their current already competitive level and use the resources not only to address the deficit but also to address the needs, concerns and worries of middle-class Canadians in terms of post-secondary education, elder care, child care and pensions.

• (1055)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Speaker, Mike Blanchfield and Jim Bronskill, from The Canadian Press, are claiming that no Conservative members can speak without first getting the authorization of the Prime Minister's Office or of the Prime Minister himself.

Assuming these reporters' claims are credible, does the member not think that Conservative members are not necessarily saying what they think about the budget, but instead are being told to believe in the budget in order to stay in the good graces of their leader? They are forced to keep quiet about their real feelings on the budget, because their leader is telling them to believe that it is a good budget.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

I agree completely with her. This government probably exerts the most control of any government in the history of Canada. I would like to give an example. I asked the Conservative member a question. I said she had just received an award as a rising star and I congratulated her on that award, but I said that if she were really a rising star, she could give a substantive answer. I asked her a question about employment insurance benefits, and her answer had nothing to do with EI.

I think this shows that the Conservatives always use their PMO speaking points and have no personal opinions.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member is indulging in a little revisionist history when he talks about the situation regarding the banks.

The fact is that during whole period he referred to, the banks did want to merge so they could compete on the international market with the big American and worldwide institutions. The Liberal Party

was only restrained from allowing the banks to merge by the NDP voices in the House.

The current government, when it was in opposition, was for deregulation. It pushed the government to allow the banks to merge. It wanted to follow the American-style deregulation, unshackling free enterprise and let it operate in an unfettered way.

I have complimented the previous government in the past for holding firm on that issue when it looked like the way to go was to follow the Americans. However, we know it was the NDP members who pushed the Liberal government of the day to disallow the bank mergers.

I want the member to be a little fair in how he assesses the situation and to not revise history too much in the process.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I agree with about 80% of what the member said. It is true that, at the time, the Liberals said no to the mergers and to deregulation, the Conservatives were pushing hard in the other direction. They wanted the mergers to go through. They wanted to deregulate and set the banks free. Now that we know it would have been a very bad policy, the Conservatives are wrapping themselves in the framework of strong regulation, which they had historically opposed. I agree with the member on that. I said as much in my speech.

The one area where I disagree is the notion that the NDP caused the Liberal government of the day to say no to bank mergers. I remind my colleague that the Liberal government of the day was a majority government, so the Liberal government did not need the NDP or any other opposition to say yes or no to bank mergers or anything else.

While I am sure the Liberal government of the day was grateful to the NDP of the day for supporting its position on bank mergers, I do not think it can really be said that it was an NDP initiative.

• (1100)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question to do with the whole environmental aspect of the budget implementation bill. I am from British Columbia. We live in a very sensitive area. We are very concerned about the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The Conservative government has not ensured that the kinds of regulations to protect our waters from oil and gas drilling and from oil tankers are in place. In fact, the government has said that the 1972 moratorium on tanker traffic and oil and gas drilling has ended.

The budget implementation bill, Bill C-9, is a move toward putting in place the kind of regulations that are far more industry friendly and are far less concerned about the health and well-being of our waters.

Government Orders

Could the member comment on whether he sees any problems with embedding the environmental regulation within a budget implementation bill, instead of stand-alone legislation that would see fulsome debate in the House of Commons? If the legislation passed, it would be referred to a committee where we would have witnesses come forward who could talk about the impact of those environmental regulations. Then it would come back to the House for appropriate reading and debate.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, yes, of course, I believe that. One of the first points in my speech was to say that we objected to putting all these things together in one omnibus bill, just as the current public security minister had objected to a similar thing when he was in opposition. So, I agree that certain items would be better separated out.

And I certainly agree that in the light of the tragedy in the Gulf of Mexico, Canada should take much greater care, in terms of the risk of spills off of our shores, whether the east coast or the west coast or the Arctic. Time after time in this House, during question period, we have asked the government that question, about the 1972 moratorium and other aspects of what it is going to do to ensure that the tragedy that happened in the Gulf of Mexico does not happen in Canada.

Sadly, it has only provided evasive answers. So, we do not have a clear picture whatsoever of what the government's policy is going to be with regard to offshore drilling and with regard to the risk of an environmental disaster.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, speaking to this bill at third reading is a problem, because we get the feeling the government is going to roll right over us—you will excuse the expression—unless everyone who is really opposed to this bill is here this evening when you call for the vote, so that we can defeat this awful bill.

I would remind the House that the lockout that occurred just before the budget was brought down was announced by the Prime Minister's director of communications, Mr. Soudas, who today has become invisible, like a ghost, but who was everywhere back then. When this shadowy figure from the Prime Minister's Office locked us out, we used the time to tour Quebec, and I have a clear memory of giving a copy of the Bloc Québécois' budget document, *Saisir l'occasion pour le Québec*, to the Minister of Finance, his parliamentary secretary and his office.

During our tour, which lasted over a month, we sat down with 317 different organizations and nearly 400 people and we covered nearly 10,000 km all over Quebec, in the middle of winter, to ask people their opinions and find out what they wanted to see in the budget of the Government of Canada, which they support with half their tax dollars.

We suggested a number of possibilities, but we do not see any of them in Bill C-9. It would therefore be worthwhile to remind the government and other hon. members what Quebecers want from the budget.

We divided our work into several parts. First we wanted to ensure a lasting recovery by spending \$10 billion, or \$9.8 billion to be more

precise. At the time, we knew that Quebec was not recovering at the same pace as everywhere else and that we needed to pay attention to this type of thing. A few months later, we are still not sure that the recovery is secure and that we will not end up back in a recession or with economic woes if the slightest problem crops up.

Of that \$9.8 billion, \$4.2 billion was for promoting the economic development of Quebec. Indeed, we thought that if national programs could be applied across Canada, and applied specifically to Quebec, it would cost \$4.2 billion, not including what we had already proposed and is still on the table, namely, loan guarantees for forestry companies.

When it comes to the budget, comparing what has been granted to one industry to what has been granted or not to another industry shows clearly that Canada is very uneven and very unfair. Almost \$10 billion was invested in the automobile industry. That is in the budget documents and no one is against it. The Government of Canada is entitled to pay out that kind of money to help an industry, as former governments of Canada were entitled to create an industrial policy to develop the oil sands and develop the west. But why stop there? Why help out one sector and not another?

• (1105)

No policy on loans or loan guarantees for the forestry industry has materialized. There is nothing. Forestry in Canada, and particularly in Quebec, is being ignored. There is a forestry sector out west also. It is being left to fend for itself, which is unfortunate.

There were also some programs—for example, the AgriFlex program—designed to increase the income farmers should be receiving. Nothing happened. We had also recommended \$5.6 billion to help people and foster lasting economic recovery.

It is very important—and a real pleasure—for MPs to return to their ridings, meet their constituents and see what problems their constituents have.

We proposed that part of the \$5.6 billion be used for an updated, comprehensive employment insurance program. We recommended, for example, that coverage be increased to 60% and that there be a single, 360-hour eligibility criterion. What is happening at present is not right. Two people working for the same company may be treated differently because they do not live in exactly the same municipality. That does not make sense.

We also asked for the waiting period to be abolished. Why is there still a waiting period? I can understand that, in other times, when information was not necessarily available instantly, they had to wait two weeks to verify that the person was who they claimed to be. Now that all information is available instantly, it no longer takes two weeks or more to verify the information. Why have a waiting period? In general, people apply for employment insurance benefits because they need the money. They need money to pay the rent and buy food. For two weeks, we pretend that the person does not exist. It is still being enforced.

We also made significant proposals with regard to the guaranteed income supplement. We want it to be automatic, retroactive and increased. There is still nothing.

Government Orders

We also proposed a modest \$65 million to help the homeless. Unfortunately, anything can happen these days. Accueil Bonneau, a residence and outreach centre in the south end of Montreal, is closed. I was a member of the board of directors for six years, and president for four years, just before I made my first foray into politics in the 1990s. Accueil Bonneau has been helping homeless people for over 100 years, without asking any questions, not even for a name, and without telling the person they will give him or her some food in two weeks, the way the government does with employment insurance. Accueil Bonneau serves 800 meals a day. The centre is closed today, in a symbolic gesture. It is the first time Accueil Bonneau has ever closed. They have been through some real storms. They survived the ice storm and snowstorms. Accueil Bonneau even blew up about 15 years ago. There was an explosion in the basement and yet, the very next day, people were serving meals. But today it is closed. Silent. And for the government across the floor, it is also total silence. Nothing. Zero.

We also asked for funding for caregivers. We also asked for funding for housing. We asked for a total of \$5.6 billion to help people, and we obtained nothing.

We also proposed that the Government of Canada stop harassing the Government of Quebec. In March 2010, as part of its budget, the Quebec government included an appendix, appendix E, that tallied up what the Government of Canada owes Quebec on a regular basis. This includes the harmonization of sales taxes between Quebec City and Ottawa, for instance.

• (1110)

The bill before us completes the transactions involving the harmonizations requested by the provinces and compensates those provinces, including Ontario.

The Quebec sales tax has been harmonized since 1992. Six or seven successive finance ministers in Quebec have always asked for \$2.2 billion. When Bill C-9 was being reviewed in committee, we asked the officials from the Department of Finance some questions. They replied that those funds had been politically blocked and were not yet available. When parties negotiate, they must be on equal footing. At present, the one with his hand on the purse strings is the Minister of Finance, the former Ontario finance minister who, along with wanting to get his hands on the *Autorité des marchés financiers*, is also bleeding the Government of Quebec by cutting funding.

I have another example that has to do with Hydro-Québec and Ontario's Hydro One. Are there two other companies in Canada that are more similar than these two, which both produce hydroelectricity, transport the electricity using towers and distribute the electricity using wires? Electricity is distributed from waterfalls to houses, businesses and even here. Both corporations belong to their provincial governments, that is, Ontario and Quebec. However, because of legal intricacies whereby one was divided into two entities and the other into three subsidiaries, this has cost Quebec \$250 million a year since 2008.

Government officials are talking. I have a great deal of respect for them, for I have been one myself. People can talk for a long time when their mandate is not to resolve a problem. People sitting around me here today have had long careers in the union movement and know very well that when people are given the mandate to

resolve an issue, they solve it. However, when their mandate is to talk, they talk. Government officials do not have the mandate to resolve the issue of the \$250 million at this time.

The government put a cap on equalization. During the election campaign in 2008 in Quebec, with a stroke of the federal pen, without any consultation with the provincial governments, the government drew a line that is costing the Government of Quebec \$357 million a year. There is no mention of this in the budget speech.

There is protection money, a certain insurance policy invented in 2006. Quebec was the first province to see its revenues drop. The Government of Canada said that Quebec had received too much money in recent years and therefore demanded the \$2.38 billion overpayment, in installments of \$238 million a year for 10 years.

The following year, other provinces found themselves in the same situation. The Government of Canada decided to include a form of protection in the equalization formula to keep payments from decreasing. Quebec went through that, paved the way for the other provinces and then asked what the Government of Canada would do for it. The government asked for \$238 million. It could tell Quebec to stop paying that \$238 million per year. However, the Government of Canada subtracts it from the payments it makes each year. So there are no cheques.

Since 1991, there has been a dispute between the governments of Canada and Quebec. They went to an administrative tribunal. They went to the court of appeal. The federal government lost. That represents \$137 million since 1991. The Government of Canada did not go to the Supreme Court.

• (1115)

In Quebec, everyone said that they would accept the decisions of the administrative tribunal and the court of appeal. The deadline for going to the Supreme Court has passed and the Government of Canada is not paying. It amounts to \$137 million since 1991.

During our tour, we said that the Government of Quebec should be respected. We proposed additional spending of \$16.8 billion, but, at the same time, additional revenues of \$18.9 billion, meaning an additional \$2 billion for the government so as not to increase the deficit.

Where was this money going to come from? We had a very logical principle: ask those who have more to pay more. For example, we proposed that anyone with a taxable income of more than \$150,000, which is a lot of money, pay up for a while and contribute as well. But Canada's current Minister of Finance—Ontario's former finance minister, refused and chose to protect those people.

Government Orders

We spoke about tax havens and banks. We know that the minister does not want to go after his banking buddies and the friends of the member for Markham—Unionville on principle. Others have weighed in however. With all due respect to our friend, I looked at what the Royal Bank of Canada had to say. In its annual report, on page 122, it says that international earnings of certain subsidiaries would be taxed only upon their repatriation to Canada. Since there will be no repatriation, there are no taxes. It also mentions that if all foreign subsidiaries' accumulated unremitted earnings were repatriated, they would be estimated at \$821 million in 2009, \$920 million in 2008, and \$843 million in 2007, just for Royal Bank. I did not look at what the other banks had to say. We are telling the Minister of Finance that we must go after that money—it is written here—but he does not want to.

We did the tour and made some proposals to the government, thinking this could improve things, but the government completely ignored us.

Coming back to the matter at hand, it is one thing for a 17-page budget speech to become a 451-page document, acceptably long, with all the details, the tax measures, annexes, and ways and means motions. That is the right way to do things; it makes sense. But what the government has presented us with is an 872-page bill that has 2,208 clauses, and that talks about privatizing the AECL and Canada Post, among other things. Those kinds of things would usually be found in several bills.

In conclusion, I hope that the opposition members who sit with me on the Standing Committee on Finance, the member for Markham—Unionville, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, and our good friend, who is regularly invited, the member for Willowdale, will be strong enough to urge all of their Liberal colleagues to join us in voting against this bill.

• (1120)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the member talk about the tax havens. It has certainly been a big issue in this country for many years. Interestingly enough, Revenue Canada has an amnesty program so that Canadians can invest in their tax havens in Liechtenstein or wherever. At the end of the day, if Revenue Canada catches on to them, all they have to do is walk down to Revenue Canada's office and declare their ill-gotten gains. The amnesty applies and they are off free.

That is a very bad signal to be delivering to taxpayers. We would be none the wiser about some of this tax haven activity had it not been for a low-level computer employee in a Liechtenstein bank, who a couple of years ago took a disc of names and sold it to the German government so that it could chase all of the people who were hiding money in Liechtenstein.

That is how we got on to this issue. It was through no help from the government or law enforcement in Canada. It was a bank employee in Liechtenstein who set this process in motion. The fact is that the Canadian government allows an amnesty. It allows people, once they get caught, to simply walk in and declare their income and

they are let off scot-free. How is that in any way shutting down tax havens?

• (1125)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, my colleague from the NDP raises an interesting point. One of a collection officer's hardest jobs is to go and get the taxes, as the finance minister says. The minister sets the fiscal policy and the Canada Revenue Agency has to go and get the money wherever it is.

What was said about Liechtenstein was very interesting. I well remember the previous minister responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency proudly announcing that he was going to nab 160 people thanks to a list that a banker had sold on Google to the German government. It was rather strange.

I would remind the NDP member that Canada's exports of capital go primarily to the United States, followed by Great Britain. The country that ranks third in our capital exports is Barbados. This is not for tourism, which is what the G8 people are supposedly going to be engaged in in Toronto. People do not invest in Barbados for tourism reasons but because it is a tax haven that the Government of Canada is unwilling to blow the whistle on and close down.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Hochelaga what he thinks about the Conservatives' attitude during questions and comments. They make speeches about Bill C-9 and then they plant questions every day in question period. The government boasts about Canada's economic situation and compares itself to the Greeks or other governments, as if it were responsible for the relatively calm conditions here.

This is the same government, though, that in the 2008 election denied an economic crisis was imminent. Now we hear Conservatives all over the place saying we managed to survive the economic crisis thanks to all they did.

Can the hon. member tell me what they are talking about? Is it the measures to help tourism in Huntsville and Toronto by building an artificial lake and so forth to attract tourists from who knows where? What measures can the government claim to have taken, other than the \$10 billion to help Ontario's automobile industry, so that Canada would survive the crisis better than most others?

My colleague is an experienced economist. Can he tell me whether this is a result of government action or rather of the global economic situation?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, I agreed with my colleague right up to the last sentence, when he described me as an experienced economist. The member for Markham—Unionville, who is also an experienced economist, will know very well that an economist is defined as someone who makes as few mistakes as possible. So I do not like the adjective "experienced", but I will accept it.

Government Orders

In fact, the government boasts about all the good news and takes credit for it. In the meantime, the Conservatives are trying to break something that works perfectly well. I will take the example of the Autorité des marchés financiers. We have come through the financial crisis in Canada with regional authorities, provincial authorities, that work together on the passport principle. It is working, it has worked. It has functioned well and now they are saying oops, it is not in Toronto, so it must be bad and we are going to take it over.

I would remind the member that some years ago, the people in the government, who were in opposition, were in favour of the bank mergers and acquisitions of Canadian banks by American banks. There must be a God, because it did not happen, but that has nothing to do with the policies of the federal government.

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like the member's comments on the possibility of a double-dip recession in the United States. We are aware that \$1.3 trillion worth of commercial loans will be coming due in the foreseeable future. There is a freeze on credit for small business in the United States. Manufacturers cannot get lines of credit. In fact, 400 of the largest contractors are now doing work in the public sector where just a couple of years ago 80% of their business was in the private sector. In addition, 2010 will mark the end of the stimulus package and unemployment is going to rise.

Does the member have any thoughts about the possibility of a double-dip recession in the United States, which could have a spillover into Canada?

• (1130)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, in fact, if the Americans start having problems with their debts, obviously the credit ratings will be changed and capital will be more expensive. If capital is more expensive south of the border, capital will be more expensive north of the border.

That would have been exactly the right time to have a loan guarantee program in place for the forestry industry, if they had done that, for example. It would have been the right time to put a business start-up program in place. That was done in Quebec in the past, in the early 1990s, after a recession, when we said we were going to give entrepreneurs a boost and offer them government guarantees. In a very large majority of cases, everything was fine and they did not need them.

When there is a problem with capital not being available, it is time for the government to consider developing and implementing loan guarantee programs. That, coupled with entrepreneurial know-how, is how the economy will recover.

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my colleague on his excellent speech.

Since the beginning, this government has not stopped talking about how much money it has spent on victims and about its plans to come up with some kind of bill to help victims. I have seen no such thing. I would ask my colleague, who is well-informed in this area, to tell us whether he has seen anything for victims other than the \$3 million over two years, if memory serves. Other than that, has the

government introduced a bill or come up with any concrete measures to help victims?

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Madam Speaker, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance is in front of me, so I will not start over. I will not get angry this time. I will keep the bill, but I want my colleague, the member for Ahuntsic, to know that I have looked at all of it. This has been thoroughly analyzed. There are pages and pages of documents, but there is nothing for victims even though it would make perfect sense to introduce a specific bill for victims. Rather than put everything in an omnibus bill, it would have been a good idea to introduce a bill to protect victims, but that is not what the parliamentary secretary wanted.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Madam Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to share my time with the member for Outremont.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth have the unanimous consent of the House for his proposal?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Jack Layton: Madam Speaker, Bill C-9 is not a budget implementation bill that lays its cards on the table. It is far from honest. The House of Commons has approved an 880-page Trojan Horse filled with measures that have nothing to do with the budget. The NDP called on the members to remove the most provocative measures from the bill so that the House could debate them on their merits. I am very disappointed that this House voted yesterday evening to keep the Trojan Horse whole and intact. I am disappointed that the Prime Minister ignored our call to have the courage to be accountable. I am disappointed that the leader of the official opposition did not walk the talk.

• (1135)

[English]

I am especially disappointed this morning with the Leader of the Opposition, who is squandering this opportunity to stop this Trojan Horse budget before it hurts Canadians. Together, we have the leverage. With the G8 and G20 leaders coming for the \$1 billion extravaganza, there is no way the Prime Minister is going to force an election on top of that.

Canadians are asking the opposition parties to work together and we need to be honouring that call. At the very least, Canadians deserve clarity from their official opposition, not a maze of confusion.

Look at what has happened. In committee, the Liberals voted against the Trojan Horse budget but not in sufficient numbers to ensure it was defeated. At report stage just last night, the Liberals voted for the Trojan Horse by opposing NDP amendments to split off the most egregious elements of it for separate discussions. Then again last night, they switched their vote once more and voted against the Trojan Horse but not in sufficient numbers. The result was that the whole package was approved and stands before us in this debate now on third reading.

This is not some kind of academic exercise. Let us review what is at stake here with this bill.

Government Orders

[Translation]

This bill weakens the Environmental Assessment Act. It gives responsibility for environmental assessments to the National Energy Board, which is in bed with the energy industry and big oil. Even worse, it gives cabinet the power to forgo some assessments, even for major offshore energy projects. Could the timing be worse? The Conservatives want to give oil companies more freedom when the BP oil spill is destroying the Gulf of Mexico and Canadians want measures to prevent a similar catastrophe here.

[English]

The bill also authorizes the sale of AECL. Without debate, we are ceding Canada's control over the future of nuclear technology in this country.

At risk are 30,000 highly skilled jobs and our reputation as an innovator, especially in nuclear medicine and research. It is an obnoxious precedent. It gives the cabinet the right to sell the largest crown corporation without public debate or scrutiny and that is simply wrong.

Third, the bill furthers the privatization of Canada Post. It takes profitable overseas mail delivery business, which is essential to Canada Post's success and hands it over to private business. It weakens this vital crown corporation and sets up the slippery slope toward full privatization.

Universal public mail service is a right of citizenship in this country and has been for over a century wherever we live, just like public health care. We cannot count on a weakened privatized Canada Post to provide fair services everywhere, especially in rural areas where service is less profitable but vital to the businesses and the citizens of rural Canada.

The bill also seals the deal on raiding the EI account. The Supreme Court concluded that the government was wrong to steal the money from the EI surplus, put it into the general accounts, and give it away as corporate tax cuts to the banks and oil companies. The Supreme Court said it was wrong and so, buried in the bill is the provision to simply make it a new law that not even the Supreme Court could stop. It is obnoxious timing because we are still emerging from a recession when workers need the help from the EI fund more than ever.

EI was not there to help them when they needed it. People are falling off the EI rolls. The government celebrates but it should not be because many of those people are falling into welfare. That is why EI needs the financial support that the bill would take away. It is time to renew protection for the unemployed, not take it away.

What is going on here? Omnibus bills like this are the wrong way. They are the last refuge of a regime that is trying to hide from Canadians what it is doing and it is playing on the weakness or ambivalence or waffling of the official opposition.

There is an opportunity this afternoon to do the right thing because barring a sudden conversion by the Prime Minister before tonight's vote, something I am not holding my breath in anticipation of, Canadians will wake up tomorrow with a weaker country.

It did not need to be this way. It does not have to be this way. Tonight's vote could change that and Canadians need us to do exactly that.

• (1140)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth for that very passionate speech. The member rightly points out that we do have an opportunity to stop the bill in its tracks.

We had an opportunity last night, but sadly we did not have all of the members of the opposition supporting NDP amendments. Tonight we have an opportunity for the opposition to have all of its members in the House to just say no to what the Conservatives are doing to our country.

I would like to ask the member to speak to one particular aspect of the bill. I know the member many times has raised the issue in the House.

Those of us on the west coast, in British Columbia, are very concerned about what is happening in the Gulf of Mexico with the oil spill. In British Columbia we have had a moratorium in place that prevented oil and gas drilling in our very sensitive and pristine waters. We also had a moratorium on tanker traffic. We have heard the Conservative government talk about the fact that this moratorium has lapsed.

With the environmental regulations, or I should say the deregulations, that are in the bill, I wonder if the member could comment on what he sees the impact could be on our environment with this omnibus bill that buries these environmental regulations and takes apart these environmental regulations.

Hon. Jack Layton: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan for her tireless work and the time she has devoted toward the protection of the west coast fishery and the pristine waters which we all know need to be protected.

There is a word that the Minister of Natural Resources has been using lately with regard to this moratorium. He slips it in rather quickly in his prepared answers. It is the word "voluntary", that it is somehow a voluntary moratorium. In other words, we are to trust Exxon or British Petroleum, BP, to voluntarily avoid damaging the environment off the west coast. Come on, I say to the government. Surely it is the role of the government as the representative of the people of Canada to ensure that the resource is protected and that the moratorium has the force of law.

It was interesting to hear the proposal from Enbridge to put a pipeline 1,100 kilometres long across the Rocky Mountains, to take bitumen to huge tankers that would then be sent off across the ocean. The risks involved in this are enormous. Once again we are dealing with the question of whether the tankers will be allowed.

I believe we are setting up for a massive battle with the oil and gas companies around these issues, and we need every tool at our disposal. This budget takes away one of those key tools.

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I have one final comment. The Leader of the Opposition has mused about how perhaps the Liberal senators in the other place will somehow save us from this Conservative government. I ask the Liberal members to stand up in this place and join with us in stopping the government from doing what it intends to do.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. leader of the NDP, building on his comments about big oil, why in this 880-plus page omnibus bill are there no investments in Canada? Why is there no income security for mothers, families and retirees? What about passenger rail, green jobs, green technologies, health care, home care, education, sustainable community-based forestry and especially sustainable energy, instead of tax rates which are half the rate of the United States for big oil and big banks?

● (1145)

Hon. Jack Layton: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the member for listing exactly the kinds of things that should be in a budget implementation bill, things that Canadians and New Democrats have called for for a long time. Sadly, the government does not believe in those kinds of positive initiatives. It does not take those sorts of positive steps to build our future. It is disappointing. It is one of the reasons we are voting against this budget implementation bill.

I would call on the majority of members of this House to show up and to vote with us against this bill.

[Translation]

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-9, although the bill itself does not please anyone following our debates here. It is an honour to speak after the Leader of the New Democratic Party and to note a few aspects of this bill to illustrate to what extent it would be unacceptable for the House to pass it, especially since the Conservative government, as we all know, is a minority government.

My leader raised a number of points that bear repeating, namely the fact that the Conservatives, with their now legendary hypocrisy, keep saying they are a law and order government. Take Canada Post for example. The courts ruled that the activity of certain companies falls within the mandate of Canada Post and that this was a clear violation of the legislation.

These same companies have convinced the government to introduce within this omnibus bill, provisions in their favour. This is clear to the House. Instead of being punished for breaking the law and told to stop breaking it, these people have convinced the Conservative government to change the law so that they are no longer in violation of it. The government claims the legislation was the problem and not the people who were violating it. Such is the Conservatives' hypocrisy.

We also saw this with the theft from the employment insurance fund. Some \$57 billion had been collected from all the employees and all the businesses in Canada for a specific purpose: to cope with the cyclical nature of unemployment in Canada. The Supreme Court ruled that by taking this \$57 billion, the government was, in a way, violating the law. No matter, it will simply change the law again to no longer be in violation of it.

With impunity, those who broke the Canada Post Act are now finding justification *ex post facto* through a legislative amendment. With impunity, the government has shown that the law only applies to others. That the law applies equally to everyone is the very foundation for a free and democratic society. In French we call it *une société de droit*. In English, we call it the *rule of law*. We have seen that, for the Conservatives, the rule of law consists in saying “do as I say, not as I do”.

There is a direct link between another matter in Bill C-9 on the environment and the destruction of what used to be a balanced economy in Canada.

In Canada, since WWII, we have built a balanced economy with the primary sector as the engine. The makeup of our country dictated that it was the strength of our economy from the beginning. We had mines all over the country. We mined the different minerals and moved onto the forestry sector. It is our primary sector. The secondary sector is based on processing and manufacturing. It is well distributed across the country but concentrated, to a certain extent, in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario for historical reasons. Finally, in the last generation, the service sector has been growing.

The Conservatives have been destroying this balanced economy since they came to power. There is a term for the reality in Canada today. In economics, it is known as the Dutch disease. When the Netherlands discovered oil and gas resources off their coasts two generations ago, they quickly began their exploitation. At the time, the Euro was not Europe's common currency and every country had its own currency. In the Netherlands, it was the guilder. The value of this currency rose significantly, compared to other European currencies, with the result that the manufacturing sector in the Netherlands was destroyed in one generation. We learned not to do this. That is not the case for the Conservatives, who, I would remind you, continually boast about being excellent administrators and people who understand the economy.

Let us look at the facts. Last year, they posted the largest deficit in Canada's history. That is the reality.

● (1150)

That is not rhetoric; that is the reality of the Conservatives.

Since they came to power, they have emptied the employment insurance fund. In fact, they picked up where the Liberals left off and finished looting the EI fund. They are making it official with Bill C-9. They created some \$60 billion in tax room, so it is no coincidence that Canada's richest companies received exactly \$60 billion in tax cuts.

Government Orders

Why do I say the richest, wealthiest, most profitable companies? It is simple. Let us take the example of manufacturers in Quebec and Ontario and forest companies in B.C. Our strong loonie is a direct result of the Conservatives' work, because they imported huge numbers of U.S. dollars by exporting huge quantities of Canadian oil without internalizing environmental costs. Because the number of U.S. dollars is artificially high, the loonie is too high, which makes things more difficult for the manufacturing and forestry sectors. When a company does not turn a profit, it does not pay any tax, which means that the \$60 billion in tax cuts did not benefit the companies in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, which needed them most.

Who did these tax cuts benefit? Companies like Encana, which was already making a fortune developing this country's natural resources, the oil sands, without internalizing environmental costs, and received a \$500 million windfall. The government is leaving not only an environmental mess, but an economic mess for future generations.

The worst part of the whole thing is that the companies that tanked are paying the price, because if a company loses money, it does not benefit from tax cuts, but it still has to pay employment insurance premiums for all its employees. The companies most in need therefore wind up subsidizing the richest companies in Canada. That destabilizes our economy.

Before the current crisis hit, in the fall of 2008, Quebec, Ontario and the other manufacturing sectors had already lost 400,000 well-paying jobs. The government will say that that is wrong and that we can see from the figures and the statistics that other jobs are being created. Okay, but they are not factory jobs that pay \$35 an hour and come with a pension. Sustainable development also means thinking about outcomes for future generations. It is not just an environmental concept, but an economic one as well.

Future generations are the ones that will pay because those people may now be working in a store for \$12 an hour. I do not wish to take anything away from someone who works for \$12 an hour in a store, but make no mistake, these people cannot truly provide for their families and they definitely do not have a pension plan. We are just continuing to dump our problems onto future generations.

According to OECD, Canada has the highest debt-to-financial assets ratio for households and families. That is the reality.

So when we hear the Conservatives say that this is normal and that their banks are absolutely brilliant on the global stage, we look at the facts. For the first six months of this year, the Canadian banks have set aside \$5 billion for bonuses for their executives.

These same banks have made more than \$19 billion in profit since the beginning of the recession, not because they are financial geniuses, but because there is a quasi-monopoly, because no one controls the simple things such as ATM fees and because no one does anything to control interest rates.

The differential that exists between the basic rate and what they are charging for mortgages, on credit cards and on lines of credit is the largest in history. It is not because our banks are financial geniuses, it is because they are abusing the system. But no one in this government is doing anything, no one is lifting a finger, to act in the

public's interest. It is an outright failure, and it is entrenched in Bill C-9. However, we know the Conservative government's cynicism.

• (1155)

They tell themselves that it does not matter because the Liberal leader has already demonstrated his incompetence, his mismanagement and his inability to act, so they can put anything and everything into this omnibus bill. And they will say that we have no choice but to support them. The public will not soon forget. We are going to oppose Bill C-9.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Outremont for his intervention here today. It is very important to include the manufacturing sector, as well as what is happening with the dollar and the petro-economy.

One of the things that has not been touched upon yet but one which I would like him to expand upon is the insanity of borrowing this money for record corporate tax cuts, money we will be paying interest on for generations. Let us look at the HST, the \$6 billion bribe to be brought in. I had independent economists estimate over 10 years the average borrowing rate of the government and they estimate it is will cost anywhere between \$8 billion and \$10 billion after interest, if we can pay it off in 10 years.

I would like the member for Outremont to talk a bit about the fact that we will continue to pay interest to provide this privilege. This is something that George Bush did in the United States and it has hollowed out the American economy quite a bit. That will continue to hollow out our economy as we pay a premium, not just with regard to the general corporate tax cut now, but the interest in the future of that actual cost.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague for the excellent work he has done on this important issue because his figures are borne out by independent studies.

It is important to bear in mind that as the Conservatives go through their exercise of saying that they are great managers and look at these figures for this year's budget and so on, there are any number of little nuggets like that one that are being hidden and, again, will be foisted upon future generations.

The example of the HST in Ontario and British Columbia is a good one. Canadians, as a whole, will be paying for what the government will have to borrow to pay that off long term.

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However, let us look at the other examples, and there are many. In a study done, not by our political party but by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, an independent outside outfit,—we do not draft its studies, let us just put it that way—it calculates 200,000 jobs will be lost because, in addition to stealing the \$57 billion from the employment insurance fund, which the Liberals started and which the Conservatives are now completing with Bill C-9, and because they have frozen EI contributions they are creating a hole that will start being paid in a couple of years but that hole is \$15 billion which will be a terrible tax on payrolls and will take away jobs.

These great managers, who love to pretend that they finger-wag and tell other people what to do with the public purse, are in fact the biggest big bunch of incompetent bunglers who have ever put together a budget in the history of Canada.

My colleague is right to point out once again that they are hiding the figures and that what will happen is that future generations will be stuck with an environmental bill and a financial bill the likes of which we have never seen before in this country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Outremont for his speech. I have a question for him. Yesterday, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam introduced a bill in the House of Commons regarding employment insurance. This bill would extend the period for which sickness benefits may be paid from 15 weeks to 52 weeks, for example, in the case of Marie-Hélène Dubé, from Laval, who testified in committee, and who is struggling with her third bout of cancer. This week, I met a man in my riding who, after 22 years of work, developed a serious, long-term illness and was not entitled to employment insurance.

The Liberals and Conservatives are going to approve the write-off of that \$57 billion. We must remember that the Liberals were stealing this money up until 2006, and that the Conservatives took up where they left off. Would the fund have enough money if it were not going to Bill C-9? Today, journalists are reporting that the costs were not included in this bill, and they amount to about \$450 million. Would there be enough money to help workers instead of the major banks, as the government is in the process of doing?

● (1200)

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, the wonderful thing about the Conservative government is that from time to time, it says out loud what it has actually been thinking. We all heard the minister publicly say that she and the government believe that people who receive employment insurance are lazy and looking for a handout.

Benefits have always been needed to help offset the cyclical nature of employment insurance, and assist the unemployed and their families. I am very proud to work with the member for Acadie—Bathurst. For years, he has been a strong and consistent voice to ensure that the employment insurance fund is accessible to the public and that money is not stolen from it, as the Liberals did, with the help of the Conservatives.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand here as a member of the finance committee to talk at third reading of Bill C-9, the jobs and economic growth plan. It

follows up on our economic action plan, which this government implemented over a two-year period to tackle the economic situation that this country was facing, as other countries were around the world.

It has been a very difficult economic time and we in this country have been fortunate enough to have a banking system, financial system and Conservative government vision that have paid down debt and put our House in order to be able to manage through that economic crisis. We have seen some really positive numbers over the last number of weeks, whether it was our GDP growth at 6.1% or the job creation numbers that we have seen over the last few weeks.

I think we are on the road to recovery. We are doing much better, as was even admitted by our Liberal opposition today, than most countries around the world. The OECD indicates that we are number one in terms of our ability to come out of this recession. It is the deepest recession that we have had in this country since the Great Depression. We had the foresight, vision and ability to take action and make things happen.

We were able to create jobs, generate wealth and resume the economic growth that this country needs and has been able to maintain over the last number of years. We are getting back on track and I think it is very much in light of this government's ability to see what is going to happen, take action and put the economic action plan in place.

The action plan was a two-year process for us to ensure that we kept our economy rolling. It will come to an end in March 2011 in terms of the stimulus funding and people are aware of that. People understand that it was a one-time opportunity for us to put money into the marketplace to create the long-term infrastructure to make our country a solid place to grow, live and raise a family for many years to come.

Before I really get started, it has been an honour for me to be on the finance committee over the last three to four years. To show the kind of commitment that the committee has to working on issues that are facing Canada and Canadians from an economic perspective on a daily basis, I want to congratulate three of my colleagues on the committee.

First, I want to congratulate the parliamentary secretary from Macleod. Based on a Maclean's survey, a survey done by our peers indicating who we think is the hardest-working member of Parliament, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, the gentleman I work with every day, won that award and it was well deserved.

Another individual on our committee who I also want to congratulate is the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. She won the rising star award through the Maclean's survey. We in the House voted on who we thought was making a contribution, not just in Parliament but on committee and to their constituents. Both of those constituencies should be very proud of their members and I am honoured to serve on the finance committee with them.

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Finally, the other person who needs some recognition is the chair of the finance committee, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, who runs an excellent committee. We often hear in the paper about some of the committees on the Hill that are not working that well, but these are big, tough issues that we deal with. He gets some recognition in the newspaper on occasion but I want to publicly do it here in the House.

We have lots of people who come to see us asking for money and having lots of suggestions. I congratulate and thank the chair of that committee for the excellent work he does on keeping us focused, for keeping an eye on the ball, for knowing the issues we are facing as a committee and for being able to deliver reports, suggestions and recommendations back through the House.

● (1205)

The jobs and economic growth plan that we have in Bill C-9 will come to third reading and hopefully will pass this evening and be off to the other place for its consultation and vote.

I will talk about a number of areas in it and then highlight a few that are of particular interest to me. First, it would eliminate tariffs on manufacturing inputs on machinery and equipment. We have heard often that this is a big bill. It is actually 24 sections, but one of the additional pieces is the hundreds of pages of tariffs that exist affecting business in this country every day. These are tariffs for input costs that our manufacturing sector has to pay. It has to understand that there is paperwork involved and then there is the cost of doing business.

There has been a lot of discussion and I think there will be more in the future on the productivity of Canada and where we are in comparison to our competitors around the world. We do not just compete within Canada. We need to compete on the world stage with the productivity levels of other manufacturers and other service providers around the world. Canadians need to be as productive as possible to ensure we can get the economic benefit from being a productive economy.

These hundreds and hundreds of tariffs have been and continue to be a barrier to many manufacturers, and I am not talking about large manufacturers. These are smaller organizations with 10, 15, 20, 30 employees. This burden placed on them is a job killer and prevents them from being competitive on the world market. I am glad that Bill C-9 is finally removing these barriers.

Bill C-9 would also eliminate the need for tax reporting under section 116 of the Income Tax Act for many investors by narrowing the definition of taxable Canadian property. It is technical but I will give some facts. I will go a little further on this later. We are making it easier for venture capital money to come to Canada. The venture capital marketplace in this country is very small and, for our businesses to grow and attract capital, one of the barriers is in the Income Tax Act on the paper burden for someone to invest in a Canadian company. I will go further if I have time into this issue, but it will remove that barrier.

I was not aware of this issue until relatively recently in the fall. A number of members of Parliament had a meeting with Canada's Venture Capital & Private Equity Association and it was clear that this section of the Income Tax Act was a real barrier for it to be able

to attract money from other parts of the world to invest in Canadian companies. This is not a takeover. This is to get companies from one level of a being small organization, where most of the investment that has happened thus far is either from the pockets of the owners, their friends, their family or other angel investors they may have found, and move them to the next level where they can compete on a world scale and attract investment to help them to invest in people, equipment and machinery to make the best products and services so they can be the number one company in the world.

We are implementing important changes to strengthen the pension plans which were announced in the fall. Bill C-9 would implement those changes, which I will talk about later. It would authorize over \$500 million in transfer protection payments. What does that mean? There have been changes to the formulas in terms of transfers to the provinces. For those who do not know, there are three basic transfers to provinces: the health transfer, the social transfer and the equalization payments. There have been some changes to the formula and we wanted to ensure the provinces were treated equitably through these changes. For some provinces, because of the formula, there was going to be a reduction in the transfer.

● (1210)

This government came to the plate, stood up for the provinces and said that we know there are some issues in the changes and that we will honour the amount of money the provinces received in previous years. That is what that \$500 million is for.

The bill would allow for the regulation of the national payment card network and its operators. With respect to the credit card and debit card industry, the minister has been very clear that some changes have to be made. The consumer has to be respected. This bill would put in place what the minister has said is voluntary at this point, but if the voluntary program is not followed, the government will make it mandatory.

However, the Minister of Finance did not have the authority to make it mandatory. Many people do not know that. A lot of people believe that the federal government has a magic wand and it can do whatever it wants. That is really not the case. The law has to be followed and the law did not allow it to happen. Bill C-9 allows the finance minister to make mandatory any changes to credit card and debit card operations that would benefit consumers.

Another aspect I am very excited about is that Bill C-9 would provide credit unions in each province the ability to have a national charter. What does that really mean? There are a number of very successful credit unions across the country. They are all run and regulated by the provinces. The bill would allow for a broader opportunity.

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Just a few minutes ago the banks were mentioned. Canadians are thankful for our banking system. Our banking system is much more robust and got us through this recession in much better shape than many other countries. However, we still believe in competition and that is why we think the credit union system can play a role in being competitive in the financial services marketplace.

Now it is not possible for credit unions to have a national charter. The bill would allow them to have a national charter so that a credit union that is successful, say, in British Columbia, could expand in other provinces. Credit unions would need permission from the provinces. It would be a partnership. It is not the federal government overruling the provincial regulations, but it is a partnership that would allow it to happen. That is included in Bill C-9.

We are doing a number of other things. My colleague spoke earlier about the extension of the mining and exploration tax credit for another year, which helps the mining industry remain competitive. A member talked about the tax fairness between single and two-parent families with respect to claiming universal child care, which is putting money in families' pockets.

We are also hearing, particularly in southern Ontario and some areas of British Columbia, about the difficulties with contraband tobacco. Bill C-9 would deal with that issue. We have come up with a new system to identify which packaging is legal tender and which packaging is not. Consumers and law authorities would be able to tell what is a legal package of cigarettes and what is illegal. Those who are producing contraband tobacco products and selling them mostly to young people would not have access to this new system and it would be possible to prosecute them based on that.

We have to take the lead on these issues in this tough economic time. I am hoping the majority votes for Bill C-9 tonight to move it to the other place and allow us to move ahead on some of these issues.

• (1215)

One of the issues is the freezing of allowances and salaries of parliamentarians and reducing governor in council appointments to federal institutions. For clarification, there is a whole slew of governor in council appointments available to the government. Many of them go unfilled because the positions are not needed or the organization has fulfilled its mandate in terms of what it was set up for. However, each department that makes these appointments has to budget for them and put aside Canadian taxpayers' money to fund those positions, year after year, just in case the government of the day decides to make the appointment. It cannot make the appointment if there is no financial support for the position.

Our finance minister, through Bill C-9, has removed a tremendous number of these appointments. This in turn allows the departments and the government to take that money out of funding those positions that were never going to be filled.

In the last few minutes that I have for debate I want to talk about venture capital. Our Conservative government believes that Canadians and Canadian businesses should keep their hard-earned money where it belongs and not in others' pockets.

We are committed to making Canada a great place and to creating jobs for Canadians to earn a living. It is done through private

investment in companies so they can grow, create jobs and compete in the world market. That is why the jobs and economic growth bill includes a key tax reform to strengthen Canada's entrepreneurial advantage, supporting greater venture capital investments.

During the finance committee's cross-country prebudget consultations, which happen every year in the fall, we heard witness after witness stress the significance of venture capital as a key source of financing for new companies and for the growth of companies that already exist. Indeed, venture capital provides critical financing to promising pioneer start-up firms to give them the ability to introduce new technologies, invest in new capacity and create new, high quality jobs.

That is why our all-party finance committee made an important recommendation in our recent prebudget consultations. I will quote directly from the report that was brought to the House:

In the Committee's opinion, financing is critical for organizational success... Consequently, the Committee recommends that: The federal government work with the venture capital industry to identify new sources of financing and examine the effectiveness of existing tax incentives related to financing.

I am proud of what we are doing in budget 2010. I am proud of what we are doing with the jobs and economic growth act, Bill C-9. Specifically this legislation proposes a narrow definition of the tax on Canadian property to eliminate the need for tax reporting. It does not sound like much, but it is a tax reporting system that is very burdensome to those who have venture capital to invest. Why would people invest money in a marketplace that made it difficult for them to do so?

The demand for venture capital is not just here in Canada. It is around the world. It is a global marketplace. We need to be competitive to make sure that we are able to attract people with an interest in the growth in Canada and Canadian companies, with their capital, their cash to be frank, to be able to make those investments so we can improve our productivity, improve our delivery of service, improve our delivery of products.

That is what Canadian companies want. That is what Canadian companies need. That is what this government heard and it is what this government is delivering. This will enhance the ability of Canadian businesses, including innovative high-growth companies that want to contribute to job creation and growth in this country.

I have highlighted our government's actions here today with respect to venture capital, helping families with the universal child benefit, improving and making sure that the credit card system is serving consumers, and the credit unions' ability to compete with the banks and provide competition and consumer options. This is what Bill C-9 actually does.

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•(1220)

As a result, our Conservative government has taken unprecedented action to help Canadians through this difficult time. We are continuing to see signs of recovery. We are seeing better job numbers, strong positive GDP growth, and signs that the Canadian economy is recovering from the worst global recession since the 1930s.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member does a good job on the finance committee.

There is certainly growing concern in the United States about the possibility of a double-dip recession. It has been discussed recently. There is \$1.3 trillion in commercial loans that will be coming due soon. There is a freeze on credit for a lot of small businesses. Banks are classifying commercial loans as risky, so they are being very conservative in their lending practices. Manufacturers cannot get lines of credit.

In fact, in 2008 the 400 largest U.S. contractors were doing 80% private sector work, and now the 400 largest U.S. contractors are doing 80% public sector work which will run out at the end of the stimulus package at the end of this year. Unemployment will then rise.

Does the member agree with that assessment of a potential double-dip recession? What will be the spillover effects to Canada and when?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, that was a very good question. It highlights the differences between Canada and the U.S., and the position we are in compared to the U.S.

The United States debt and deficit levels are completely out of control. The Americans have no idea and no exit plan. The finance committee was in Washington a number of months ago. We asked them specific questions about their exit plan and their future. The response we got, whether it was from elected or unelected officials, was that they did not have a plan. That is the difference between the United States and this country.

We are seeing growth in this country. Is there potential for a second wave of the recession? It would be untruthful for me to say that there is no possibility of that happening.

We have the fundamentals here. We can see that from the growth and our job numbers. Unemployment is lower in this country than it is in the United States. When in our history has that ever happened?

We have good fundamentals. We did an excellent job of paying down \$40 billion of debt before the recession hit. We have set in place the concept of being ready just in case.

That is why Bill C-9 is important. It makes a number of changes to allow us to continue along the growth path that we are on, maybe smaller than what some people thought it would be and bigger than many thought it would be. We want to maintain it so that we do not see a second wave.

•(1225)

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the remarks of my colleague from Burlington.

The one person on the finance committee that he of course naturally left out was himself. I have seen the member and his work. We worked together on a committee in the last Parliament. I have seen, as is evidenced here today, his tremendous institutional knowledge of the topic as he sat there without notes and went through many different minute aspects of this important bill.

One of the things the member did not mention was the evidence of the progress that Canada's economic action plan is having in his own riding. I know he comes from a part of the province of Ontario that makes a tremendous contribution to Canada's economy generally.

I wonder if the member could reflect on some of those examples that he has seen in his home riding of Burlington, and on why this bill is that much more important to drive the action plan forward.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, Burlington has received its fair share of both the stimulus funding and of the longer term funding from the building Canada fund. With respect to our vision for infrastructure, we are improving the waste water plant that serves Burlington and the surrounding area. It will take a number of years, but that is a requirement to make sure that we have a proper environment and good, quality, clean water in Lake Ontario. We had that vision and we are able to fund that.

On the stimulus side, we have a number of projects, whether it is through the recreational program or the infrastructure program. Let me list some of them. It is helping to build a fire hall. We are building a new rink. We will have a new transit centre. We are creating a new park. There are four or five solid items that we are doing that have created jobs—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend not only for a great speech today but for the tremendous work he does on the finance committee. Most of the members of the finance committee refer to him as the deputy, because he fills in admirably and understands the issues. He puts forward some great ideas.

I listened to his speech today, and there are a couple of things I want to highlight that may not have received enough attention. These two items were studied at finance committee, so he should be able to reflect on them. One item is pensions, or retirement income adequacy, as we are referring to it, for Canadians and future retirees. It is a very topical issue.

The second item is credit cards, which were discussed at committee. The reaction to what was heard at committee is reflected in Bill C-9. We have put in changes in relation to both retirement income adequacy and credit cards.

I wonder if the hon. member could enlighten us about some of the positive changes in Bill C-9.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his leadership on that committee and for his work with our colleagues across the aisle on these things.

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We are doing some things on the pension side in Bill C-9 that the finance minister announced earlier in the fall. The bill would require an employer to fully fund benefits if the whole pension plan is terminated. The bill would establish a distressed pension plan workout scheme under which employers and employees and retirees could negotiate changes to plan funding. The bill would permit the Superintendent of Financial Institutions to replace an actuary if he or she is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of the members and the retirees. Finally, an administrator would be required to make additional information available to members and retirees following the termination of a pension plan.

We have heard many times, not just during this process but in the process of studying the retirement system and pension plans, that people do not have any information. The changes we are making through Bill C-9 are vital changes that would allow pensioners to have control and a say in their future retirement plans.

• (1230)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member spoke about venture capital markets. I would like to find out from him about the health of the Canadian venture capital market. It is difficult in the United States, as well. Most of the venture capital markets are in Massachusetts and Silicon Valley. The rest of the country has a hard time competing. It is the same for Canada.

Ian MacLellan, the founder of ARISE, a company in Waterloo that manufactures solar panels, was looking for venture capital, but he had to move to Germany and become a partner with the German government. That is one example of Canada losing out. A venture capital market would have been helpful to him at that time.

I would like the member to give us an update on the state of venture capital in this country. Labour investment funds across the country in different provinces have had varying degrees of success. There have been some successes and some failures. It is a tough market, regardless of what government is in power—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Burlington has 30 seconds left.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, the venture capital market in Canada traditionally has been small and it continues to be small. It trucked up considerably during the recession.

I want to point out that the official magazine of Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association states:

The Canadian government has listened to the financing community, understood the severity of the problem and removed the major tax barriers that have prevented critically needed international investment capital from crossing our borders.

That is a quote from the association. That is in Bill C-9. That is why members should support it.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak at third and final reading to the jobs and economic growth act, referred to in the House as Bill C-9.

We spent quite a bit of time debating this, and I am almost as happy as most Canadians are to see this debate coming to a close so that we can move it on to the other house and actually implement all of these good measures.

The jobs and economic growth act and budget 2010 are an integral part of Canada's economic action plan. It is a positive and ambitious plan that has been successfully strengthening our economy and helping to create jobs throughout our country.

Recent job gains help illustrate that Canada's economic action plan is indeed working. May represented the eighth month, out of the past 10, of job gains. Since July 2009, Canada has created over 300,000 net new jobs.

What is more, both the OECD and the IMF have predicted that Canada's economic growth will lead the G7 by a wide margin this year. What is more, just recently, the IMF singled out Canada for praise, saying, "Canada entered the global crisis in good shape and thus the exit strategy appears less challenging than elsewhere".

This reinforces what we have said all along. While not immune from the global recession, Canada's economy entered it from the strongest position, and Canada will exit it in the strongest position. Listen to a *Toronto Sun* editorial following the great announcement that over 100,000 new jobs were created last April. It said:

Our economy in April produced a record 108,700 jobs...the largest one-month increase ever in raw numbers....[T]he job growth numbers support [the] Prime Minister's contention Canada's economic recovery is among the strongest in the world....What politicians of all stripes on Parliament Hill need to remember is that for average Canadians, the economy is job one.

We agree. We acknowledge that the global recovery remains fragile. That is why our number one priority remains the economy. That is why we have been working, and will continue to, to fully implement Canada's economic action plan, which is a blueprint for creating jobs, lowering taxes, fostering economic growth, and investing in better infrastructure.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth act is one way our government is doing just that. It is staying focused on job one, the economy.

In the remainder of my time, I want to speak about the constructive and encouraging initiatives in the jobs and economic growth act. However, first I would like to highlight, for the benefit of the chamber and Canadians, how witness after witness at the finance committee, during its consideration of this important act, spoke strongly in favour of these important initiatives. They were witnesses like the Canadian Apparel Federation and the 400 Canadian companies and 50,000 workers it represents. The Canadian Apparel Federation spoke glowingly of the jobs and economic growth act and the historic step within it to eliminate all tariffs on manufacturing inputs and machinery and equipment. It understood the importance of this bold move, one that will make Canada the first G20 country to establish itself as a tariff-free zone for manufacturers.

In the words of the Canadian Apparel Federation at the hearing:

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[O]ur most important industrial policy issue has been the duties paid on imported raw materials. I am happy today to support the passage of Bill C-9, because it contains the elimination of these duties....In the current economic climate, this is the most effective policy at government's disposal to lower the costs of domestic manufacturing. It eliminates an unnecessary financial burden on domestic manufacturers....

That is a compelling argument.

Witnesses such as the Retail Council of Canada, and the 40,000 Canadian stores and online merchants it represents, strongly urged the committee to pass the jobs and economic growth act, especially the legislative provisions within it to monitor compliance with the code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry and to regulate the industry if necessary.

• (1235)

The Retail Council of Canada stated:

Merchants across Canada are following this issue closely. They commend the minister...for establishing a card payment regulatory framework and for equipping the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada with the tools it needs to monitor and enforce compliance with the code of conduct changes, changes that are both contained in Bill C-9....[W]e...applaud the fact that there are regulations that will allow the minister to in fact regulate the payment system....[T]his may have to happen sooner versus later.

What about witnesses such as the Canadian Cancer Society, which spoke in favour of the initiative in the jobs and economic growth act to help counter illegal contraband through an enhanced stamping regime for tobacco products?

As the Canadian Cancer Society stated at committee:

All members of Parliament are aware of how we have a significant illegal contraband problem in Canada, and we need solutions. We support the enhanced tax stamp regime that will be authorized with this bill....It will assist in preventing counterfeiting.

The finance committee has also heard from witnesses such as Pathways to Education Canada. The jobs and economic growth act provides \$20 million for pathways, which is a unique program of early interventions and support for high school students to help them overcome the barriers they may face in pursuing post-secondary education. This community-based, volunteer-supported program provides tutoring, mentoring, counselling, and financial support to disadvantaged youth and their families. It has an established record of reducing high school dropout rates. It has a record of being effective in increasing post-secondary enrollment of students from inner-city high schools.

The \$20 million in new support authorized with the passage of the jobs and economic growth act would allow Pathways to grow and would help even more disadvantaged youth.

As David Hughes, president of Pathways to Education Canada, told the committee:

[O]ur program...is lowering dropout rates of at-risk youth and helping them to make the all-important transition to post-secondary education and meaningful employment. This investment will enable Pathways...to expand its program from being a regional program to being a national one, helping us expand to 15 to 20 locations, to seven to eight provinces, and serving over 10,000 students.

The committee also heard from Genome Canada. Genome Canada is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to developing and implementing a national strategy in genomics and proteomics research for the benefit of all Canadians.

The research performed by Genome Canada, such as genomics research, has outcomes in the areas of human health, the environment, and natural resources. Recognizing the work performed by Genome Canada, the jobs and economic growth act would invest \$75 million in this organization to launch new research, an investment that Genome Canada is ready to put to work.

Indeed, when Genome Canada appeared before committee, it noted:

[W]e are proud of our track record....[T]he recent federal budget provided \$75 million in additional funding to Genome Canada, for which we are thankful....We want to get these funds directly into the hands of the researchers as quickly as possible....Excellence is the only standard that Genome Canada will accept or fund.

Witnesses also appeared before the finance committee to applaud the provisions in the jobs and economic growth act that would enable credit unions to grow and remain competitive by permitting them to incorporate as federal entities, if they so choose.

We all recognize that Canada is home to a strong and vibrant credit union industry that provides financial services to millions of Canadian consumers and small businesses. It has long been argued that allowing credit unions to grow on a national scale would broaden choices for consumers by helping credit unions attract new members and improve services for existing members across provincial borders.

Indeed, that is what we heard at finance committee.

Credit Union Central of Canada presented a very convincing case. It noted that the jobs and economic growth act provided:

a good first step towards the establishment of a useful, attractive, accessible, and distinctive federal charter option for credit unions.

• (1240)

The president of Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, Tracy Redies, added that the act was:

—a historic milestone that will enhance the strength and stability of the credit union sector and financial services industry as a whole....It will give credit unions the chance to develop greater economies of scale and more competitive cost bases while remaining true to cooperative principles. This, in turn, will allow the development of a wider range of enhanced products and services that credit union members now expect.

Increased competition from federal credit unions will provide Canadian consumers more choice, drive innovation, and lower prices.

Finally, the finance committee heard powerful testimony from witnesses praising the government for allowing competition in the outgoing international mail marketplace. We heard evidence that this move would directly save thousands of Canadian jobs. I note that this competition has already been occurring for decades.

Representatives of the Canadian Printing Industries Association, which represents over 7,200 printing establishments that employ some 65,500 Canadians, came to committee to warn of the dire consequences of failing to pass the jobs and economic growth act in a timely manner. They said:

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Canadian printers and remail companies have already seen a significant decrease in business given this industry's uncertainty over the past few years. Without this amendment, these companies stand to lose even more business as their customers will simply take their business to another country...No one is going to win: not Canada Post, not our small businesses, and not the Canadian economy.

What about the other quote that we heard from Barry Sikora? This was at committee also. Mr. Sikora is a small businessman and has been involved in the international mail industry for over 30 years. Mr. Sikora came to committee with a simple plea. He said:

—my company employed 31 people. We're not a huge corporation; we're an average business in the printing industry. Now, because of this situation, we're down to 17 employees. Many of our customers have left...they have taken their business to another country. They have forced our industry to lay off long-time employees, and that's not a pleasant thing to do...We're hoping that it will come back, but...If this doesn't pass, I'm out of business.

He is referring to the jobs and economic growth act.

For those in this chamber who would get lost in ideological and procedural debate, I ask them to remember Mr. Sikora and the hard-working Canadians his business employs. I want them to think about these employees, the jobs that would be lost and the families affected if we did not pass this act in a timely manner. We need to always keep that in perspective.

We also need to keep in mind the other positive measures in the jobs and economic growth act. I would be remiss if I did not speak briefly to a few of these measures. For instance, the act provides important tax relief to those Canadian seniors who collect U.S. social security benefits.

For background, before 1996, Canadian seniors, who received U.S. social security benefits, were required to only include 50% of those benefits when calculating their Canadian income tax. In 1996 the then-Liberal government changed the tax law to tax 85% of those social security payments, an unwelcome change for those Canadian seniors on fixed incomes.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth act reinstates the pre-1996 tax treatment for those Canadian seniors who have been in receipt of these benefits before 1996, as well as their spouses or common-law partners eligible to receive survivor benefits. This important change, which fulfills a promise that our Prime Minister made during the 2008 election campaign, was warmly welcomed. Indeed, listen to what William Thrasher of the Canadians Asking for Social Security Equality told the *Windsor Star* recently. He said:

We've been fighting for this for 15 years...The tax increase was a "disaster" for seniors. People were thrown out of nursing homes because they couldn't afford to live there...at least seniors will be getting a bigger portion of their social security. It's a major victory.

• (1245)

However, there is more in our jobs and economic growth act. As we all will recall, in 2006 our Conservative government introduced the universal child care benefit. This benefit provides \$100 per month for each child under the age of six and gives working families the support and freedom to choose the best child care option for them. The jobs and economic growth act will ensure that single parents are not disadvantaged by allowing single parents to choose to include universal child care benefit payments in the income of a dependant. In most cases the dependant would not be subject to tax.

This change will ensure that single parents are not disadvantaged by their family status and will provide nearly \$200 in tax relief for each child a single parent may have. The Institute of Marriage and Family Canada, like most observers, has welcomed this change. It has said:

—the government has recognized that single parent families have been unfairly penalized through an excessive tax clawback of the Universal Child Care Benefit.

There is so much more to applaud in the jobs and economic growth act, like the half a billion dollars in payments to various provinces to support the key health care and social services that they provide by ensuring no decline in their total transfers in 2010-11, money that our provincial partners are counting on receiving in a timely fashion. Indeed they put it in their budgets. There is also the modification to section 116 of the Income Tax Act to better help Canada attract foreign venture capital and the jobs that it will create. In addition, there is the important extension of the mineral exploration tax credit, a move that will help promote employment and investment growth in rural and remote communities throughout Canada.

Clearly the jobs and economic growth act will implement key measures in Canada's economic action plan to help to secure sustained recovery and create jobs. Given the importance of the jobs and economic growth act, I ask all members to give it the support it deserves and to pass this important legislation in a timely manner.

• (1250)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has enumerated almost in a fashion of litany all the advantages of tax and non-tax. Perhaps he would like to recall this for members in the House, and anyone else who is interested. In the course of a year the Conservatives built up a deficit of \$55 billion when they came here with a surplus. Perhaps he can tell us why in that same year the economy collapse and caused a loss of 550,000 jobs.

The parliamentary secretary goes on at great length to talk about the job creation. Everyone in Canada wants to know where those jobs are. At last count, if every one of those jobs were to carry a wage of \$100,000 for every \$1 billion of stimulus, we would have X number of jobs. In fact, for \$30 billion of stimulus, we ought to have the creation of 300,000 jobs. That deficit is also part of the stimulus package. Where are those 550,000 jobs represented by the deficit? The fact is they are not there. We are still losing jobs.

In my province of Ontario, which is responsible for about 40% of GDP, if we were to make the calculation bringing over what the province has spent in stimulus, it means we would have been spending in Ontario alone \$200,000 per job, but the jobs still are not there. Whose credit is it? Is it Ontario's credit or the Conservatives' credit?

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Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, what an interesting question. I am thankful every morning when I get up and I am not that depressed about Canada. I do not know how the hon. member can try to make a bad story out of what the rest of the world is looking at with envy.

Since July of last year we, as all of Canada, have created the environment for Canadian businesses to rehire. We have created the environment through our stimulus and through budget 2009. If we can get this bill through the House, the continuation year two of the jobs and economic growth act, we will create more jobs in our country.

However, that sort of negative comment would make businesses wonder why they were operating in our country. It is because we are the government. We put in place a positive environment for businesses to operate in. We have reduced their taxes so they have more money to expand their business. We have reduced their taxes so they can increase the number of employees. That is why we have 310,000 new jobs since July.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the parliamentary secretary on being named the hardest working MP of the year. It seems his colleague will applaud just about anything.

Page 176 of the budget shows that employment insurance revenues will be going up. They will rise from \$22.6 billion to \$25.2 billion, then to \$26.6 billion. Compare that to the information on page 180, which shows that the cost of employment insurance benefits is expected to drop.

Employment insurance benefits are the moneys paid out to unemployed workers, and employment insurance contributions are collected not from the government, but from employees and employers. There is a big difference between the two, and over the past four years, that difference added up to a surplus of \$19.2 billion. How can they say they have a \$19.2 billion surplus when they took that money from workers and employers? Is this theft, or is it a new tax?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies: The simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is neither. However, the hon. member brought up theft and that is a pretty strong word to use in the House.

When we came to government, that surplus was gone. It was contributed by employees and employers for a time such as what we have just faced, a downturn in the economy and increases in unemployment. Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government chose to spend that money on its own political wishes.

• (1255)

Mr. Daniel Paillé: You would do the same thing.

Mr. Ted Menzies: The hon. member suggests that can be done again. We put in place a separate board that is arm's-length from the government so that can never happen again. We saw the falling of the last government and we chose not to go down that road.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to take a lot of time. As everyone knows, we do not support this budget. It is not because there are not some good things in it, there are, but it is more because of the hidden

agenda the Conservatives put in on items they were unable to put through in other bills.

An example is Canada Post. We hear the Conservatives saying that we will be able to send our mail overseas for services in Canada. Let us get this straight. We are going to send the mail to Jamaica to come back to Canada for distribution.

This bill consists of 880 pages. Canada Post is instrumental within our communities, providing direct service. Could the member guarantee me that none of the post offices, especially those in rural areas, will see any closures because of the proposed changes in the bill?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the hon. member should suggest that we will send jobs overseas. She perhaps did not hear me read the quote from Barry Sikora in the finance committee, who is a Canadian resident, Canadian employer and Canadian taxpayer. He pleaded with us to ensure we would allow him to compete.

In committee Moya Greene suggested that it would not impact Canada Post's bottom line one way or the other. What the board of Canada Post chooses to do is beyond my purview. I encourage it to continue its support of rural post offices, and I assume it will because we have basically given it that direction.

Rural post offices are very important to my constituents. I would not be a part of jeopardizing them. This is providing jobs and competition, which is what Canada is all about.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-9 has 24 sections in it. We hear often from the opposition that this is a big bill and so on. Hundreds of pages are for the tariff relief that we are providing.

However, we are providing expenditure restraint. We are improving competition when it comes to Canada Post. We are fighting money laundering. We are improving the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada's abilities. There is a variety of things we are doing.

Could the parliamentary secretary tell me why anybody would be voting against this particular bill?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I am stumped because I have no answer for that question. I have no idea why anyone, who is elected by Canadians, would vote against some of the positive things, in fact, all of the positive things that are in this budget.

The hon. member raises a good comment, that opposition members stand up and complain about the complexity of this legislation. This document appears certainly to be a large document. I have seen some people throwing it around as if it is not that important, but it is important, and 52% of it is actually defining the tariffs that we are reducing, the tariffs that have been impeding businesses from being able to compete internationally.

• (1300)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to address the issue of this budget.

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As members know, we have some serious reservations about this budget plan, primarily because of that four letter word “plan”. We do not see one.

What we do see is, and the parliamentary secretary has described it, a mixture of certain elements that the government surreptitiously wants to see addressed, accepted and moved on, and not having the courage to address some of those issues.

For example, he talked about remailers and the reorganization of Canada Post as if it was a fait accompli already but not having the courage to present the stand-alone legislation here so that we could have a look at what the government wants to do.

He threw around figures, for example, about the number of people in the printing business in this country. Of course, we know there are people who are engaged in the printing business, but they are not all engaged in the business of remailers. They are not all engaged in the business associated with whatever it is that Canada Post does relative to the printers.

It is a little bit too much to ask the Canadian public to support a piece of legislation that says “vote for us, we are good, we have the public's interest in mind, and by the way to those who are printers or involved in transportation or any delivery of service, this bill will address those interests, and it does that because it eliminates taxation”.

We are all left scratching our heads. What is it? There is a document that is 880 pages long. The government says it is the fiscal plan for the country, that it is the business upon which the country must live or die over the course of this next year, that it is the basis for the creation of jobs, but it is not willing to separate out some various items.

There is the issue about the re-transformation, and I say re-transformation because Canada Post has been transformed so many times since I have been here that I do not even know if it is Canada Post as it was before. There is reference to what the soon-to-be former president says about where Canada Post is headed and the business plan. There is mention of privatization, but no, not privatization. There is mention of the privatization of rural mail post offices, but no, we are not going to be privatizing those post offices. There is the fact that we are not going against the unions and CUPW, but no, that is not what it is about.

What is it about? Why would the government put all those questions and queries in the bill, while throwing out these little nuggets of whatever it is that is part of the fiscal plan, the economic plan, the economic strategy of the government, if in fact we can still talk about it as a strategy? Why would the government throw it all in this 880-page long bill and expect members of Parliament to be experts on it?

The government is not an expert on it. It has members of Parliament reading out speeches. The only jobs it is creating with that is for those speech writers who revel in the opportunity to have their mots of wisdom, their words of explanation, repeated over and over again so that they become speaking points and are read in this place.

These words say the same thing; we are good and they are bad. However, what is not talked about are the consequences of taking one move from one place to another. For example, if we talk about reorganizing the post office, reorganizing the way that we do international remailers, we cannot even discuss the merits of that. We cannot even discuss the financial implications of that.

We have discussed some of this in the past. I can give members some of the numbers. The government contests all of the numbers that the Parliamentary Budget Officer gave.

However, we cannot do that because we are talking about the larger fiscal plan of the government. We are talking about an economic strategy, which must be at the base of the authority that the public gives elected office holders, that the public gives chambers, assemblies of people, like this one here to make decisions on their behalf.

That is not what is in this budget plan. It certainly is not to be seen in that issue related to the post office. By the way, the post office is an important element of our society. Yes, it creates many jobs. It delivers and it is a stimulus for a lot of economic activities. It has general revenues of about \$7.8 billion a year. In the large scheme of things, it is important but it is not the overriding issue.

The overriding issue is the plan that the government put in place to tax Canadians and to build on that taxation.

•(1305)

In my question a few minutes ago I talked about one very specific element. We need to get beyond the subterfuge that is presented in some of these fabricated speeches, otherwise known as talking points, that pass for debate in this place when delivered by the government side.

We need the government to tell us about what it calls its plan, that dirty four letter word again. We need it to tell us what it is going to be doing with our money and our confidence. That is the question that everybody here wants addressed. The general public wants the same thing.

Members have heard me say this before, that the Conservatives acquired a deficit in the last 18 months. They inherited a \$12 billion surplus, which was gifted to them by the last Liberal government, and I realize that is not very palatable for them. It was a Liberal government that bequeathed a \$12 billion surplus, and the Conservatives ate that up. Not only did they eat that up, but they squandered the opportunity to build on what was made available to them by responsible administrations that preceded them. We are now faced with a \$55 billion deficit.

Any responsible, accountable government would have told us its plan. It would have addressed this. But no, the Conservatives sneaked in the back door and put themselves into a situation where they went from a \$12 billion surplus to a \$55 billion deficit. Then they say they are going to re-establish the economic climate. I want members to notice the word re-establish. The Conservatives are going to re-establish the economic health of the country, implying of course what everybody sees to be the obvious.

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The Conservatives drove the surplus down to the ground and then say it was a synchronized depression-recession collapse. The Conservatives claim it is everybody else's fault. "The devil made me do it" is what Flip Wilson use to say in the sixties. I think he was the mentor for the current government, especially for the Minister of Finance. The devil made us do this.

We were fine as long as we lived under a Liberal administration, but now the world has decided to punish us and the Conservatives decided they were going to visit unhappiness on Canada. That is why we have a deficit.

The Conservatives are saying they are going to cut taxes, so that everybody else will invest in Canada and get us out of this deficit. That \$55 billion amounts to about \$2,000 per person in Canada. Every man, woman and child must pay \$2,000 to reduce that deficit. Where will that money come from? It is going to come out of the pockets of people who work, corporations that still turn a profit. It is going to come out of the pockets and purses of every single Canadian. Everybody is asking, how else are we going to get rid of the deficit? When we had a responsible government, we did not have a deficit.

I notice the finance minister is too busy to appear here on a finance bill. I am sorry, I should not have said that. I take it back. The Minister of Finance could have spoken for himself but he asked the parliamentary secretary to speak on his behalf. He said that we need to create an environment for building the economy of the country. I would like him to tell me which industries the government is going to stimulate. Will it be the auto sector? It cannot be that sector because we have already given it \$12 billion in loans and subsidies, et cetera. That sector is not creating any more jobs. The economy has collapsed for the auto industry.

Is the government going to stimulate the agricultural sector? No, because everybody is engaged in buying their food products from other places at a very competitive price. The government claims it cannot build a market for the agricultural sector because it should not be up to the government to do it.

Maybe it is the mining sector. The government does not believe in industrial strategy because it cannot be insinuated in the day to day decisions of private enterprise.

• (1310)

Maybe it is fishing. Can we see something there? Our coastal communities in particular might rely on that. Do we have a plan for it? Do we have something that is associated with biodiversity, the environment, investments in infrastructure to associate productivity with agri-production and with value added businesses? No, we do not have that because we do not find that is very productive, but we have a stimulus program.

We are looking for the stimulus program. Everyone in the country has a stimulus program. Every province has a stimulus program to get us out of a recession that the government threw us into because it said that we did not need to worry and that we should be happy. After the 2008 election it said that there was no problem in this country that it could not handle. It said that since it already had that \$12 billion surplus that the Liberal government gave it, it could ride out the storm.

Bang, 14 days after the election we were in the worst economic crisis we could ever be. Why? Because someone on the opposite side was asleep at the switch, and that is exactly where the government is today.

Members of Parliament on this side of the House look at this and say that this is a tax and squander government. The bill is 880 pages of taxing and squandering. Then the government has the gall to stand up and say that it is reducing taxes.

My colleague from the Bloc Québécois, who made some reference to a question by a member on this side before, at least took the trouble to look at particular pages. I will bet that if he looks at the budget plan again, out of those 880 pages, he too will scratch his head in surprise and say, as he has said already, that people will be paying payroll taxes. There is an additional \$11 billion in payroll taxes that will accrue to those who work and those who offer work.

I do not know why the government thinks that that is a stimulus. By the way, the Liberal administration for nine straight years reduced payroll taxes.

I am sure my Bloc colleague is also thinking that before reducing taxes because reducing taxes stimulates economic activity, surely to heaven, if we raise taxes on travellers by \$3.5 billion, which I am sure is somewhere in that 880 pages and maybe one of the other parliamentary secretaries will do it for the Minister of Finance and point out to us, how does that stimulate further travel.

Here is the problem with subterfuge. The government sneaks it in under the pretext that it will make additional investments in security so that we can fly safely. It used the opportunity to build on paranoia just last December and it threw \$11 million into buying scanners that everyone says that they might be superfluous but because we are afraid of flying and afraid of terrorists, it is a worthwhile investment. The government bought 44 scanners for \$11 million. There is not that much space in our airports but it would find it and put them in and everything will be fine. Then, immediately after that, it will spend another \$3.5 billion on another 60,000 of these scanners. Where is it going to put them? How will it encourage travel by increasing the cost to travellers by \$3.5 billion?

No, the government will not use the word "taxation" for these things. There is a new moniker for all of these things now. This will be the government of fee for usage, not tax. If we are going to use the infrastructure of air travel, we have to pay an additional fee, which is only fair. Only 60 million people travel and there are only 32 million Canadians but they take about 60 million flight movements in Canada. Now the government will tax them an additional \$3.5 billion for the audacity of travelling.

We want to see where in this budget plan there is the \$1.2 billion for the G8 and G20 summit which suddenly out of the blue has become the new normal in terms of cost for putting on an international conference. The government has taken the word "squander" to artistic levels.

Government Orders

•(1315)

I will tell members about squandering. It is not just about money thrown away for building man-made lakes inside closed environments when we have hundreds of thousands of lakes right here in southern Ontario. No. It is the squandering opportunity.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance took great pains to remind everybody about the child credit, the \$100 for every child under the age of six so that women and families could get out and work. The only place in the country that actually provides child care at a reasonable price is in Quebec. However, people living in Toronto or anywhere in southern Ontario who wants child care services for their children under the age of six, unless they are going to junior K, which is paid by the provincial government now after age four, will be paying \$50 a day. If they get a discount, that might go down to \$30 or \$35. That means, at the very best, they will get either two or three days of child care services for their infant, toddler or pre-schooler. That is what that \$100 represents. That \$100 represented a plan, that was before it became a dirty word, a strategic plan to provide a universal and universally accessible child care program nationwide, in conjunction with the provinces, and the initial cost from the federal side was \$5 billion.

The Conservatives turned around, took a reasonable plan that had already been negotiated with the provinces for \$5 billion, and substituted it with \$100 a month for those children under the age of six.

Talk about squandering an opportunity to build a legacy for the future.

We look at this financial plan of theirs and we see that another squandered opportunity is what they want to do with AECL, the Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. We spent hundreds of billions of dollars in developing a national, internationally-recognized institution with very high-paying jobs for engineers and scientists to produce medical isotopes and other energies. We are leaders in the world on this. However, the government, in its classic *modus operandi*, its method of operation for everything, has decided to squander that opportunity, vilify the people who work in it, allow the institution to collapse into disrepair and then say that it is in such a bad situation that it will sell it off to some sucker so that we can export the benefits and the sacrifices that everybody had made in order to achieve those benefits in the past. It wants to hand that off to somebody else. We will turn back to being hewers of wood and drawers of water.

I am not sure about the hewers of wood anymore because the Conservatives' plan for the forestry sector and the 350 communities around this country that rely exclusively on forestry has been shameful, to say the least. They have abandoned the complete market in the United States and when the Americans call and say, "Listen, Canada. Back off", we say, "How quickly?".

We have not done anything in terms of promoting our products, either our first primary product or our downstream products, anywhere around the world, but we are quick to eliminate anything that involves additional research and development. Why? Because the government is afraid of the words "industrial strategy". It requires some thinking, it requires a vision and it requires a plan.

More important, however, it involves believing in Canada and believing in its citizens. The Conservative government opposite does not believe in any of it. That is why it has come up with a subterfuge of 880 pages, expecting everybody to buy a pig in a poke.

Do members know what? The Conservatives have made a mess of this country in the four and a half years they have been here and they deserve to be thrown out.

•(1320)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening with some amusement to the comments the member made and I would indicate to him that having a surplus is not particularly difficult. Any Joe could have a surplus. If we look at how the Liberal government did it, it was not by good business practices but by taxing hard-working Canadians who had to work harder to pay more taxes. If we burden the people, we will get more money, but the Liberals balanced their books and got a surplus on the backs of Canadians.

First, they took \$25 billion from the provinces and the municipalities that had to forgo infrastructure and certain things that had to be done. They tried to balance their books on the backs of ordinary Canadians. They then raided the EI account by taking \$50 billion from that account for their own pet political projects and then said that they had a piddling surplus.

They did it on the backs of ordinary Canadians, which is nothing to brag about. It was not because of good business practices. They took it from hard-working Canadians. What did they do with that money? They spent it.

We reduced taxes for ordinary Canadians. We reduced the deficit by \$38 billion in the years we were in government. We not only reduced taxes but we put money into infrastructure. During the difficult times, we were there helping Canadians and ensuring that we were not balancing the books by taxing ordinary Canadians.

What would they do if they became government? The Liberal Leader of the Opposition said that he would raise the GST, raise taxes, spend—

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the hon. member there to give the member for Eglinton—Lawrence a chance to respond.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the parliamentary secretary thinks he lives.

If anybody could have eliminated the deficit, maybe Brian Mulroney and all of his ministers who caused the deficit to rise to \$43 billion would have given them a hint. I am sorry but apparently he has been giving them advice, so they have taken a surplus and they are back down to a \$55 billion deficit.

What did we do with that money, he asks? I just want to point out two programs for him. One was an increase in equalization payments to all provinces. It was \$32 billion over a 10 year period, \$3.2 billion per annum. That is still ongoing. It is in year five.

Government Orders

There was also an additional \$41 billion transfer in health transfers to the provinces, which is \$4.1 billion per annum every year. We are now in year five and we have another five years of this to go. That was all money that was put into the fiscal plan in 2005 and it was effected. It was put in place. Everybody here knew about it and everybody voted for it. That is \$72 billion.

As for reducing the tax burden, he knows quite well that the former Liberal administration not only reduced the deficit to zero but also the debt by over \$100 billion. His government brought it back up again.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has to be concerned about a double-dip recession in the United States. We know that \$1.3 trillion worth of commercial loans are coming due and commercial real estate values are collapsing in a lot of the different markets. There is a freeze on credit for small business. Banks are being very restrictive in their commercial loans and very conservative in their lending. Manufacturers cannot get lines of credit.

In fact, in 2008, 400 of the largest U.S. contractors were doing 80% of their business in private sector work. Now, the 400 largest U.S. contractors are doing 80% of their work in the public sector, which will be running out at the end of the stimulus package at the end of this year. Unemployment is then going to rise.

How does the member think Canada will be impacted by this possible double-dip recession in the United States?

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, the member was not here when we ran through these difficult times in a previous Liberal administration, but today I see that even the government members opposite turn around and say that people look to Canada for the fiscal stability for which it is known, one that was built over 13 years of Liberal administration.

One of the things that we did, and that the government has been busily undoing, is that we did not follow the American example of allowing the banks to make loans to people who could not pay them and to allow their stock markets to speculate on the bets that the banks took on people being able or not being able to repay their debts. We made it very difficult.

We had a very conventional, traditional and responsible way to do business. In my brief comment a few moments ago, I said that we needed a fiscal plan as well as an economic strategy but that this bill does not address either one.

We made sure that we had a fiscal plan and those guys are eroding it.

• (1325)

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been quite a performance here this afternoon. I think the hon. member actually used the word “subterfuge” in his comments. I would say that the sultan of subterfuge is over there. All we have had here this afternoon is a bunch of bluster and talking points from his own party.

This is a serious discussion about Canada's economic action plan. The member said that there is an absence of a plan. Perhaps he missed the document that came out in 2007 called “Advantage Canada”. It set out an entire framework for investments not only in

infrastructure but also in knowledge. It is the framework that this government has been using since 2007. We have added to that, of course, through Canada's economic action plan, but these are substantial investments, well coordinated in the economy to have the kind of results that we are seeing.

On job creation, three-quarters of the job losses that came as a result of the global recession in the last year have been recovered. Over \$200 billion in tax savings have been received and are now in the pockets of Canadian consumers right across the country. That is helping to stimulate the economy and create jobs. The hon. member ought to rely a little less on the rhetoric and consider some of the key questions that we should be discussing here in the House.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I guess the documents to which he made reference, including “Advantage Canada”, the action plan and the budget document, are nothing more than inscribed rhetoric. What I do is I look at the outcomes. I am proud to have been part of an administration—

Mr. Bruce Stanton: The outcomes speak for themselves.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, if the member would listen, he would learn something.

Everybody in Canada is looking at exactly the same thing. Under our previous administration before the Conservatives came to office, we had an unemployment rate in the country that went below 6%, when 5.5% is considered to be full employment. The pressures on our human resources potential to address all of the demands by the marketplace were so strained that we needed to come up with a demographic plan to address all of those.

Today, the unemployment rate is above 8%. People can no longer look with the same kind of optimism—

Mr. Bruce Stanton: That is the role of the G7.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, it is the G7. Here it is. That is the problem. It is everybody else. The devil made them do it. The government was in government for a particular purpose: to make sure that Canadians could benefit from the advantage that is resident in Canada—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There is time for another brief question. The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am new to the House, but even when I was a member of Quebec's National Assembly, I was always excited to hear the member for Eglinton—Lawrence's earnest statements. He has style, confidence and parliamentary savoir-faire. Government members tremble when he speaks.

I wonder if he will use his volubility and eloquence to serve democracy by persuading all of his Liberal Party colleagues to show up and vote with the Bloc and NDP members so that we can finally rid ourselves—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence has 30 seconds left.

Government Orders

[English]

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the compliments. Perhaps they are undeserved, but I have learned in my years that when there is a compliment, there is also a reality to be faced. I accept his challenge and I tell him in all humility, not in false modesty, that I will do my very best to have other people follow my example.

• (1330)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

We are at third reading of Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill. The Bloc Québécois voted against this Conservative bill at second reading because, in addition to not meeting Quebec's needs, it undermines Quebec's economic development, against the wishes of Quebec's National Assembly.

We obviously supported the NDP amendments at report stage that would have deleted parts of the bill.

Although it has been shown that this bill is unacceptable for Quebec, it has still made it to the final stage, thanks to the complicity of the Liberal opposition, which arranged that the bill would receive enough support through all the stages.

In their speeches, the Liberals—and we just heard an example—make some pro forma criticisms of the bill but when it comes time to vote there are enough absentees to allow the bill to pass, because it is a confidence vote.

This so-called official opposition does not want to defeat the government. In order to make themselves understood, they even announced in advance what they would do, supposedly because the voters do not want an election. It was very easy, therefore, for the Conservative government to introduce major changes to other bills in six parts of this one in order to quietly slip them through.

The Conservatives also took advantage of the opportunity to trample all over the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces by creating a Canada-wide securities commission in Toronto.

I like to think that the ideal would be a good government that is concerned about the well-being of the population, old people and our fragile environment and, insofar as Quebecers are concerned, considers us a nation, as it did officially acknowledge. But that is not what this Conservative government elected in the fall of 2008 is doing.

We should all remember that this is a minority government and the opposition parties exist precisely to express their opinions, say why they disagree, and oppose when necessary.

A general election is obviously a major undertaking for the various parties and there are necessarily costs involved, but the social and monetary costs of more years of Conservative rule are much more onerous, especially for Quebec.

I would like to speak now about my riding of Alfred-Pellan. A Liberal candidate was chosen about a year ago and he seems to have

been campaigning ever since, in case there is an election. It just goes to show how indecisive and inconsistent the Liberals are.

It is only natural for a candidate to work hard for success during an election campaign, but perhaps this one should be reminded that his party does not even want an election. In any case, I would like to know what kind of alternative a Liberal candidate would currently offer.

Today is the last chance for all the members from Quebec to oppose this bill.

It contradicts two unanimous votes in the Quebec National Assembly, and it is simply unacceptable for members from Quebec to be complicit in it, given that the Quebec nation was officially recognized in this House.

There was a unanimous request from Quebec that the government provide \$2.2 billion in financial compensation for the harmonization of the sales tax. Still the government refuses, despite the agreements that were signed with five other provinces for a total of \$6.8 billion.

On March 31, 2009—more than a year ago—the Quebec National Assembly unanimously passed a motion asking the federal government to treat Quebec fairly and equitably by providing compensation comparable to what Ontario is receiving for harmonizing its sales tax.

Despite the repeated pleas of the Government of Quebec and all the attempts of the Bloc Québécois to correct this injustice, the Conservative government is still refusing Quebec's requests.

• (1335)

What was possible with five other provinces does not seem to be possible with the one that is in fact recognized as a nation. That is unacceptable to Quebec.

What can we say now about the government's intention of trampling the powers of the provinces and of Quebec by creating its national securities commission, again in spite of a unanimous vote against it by Quebec?

The entire economic community of Quebec is mobilizing against this coup. The editorial writer in *La Presse*, a newspaper owned by Power Corporation that is in fact dedicated to defending federalism in Quebec, says, and I quote: "The expression 'predatory federalism' is overused, but that is what this comes down to."

In addition, the editorial writer in *Le Devoir* says, in an editorial entitled "Perverse process", that if the government wins in the Supreme Court, it would be a flat-out intrusion into a provincial field of jurisdiction, another step toward centralization of the country.

He goes on to say that the trap lies in the provinces' freedom to join in the process. The three recalcitrant provinces, Alberta, Manitoba and Quebec, will not be able to resist the pressure from the market.

We are looking at a poorly disguised attempt at constitutional fraud. Once it has its foot in the securities field, the federal government will find it easy to expand its sphere of activity, while Quebec's will shrink, against its will. The members from Quebec must not take part in this attack on the Quebec nation.

Government Orders

This negation of Quebec in the bill was not enough. Taking advantage of the Liberals' acknowledged servility, the government has introduced very significant amendments to other statutes in this bill that it does not have the courage to put forward and defend by introducing separate bills, as our democratic parliamentary rules require.

In the few minutes available to them, witnesses we heard in committee expressed their confusion in the face of the lack of consideration given to subjects as important as the exclusive privilege of the Canada Post Corporation, the privatization of Atomic Energy Canada, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the Employment Insurance Act.

I would like to speak specifically about part 24 of the bill, which amends the Employment Insurance Act. The Bloc Québécois called for substantial improvements to the scheme. Instead, the bill hands us the following measures: the 2010 budget closes the employment insurance account and creates a new account, the employment insurance operating account; and the accumulated employment insurance surpluses are eliminated finally and permanently, with retroactive effect to January 1, 2009.

The employment insurance surplus, amounting to more than \$57 billion on March 31, 2009, will disappear for good.

That was not enough. Lifting the freeze on premium rates in 2011 as set out in the bill will not even improve the system. The government will help itself to surpluses estimated at \$19 billion between 2011 and 2015. It is appalling that they will penalize the workers of Quebec and Canada like this.

Out of respect for the people of my riding of Alfred-Pellan, I will vote against this budget, which clearly does not meet their needs and in fact works against their development and progress. In fact, I would like to see all members of this House from Quebec show some solidarity at this crucial moment and oppose this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely correct in his analysis of Bill C-9. We have an omnibus bill which is 880 pages long; it has to be a record. The government is adding in all sorts of measures that have nothing whatsoever to do with budget implementation. More to the point, they are measures the Conservatives have been trying to get through the House for the last two years.

For example, on the post office remailer issue, the government introduced Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 over the last two years. The Conservatives brought those bills to the House, debated them, but could not get them through the House, so they simply have seized the opportunity while the Liberals are sleeping to stick it into this huge omnibus bill and ram it through the House. That is the way the government is approaching the legislative agenda today and it is absolutely wrong. It is the wrong way to proceed.

I would like to ask the member for his comments.

• (1340)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Carrier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for raising this point. Clearly, the six parts of this bill that really should

be separate bills are inconsistent with a normal democratic system. We should be able to amend every bill, taking into account the various procedures, so we can take the time to hear witnesses and propose amendments to ensure that bills really meet the needs of the public.

Our system is working very poorly because the official opposition has already announced that it will support the budget implementation bill. It is giving in to the will of the government, which can now do whatever it likes.

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech and for pointing out the complacency and, even worse, the fact that the Liberals are again sitting on their hands when it comes to this budget. What is even more pernicious, in addition to the fact that they are keeping the Conservatives in power, is that it allows the Conservatives to add all the elements mentioned by the member because they know that the Liberals will let the budget pass. The bill will, among other things, deregulate the postal service and confirm the pillage of the employment insurance fund. These are elements that should not be in a budget, which has become an omnibus budget bill, as previously stated by my colleague from Hochelaga, our finance critic.

As my colleague asked, why do the Liberals not realize this? Yesterday, they could have voted for the amendments to withdraw these pernicious elements from Bill C-9. They at least would have taken a stand. They have again shown that they are incapable of doing so.

Mr. Robert Carrier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to again thank my colleague for his question. The fact that the official opposition, which is the largest party in opposition, is already announcing that it will not vote against this bill, undermines the foundations of the functioning of the parliamentary system, which requires that every bill must be studied on its merits. There is a leadership problem in the opposition across the country. The opposition is theoretical and virtual and does not fulfil its full role in our democratic system.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, but I am also deeply disappointed. This bill to implement one of the most important aspects of the parliamentary cycle—the budget—and to formalize this defining moment is something of a lost opportunity. The government had a golden opportunity to reposition Canada's economy as a 21st century economy that focuses on the future and will outstrip the past 30, 40 or 50 years during which our economic activity was heavily dependent on the oil industry.

The government decided to shelve the green revolution that Canada needs to restructure the economy and create the value-added jobs of the future, many of which are green jobs. Instead, the government chose to remain in the stone age of economic development and cling to its reliance on the oil industry, which is located primarily in the west, as is its political base.

Government Orders

Today's initiatives concern the budget presented a few months ago, which proved that the government's economic choices were essentially political, partisan choices made in the interest of the party's political base in Saskatchewan and Alberta, choices that penalize most other regions of Canada, especially those that rely on manufacturing. Manufacturing, this country's second economic driver, particularly in Quebec and Ontario, has been penalized over the past few years by Canada's policy of promoting fossil fuels, thereby causing the Canadian dollar to rise. Canadian manufacturing exporters have been victims of what is known as the Dutch disease, a phenomenon that Holland experienced and that Canada is going through, too.

Canada's dollar rose largely because of choices about natural resources. Canada and Quebec are being penalized by the government's economic choices made at the expense of the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

Instead, especially when Canada will be hosting the G8 and G20, we would have expected our country to answer the call that came from the UN on October 22, 2008, asking the G8 nations to come up with a green new deal by developing initiatives to promote investment in clean technologies and natural resources.

This green economy initiative was designed to create green jobs and to develop policies and market instruments that could expedite a transition to a sustainable economy. Moreover, the UN has given countries 24 months, until October 22, 2010, to come up with a plan. But judging by the discussions at the UN, the Prime Minister is refusing to give the fight against climate change a prominent place on the agenda for the G8 and G20. Yet climate change is one of the most important issues of the century, because it is causing other crises, such as food and financial crises.

• (1345)

One day, we are going to have to understand that as long as we do not tackle climate change head-on, the food crisis in developing countries will escalate. Canada's lack of leadership on climate change at the G8 summit is disappointing, and it shows that as soon as the Conservatives came to power, they decided to give up on the fight against climate change. We know what happened. We found out last week when Environment Canada released a report stating that by the time the Kyoto deadline arrives, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions will have increased by 30% over 1990 levels.

That is the problem. Canada could have included a number of initiatives in its budget. Moreover, we had made pre-budget proposals calling for Canada's economy to be converted to a sustainable, greener economy. What did we propose? First, we did not propose reinventing a number of programs. We said that existing programs, programs the government had cut and programs that were underfunded should all be enhanced.

That is the case with the ecoauto program, for example, which gave financial incentives to citizens wanting to purchase more fuel-efficient vehicles. What did the government do? It refused to agree with us and use an existing tool, taxation, to encourage greener forms of transportation. We also said that the government, again using this fiscal instrument, could give financial incentives to a number of businesses. That is the case with renewable energy. We proposed improving the wind power production incentive program

under which, in the past, the federal government would pay 1¢ for every kilowatt hour of energy produced by wind. It was a federal contribution, using this fiscal instrument, to help the economy shift towards a carbon-free economy. Once again, the government turned a deaf ear.

And what is happening now? We have learned that in Quebec, for example, businesses in Bromont's wind-energy sector are closing down simply because the government decided against offering tax incentives. But things south of the border are booming. And American President Barack Obama has decided to invest in energy sources of the future, to pursue this new economic revolution—the clean technology revolution—and use his federal budget to invest more than 10 times more per capita in energy efficiency and the fight against climate change. While the American economy is transforming itself, the Canadian economy is killing time and, when it comes to economic development, has decided to stay in the stone age. But at what expense? At the expense of economic sustainability. And this will ensure that the jobs of tomorrow will not be value-added jobs. We have to use what I call the fiscal instrument to convert our economy.

However, the government has another instrument at its disposal, and that is regulation. The government could adopt regulations that force our economy to be more sustainable. It started to do so by regulating motor vehicles. For 10 years, we have been calling on the House of Commons to amend motor vehicle manufacturing standards to match the ones that exist in California. We are happy to see that the government is going along with our proposal. Quebec initiated this harmonization a few months ago. Quebec was criticized by the Minister of the Environment.

• (1350)

All of a sudden, the minister is saying that Quebec was right. The standards will now be harmonized with those in California.

In conclusion, I want to say that it is possible to present a federal budget that aims to make our economy carbon-free. If we do not do it, our neighbours to the south will. And our competitiveness will be the first to suffer. At the end of the day, it is the workers who will see new jobs created, but they will be so-called carbon jobs with no added value.

• (1355)

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his very clear speech on taxation, which could be much greener.

Statements by Members

I would also like to ask him what he thinks of the initiatives the government has taken, which, I believe, have come up short and will not necessarily deliver what the government was hoping. This is particularly true in the case of biofuels. A huge amount of money has been invested, but will that really produce the desired results?

There is also what the government wanted to develop with regard to the capture and storage in the ground of oil companies' CO₂ emissions. A great deal of money is being spent on this technology. Will this change the tax situation in our country?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I will begin with the first question.

We have learned from the Environment Canada report released last Friday that the measures introduced by the federal government in recent years have not actually led to any greenhouse gas reductions. That is the Canadian tragedy. That is the federal tragedy. The approach presented by the federal government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions does not produce any results. For a government that has been in power for a few years now and wanted to maximize every dollar invested in the fight against climate change, the truth is, it has failed.

As for carbon capture and sequestration, the Conservatives are asking us to finance an oil industry that is making huge profits. Now they want to use tax measures to finance their carbon capture and sequestration project. It is completely unacceptable. Instead, we must reinvest in renewable energy sources and not give huge incentives—nearly \$64 billion since 1970—to an industry that is making huge profits.

It does not make sense. It goes against sustainable development practices and is not the way to achieve a greener economy in the next 10 or 20 years.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on this World Oceans Day, I imagine that the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie's opinion on Bill C-9 is surely motivated by the increasing concern for the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the estuary, with respect to oil and gas development. I would like to hear what he has to say about this because Bill C-9 opens the door to a laissez-faire approach that, in my opinion, is very dangerous.

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Mr. Speaker, I will use my two remaining minutes. There is a risk with Bill C-9. What does it do in terms of oil and gas drilling projects, especially in offshore areas? It transfers responsibility from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to the National Energy Board. It means that an economic department is going to conduct environmental assessments. That is the current risk. It is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse. We must remember the events in the United States. When an economic office is responsible for the environmental assessment of projects, the ecosystems will definitely be in danger.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

VETERANS

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our military veterans are the pride of Canada for their selfless service in

our defence and they have much to teach us. However, time is marching and the lessons to be learned from the experiences of our World War II veterans risk being lost with their passing. That is why I have invited the Historica-Dominion Institute's memory project to my riding of Wild Rose this summer.

Later this month, the memory project will interview veterans in Wild Rose to record their first-hand stories as well as their wartime artifacts and memorabilia for a digitized archive. These veterans' stories will afterwards be available on line at thememoryproject.com for teachers, students and the general public to learn from and enjoy.

Canadians deserve a permanent record of their country's participation in the second world war as seen through the eyes of our veterans.

I am pleased that our veterans in Wild Rose will have the opportunity to contribute to this memory project.

* * *

● (1400)

FIFA WORLD CUP

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 2010 Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup in South Africa June 11 to July 11.

Call it soccer, football or footie, this game is the most popular sport in the world and one of the most popular in Canada. The FIFA World Cup is the most widely watched sporting event in the world. Seven hundred and fifteen million people watched the tournament in 2006.

Sadly our Canadian team did not qualify for 2010, so young players, get ready for 2014. It will be Canada's turn. Instead I will cheer this year for my country of birth, South Africa, the first African nation to ever host the World Cup.

The World Cup is a celebration of athletic participation and excellence and, most important, it displays the world's cultural diversity. Through sport, our young people grow healthier, our communities grow stronger and the nations of the world grow closer.

As the Liberal critic for amateur sport, I invite parliamentarians to join me in wishing all the competing teams and players in South Africa the very best of luck.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

EDUCATION IN QUEBEC

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois, the Parti Québécois, the NDP, unions and French-language-defence groups have joined together to oppose the Government of Quebec's Bill 103. This bill is a threat to education in French and to the integration model based on the French-language public education system.

If it were passed, Bill 103 would give parents the opportunity to buy the right for their children to go to school in English, provided that one of the children has spent three years in an unsubsidized, private English-language school. Although students will be required to attend these bridging schools for a longer period, the problem is still there. As odious as it is, only the rich will be able to pay to get around the Charter of the French Language.

I urge the public to defend our language, to defend the model of integration through education in French, and to come out en masse to the various demonstrations that will be held against Bill 103.

The Bloc Québécois will never accept a bill that would weaken French, our common language.

* * *

[English]

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has the longest coastline on Earth and I rise today to draw attention to World Oceans Day. As Canadians watch the gulf coast catastrophe unfold, it becomes overwhelmingly evident that concrete action must be taken now to protect our oceans.

As New Democrat oceans critic, I acknowledge the government's announcements today to add two new areas of interest. However, as the ministers realize, it takes a long time to go from the AOI stage to becoming an actual marine protected area, a status for which the Race Rocks AOI has been waiting for years. It also requires dedicated resources, funds that will ensure our oceans from the Pacific to the Arctic to the Atlantic are protected. It is unacceptable that 1% of our marine protected waters have been protected to date.

In order to reach our goal of a complete and comprehensive marine protected area system by 2012, I call on all members of the House to honour our national and international commitments to protect our oceans.

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FORT MCMURRAY AIRPORT

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, northern Alberta is a major contributor to Canada's economy. The Fort McMurray Airport is the fastest growing airport in North America. In the last five years it has grown from 200,000 to 700,000 passengers annually.

Approximately 350 flights leave the northern Alberta oil sands every week for destinations all around Canada. Most of the passengers are oil sands workers who take home over \$100,000 a year and these paycheques are not spent in northern Alberta. The

money goes to their families in Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and all over Canada.

Northern Alberta is the economic engine of Canada. Our region provides 6% of Canada's GDP and creates over 250,000 direct jobs throughout the country. What we hear through the grapevine is not always the truth. People do not understand the good, responsible environmental work that the oil sand companies are doing there.

Canada needs northern Alberta, just like northern Alberta needs Canada. Instead of criticizing, I invite everyone to come and see for themselves the truth of what is happening in the oil sands.

* * *

● (1405)

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is Tourism Week in Canada, but with both the ideological cuts to festivals and the harsh Mexican visa requirements, it seems that the Conservative government wants to spoil the party.

Tourism generates \$71 billion in annual revenue and \$20.8 billion in revenue for the government. Yet our tourism industry continues to get no respect from a government that puts ideology ahead of economics again and again.

In fact, the government would rather spend millions building a G8 media centre that will not actually host the media or gazebos and toilets hours away from the summit. Yet when it comes to shelling out \$400,000 to help make Toronto's pride more accessible, all of a sudden the government cannot possibly afford it.

For all these bad decisions, I should tell the government to go jump in a lake, but it would probably spend millions on building one just to show me up.

Canada's tourism industry deserves better.

* * *

CALEDON FAIR

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the 150th anniversary of the Caledon Fair. This annual celebration of agriculture, community and family has become a cherished tradition for the residents of Dufferin—Caledon and surrounding areas.

Since the fair first began in 1860, it has honoured agricultural excellence and represents all that is rural Canada. Today families can still enjoy livestock shows and home craft displays. However, new and exciting additions to the fair include the Caledon Idol, truck and tractor pulls and a midway.

Statements by Members

I would like to sincerely thank and congratulate the Caledon Agricultural Society, especially Anne Ward and Clarence Pinkney, as well as the directors, members, volunteers and our community for successfully and enthusiastically preserving this family tradition for 150 years. Their efforts, hard work and dedication are deeply appreciated.

I encourage everyone to travel to Caledon Village on the weekend of June 11 to 13 to enjoy some outstanding family fun.

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[Translation]

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is World Oceans Day. Although the concept was proposed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the day has been celebrated every year since, the UN General Assembly officially declared June 8 as World Oceans Day in 2009.

The goal of World Oceans Day is to raise global awareness of the threats to our oceans and the resources they contain. The day also promotes sustainable stewardship of oceans and their resources by mobilizing governments and people to preserve the ocean and its riches.

It is to be hoped that governments everywhere, and especially the government opposite, will make a greater effort to better manage our oceans and their resources, which sustain coastal communities around the world, including the communities in Gaspé and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine my riding.

It is therefore imperative that Newfoundland comply with Quebec's request for a moratorium on oil and gas drilling.

* * *

[English]

WORLD OCEANS DAY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate UN World Oceans Day, a time for all Canadians to consider the importance of oceans to life on our planet. Today people around the world celebrate our oceans, raise awareness about their importance and acknowledge our connection to the sea.

[Translation]

The Government of Canada is committed to preserving our oceans and our marine environments. We are doing so by establishing a national network of marine protected areas and designating new national wildlife areas. We are committed to protecting fragile lands, waters and species.

Our Canada is enhanced by the vital natural resources provided by its three oceans, which also provide employment for many Canadians.

I hope all my colleagues will join me in accepting our responsibility for preserving our oceans for the benefit of our children and future generations.

[English]

MICROCREDIT LENDING

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to thank all members of the House for their unanimous support for my motion of today, which asks the government to provide additional funding for microcredit lending to the world's poorest people, those surviving on less than \$1.25 a day.

Two months ago, I attended a microcredit conference in Kenya, featuring such leaders in the field as Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus. That experience, plus visits to the slums of Nairobi, convinced me that microcredit could make an important contribution to alleviating world poverty.

[Translation]

I would like to extend my warmest thanks to the fifteen or so members from all parties who have supported my motion from the outset, particularly the leaders of the three opposition parties as well as the Minister of Finance and the Minister of International Cooperation. Sometimes we can work together in this House.

[English]

Yes, sometimes we can work together in this place.

* * *

● (1410)

IMMIGRATION CONSULTANTS

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our Conservative government is fulfilling a campaign promise to crack down on crooked immigration consultants who victimize those who dream of coming to Canada by stealing their money, providing bad immigration advice and encouraging them to lie to Canada's immigration officers.

The cracking down on crooked consultants bill would make it a crime for unauthorized individuals to provide immigration advice for a fee and would punish them by up to two years in prison and a \$50,000 fine if found guilty.

The government is also responding to the concerns regarding the Canadian Society of Immigration Consultants, whose directors have been accused of being in financial conflicts of interest, retaliating against legitimate consultants who criticize them, and running the organization without any transparency and for their own financial gain.

I hope Parliament passes these changes expeditiously and protects those who dream of immigrating to Canada from crooked immigration consultants.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for 25 years Grace Collins has served Victoria's special needs community. Since being diagnosed with cancer in 2007, she has applied for CPP disability twice and she has been denied twice.

Undergoing treatment and unable to work, she is disappointed that there is no compassionate consideration for people in her position, and I share her disappointment. My office has advocated time and time again on behalf of constituents like Grace with so-called episodic illnesses. No doubt offices of other members have too.

We know there is a serious policy gap here, and finally, a solution has been proposed. Introduced yesterday, Bill C-526 would extend medical EI to up to 52 weeks for people living with serious illnesses so they can focus on their recovery.

I urge the government to take action and work with us on this long overdue issue.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today our government is taking action and introducing a bill that will protect those who dream of becoming Canadian citizens from the dishonest and unscrupulous activities of crooked immigration consultants.

Canada is chosen as a destination by thousands of people who wish to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Although the Government of Canada treats all immigration applications the same, a large number of applicants choose to hire an immigration consultant to help them through the process.

Although the majority of immigration consultants are honest and legitimate, there are some crooked consultants who take advantage of those who want to become Canadian citizens.

So our government is proposing to crack down on these crooked consultants who take advantage of vulnerable people wishing to become Canadian citizens and who abuse Canada's generosity.

Our government is taking the measures needed to better protect those who hope for a better life in Canada.

* * *

BILL C-9

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, budget implementation Bill C-9 alone amends 70 other statutes, some of which have nothing to do with the budget. The privatization of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited without requiring a debate in Parliament, the end of Canada Post's monopoly on certain services, and the intentional disappearance of the \$57 billion that the Conservative government owes the employment insurance fund are just a few examples of the amendments in Bill C-9.

By hiding his reforms in such a huge, indigestible bill, the Prime Minister is muzzling the public, which is struggling to sort everything out, and the hon. members, who cannot study these reforms with the attention and the diligence they deserve.

As *Le Devoir's* Manon Cornéliier points out, by creating this omnibus bill, the Prime Minister is bypassing debates and once again undermining the role and the authority of the people's representatives.

Statements by Members

This is yet another illustration of the Conservatives' lack of transparency and their contempt for parliamentary democracy.

* * *

[English]

SYDNEY HARBOUR

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government seems content to spend millions of dollars on a fake Muskoka in the middle of downtown Toronto while Cape Breton waits to get Sydney harbour dredged. The government should stop wasting money on false lakes and instead invest in a real water infrastructure that will not be drained after the G20.

The province, the private sector and the municipality are on board, but the federal government will not come to the table. The money needed to dredge this harbour means 15 minutes of G20 security, 15 minutes. My constituents are fuming mad to see the Conservatives wasting millions when they cannot even get a fraction of that amount to secure our economic future.

It is time for the Conservative government to come to its senses and stop dredging an indoor lake and dredge the Sydney harbour instead. This is a real project in a real harbour with real benefits. The Prime Minister should get real.

* * *

● (1415)

OPPOSITION COALITION

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last weekend the Liberal leader's new strategy became clearer. He will form a coalition government if given the opportunity following the next election.

The last time the Liberals tried to team with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP, the Liberal leader said, "I'm prepared to form a coalition government and to lead that government". This Liberal strategy is the same as the last one: run an election campaign by telling Canadians there would be no coalition, then after the election join forces with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois to overturn the results.

The Liberal leader's plan remains unacceptable to Canadians. It is not acceptable to ignore an election result and install a party and a leader rejected by the voters. It is not acceptable to give the NDP co-management of the economy and it is not acceptable to share power with the political party committed to the breakup of this country.

Canadians need no further proof the Liberal leader is not in it for Canadians, he is just in it for himself.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***G8 AND G20 SUMMITS**

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are paying \$1 billion for the G8 and G20 summits, and are getting nothing in return, except a fake lake. The amount of taxpayer money being wasted on this event is shocking.

Why is the Prime Minister telling other countries how to manage their money, when he is wasting the money of Canadian taxpayers?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the security measures are the same as those taken for other summits. Canada is in one of the strongest fiscal positions in the world. Obviously, we are working with our G20 partners to improve the very serious debt situations in several countries.

[English]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what do fake lakes, gazebos and boats that do not float have to do with security? The issue is not just the waste of money, it is that the summit promises to deliver so little on climate change, on women's rights, on jobs and growth. This summit looks like a billion dollar speed bump on the road to the real summit which will be in Korea at the end of this year.

How can the Prime Minister justify this expense for so little possible result?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a historic change of position for the Liberal Party to be against a multilateral process such as this. The G20 has been key in the world's response including in Canada's response to the recession we have avoided at present by taking a series of strong measures on stimulus, on regulation of the financial sector. There are still very real challenges around the world that the G20 summit will be addressing. Canada's positions are well known. We are optimistic about the outcomes.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives can try to justify these expenses, but it just does not add up. Canadians are asking simple questions such as, "We spent \$1 billion and all we got was this lousy fake lake?" That is not the end of it. They are asking about the agenda. There is no progress on key issues. Many issues are not even on the agenda.

Canadians wanted leadership and what they got was a fake lake. How does the Prime Minister explain this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the summit has not happened, so it would be a bit early to speculate on its outcomes.

The opposition is obviously throwing around a bunch of falsehoods. For instance, yesterday the opposition said that there is a \$2 million lake when in fact what there is is a \$2 million marketing pavilion. There are thousands of visitors from around the world. This is a classic attempt for us to be able to market the country. We have quotes from all kinds of people in the Ontario tourism industry, including the president of that industry, saying that this is our chance to profile Ontario tourism to the world and we must not miss this opportunity.

● (1420)

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now it is a marketing pavilion, as if that changes anything.

Having run up the biggest deficit in Canadian history, the Conservative way to welcome journalists to meetings on fiscal restraint is to put them around a 72-hour fake lake in downtown Toronto, complete with a Jumbotron the size of a house to watch soccer. Even Conservatives are balking at the growing list of waste. The Prime Minister's former campaign manager and mentor said that the costs are indefensible. He said he is glad he is not paid "to spout that kind of nonsense".

With so many real priorities underfunded or cut by the Conservative government, how can the Prime Minister justify this waste of money?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, media are reporting widely, and obviously incorrectly, that the cost apparently of this artificial lake, which is a small part of the experience Canada exhibit, is \$1.9 million.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, and to colleagues, building costs for the water feature are \$57,000.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, even if it \$57,000, that is more than the annual income of 40% of Canadian families.

The fake lake and accessories will cost \$2 million; dancers, fiddlers and flowers will cost \$20 million; a boat will cost \$40,000; distant gazebos and bathrooms will cost \$300,000. There is an unlicensed security firm and even a fake lighthouse.

Now Toronto, too, gets something. Calling it their signature environmental initiative, the Conservatives are leaving a giant wall of plants, the cost of which they buried under the fake lake.

What else are they hiding? How much more crazy does this thing get?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are receiving and welcoming a large number of reporters. We are receiving a large number of heads of government, of leaders from around the world. We are using this opportunity to showcase Canada. We are telling Canada's story. We are proud of what we have done. We are proud of what we are doing. We are proud of being able to promote Canada abroad and we will continue to do it with this amount of money.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a subpoena was issued over a week ago for the Prime Minister's press secretary, Dimitri Soudas, to testify before a parliamentary committee. Since then, Mr. Soudas has been avoiding the bailiff, who has been unable to hand-deliver the order to appear. The Prime Minister is responsible for ensuring that people obey the law, and he should start with his own staff.

Will the Prime Minister call his press secretary to order? If he does not, we will be forced to conclude that the Prime Minister and his political staff hold the law in contempt.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members of our political staff are accountable to us, and we, as ministers, are accountable to Parliament. My chief of staff has already answered these questions.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is not up to the Prime Minister to decide what constitutes the law. He, like any other citizen, must obey the law.

By authorizing his press secretary not to testify before the committee, the Prime Minister is condoning breaking the law. He is doing the same thing with the gun registry by looking the other way when gun owners refuse to register their weapons.

Does the Prime Minister realize that he is creating two classes of citizens: those who must obey the law and those who are above it? He seems to think that he should be the one to decide who fits into each class. That is not very democratic at all.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our system, ministers are accountable to Parliament for their actions. If the Bloc leader has questions, he can ask the Prime Minister. He should have the courage to do that instead of trying to intimidate the Prime Minister's staff.

• (1425)

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, to put an end to this cat and mouse game with the Prime Minister's director of communications, the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics passed a motion whereby it now considers that Dimitri Soudas has been summoned to appear. The Prime Minister and his director can no longer hide: they must be accountable.

Will the Prime Minister stop obstructing parliamentary committees and order his employee to appear before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows very well that for hundreds of years, the principle of ministerial accountability has been paramount here in the House and in its committees. We will continue to respect that principle in order to improve and build a Canada where politicians are accountable.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my colleague that the law is the law, and no one is above the law.

The government's game is very clear. It is creating a crisis to be able to say that Parliament is not working, while failing to mention that it is the one responsible for the crisis. The height of cynicism in this whole affair will probably be when Dimitri Soudas reappears after his weeks-long game of hide-and-seek and the government announces a prorogation or election because Parliament cannot do its work.

Is that not the government's game, creating an artificial crisis to serve its own partisan interests?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome back the Prime Minister from his save the banks tour. Too bad he could not spend as much time saving the mothers and children of the world as he did saving the banks, but I guess that is what happens when one reopens the abortion debate.

We also hope that he brought back Dimitri Soudas, his director of communications, because there is a subpoena waiting for him. Could the Prime Minister tell us whether he is going to ensure that his communications director obeys the law, receives the subpoena, and shows up where he is supposed to, to be accountable to the House of Commons?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me reply to the preamble of that question.

What we are doing is ensuring that the Canadian banking system, which is the strongest in the world, is protected from unfair punitive measures. Canadian consumers and the Canadian economy have paid the price of a strong regulatory system that protected us through this crisis. We will not allow this country, its consumers or its families to be penalized for doing what is right.

We have a strong sector in this country. We are going to protect it.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is protecting the banks with such huge corporate tax cuts that they can give themselves and their executives billions of dollars in bonuses that would be enough to deal with the women and children's health crisis.

[Translation]

He is setting a bad example by wasting public funds to make the G20 a three-day party beside a fake lake. There is no excuse and the government's explanations do not hold up.

Does the Prime Minister realize this?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the money is not being spent on a fake lake. The money is being spent on a pavilion to promote tourism in Canada. It is supported by all the spokespersons of that industry. This is an unparalleled opportunity given that thousands of guests from Canada and abroad will be attending. We intend to promote tourism in our country.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that fake lakegate is infuriating Canadians. That is because the Conservatives went and put a conference in a place that it would not fit, so they are now having to scramble with TV screens and fake lakes.

Instead of doing that and spending money on these things, they could have, for example, made sure that Inuit mothers had a place to go in their own communities to give birth.

Instead of throwing \$1 billion at building barriers around the city because they chose that location, they could have invested in strong maternal health globally and taken some real leadership.

Why—

• (1430)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, as we have said, the vast majority of costs are for security arrangements that are similar to other summits and these are essential.

That said, when it comes to housing for people in the north, when it comes to health care for Canadians, when it comes to maternal and child health around the world, this government is investing.

Unfortunately, whenever we do so, the NDP takes pride in voting against every single one of these measures. For once we would like to see the NDP stand up in this House and actually vote for something that helps real people.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the face of public anger over the G8 wasteful spending, the Minister of Industry first tried to whitewash the \$400,000 restoration for a sunken steamboat, saying it was not a G8 project, that it came from a different slush fund. Then yesterday, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said the project received no federal money at all.

Confusion along with mismanagement reigns supreme with this government. Is the minister saying he cancelled funding for the SS *Bigwin* or is it an attempt to mislead Canadians on this Conservative billion dollar boondoggle?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister just mentioned, a large part of these expenses are related to security features and security factors. That is important.

There is also an important amount of money that has been addressed, much in the same way as we have done so through the economic action plan, Canada's plan to ensure that this government and this country picks up and ensures that we do not fall back into a recession.

We have stimulated the economy. That is part of those projects that are available from coast to coast for every government to be able to fund. We have done that.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not all. The Minister of Foreign Affairs also denied that G8 funds went to washrooms located 20 kilometres away

from the summit site. Yet, a June 2009 announcement by the Minister of Industry clearly stated the washrooms received \$270,000 of federal money from the G8 infrastructure fund.

Instead of misleading Canadians, when will the government come clean on this Conservative billion dollar boondoggle?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have just explained to my colleagues in this House that indeed, we were able to come forward with infrastructure money to ensure that through Canada's economic action plan we were able to fund projects that have been presented by communities and regional governments.

We have partnered with them, much in the same way as we have partnered with governments from coast to coast to coast to ensure that Canada's economic action plan functions correctly and ensures that we do create the jobs, and we get on the right side of our economic—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. There seems to be excessive noise in the House today. It is very difficult to hear the responses and the questions. I would urge hon. members to restrain themselves a little. It is only Tuesday. The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, their justification for this wasteful lake is completely ridiculous. The Minister of Industry says that this lake is a reflection of Canada. That is ridiculous. This lake is a reflection of Conservative waste, and all this waste reflects the Conservatives' incompetence and partisanship. It is quite frankly shameful.

Who needs this fake lake inside a convention centre? Who can justify this \$2 million expense? That is ridiculous.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the project my colleague referred to cost \$57,000. It is part of a series of programs to promote the country during the visit by these heads of state.

We are doing this because we are proud to showcase the attractions that have made Canada renowned throughout the world and we want to ensure that we can do so—

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now understand the origin of the biggest financial mess in Canadian history, the \$1 billion mess, the Conservative mess. We could have built three coliseums in Quebec City with the billion dollars.

All that money for a summit that will ignore Canadians' priorities because of the Prime Minister's program that denies both climate change and women's right to choose.

Why are they being so arrogant with taxpayers' money?

Oral Questions

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during these two summits, Canada will be welcoming news media, heads of government and delegations. We are seizing this opportunity to promote our country. That is what we are doing and we are doing it in such a way that we will put Canada's best foot forward. That does have a cost. There are costs associated with security, and we are paying those costs.

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POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in October 2009, the Conservatives claimed to have burned its bridges to Giulio Maturi, a political organizer with a checkered past. But we have learned that this individual is still involved with the Conservative Party. He was involved in organizing a fundraising brunch in Pierrefonds last weekend. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was the keynote speaker.

How can the Prime Minister's political lieutenant explain the clandestine return of Mr. Maturi, a political organizer whose schemes have been condemned?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague was telling the truth. Mr. Maturi has not been employed by the Conservative Party since October 2009 or even earlier.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is no question that he is no longer working for them. But he does organize fundraising cocktail parties.

In the past, in the Labonté affair, Maturi was denounced for wanting to have the salaries of four political organizers paid for by private companies. We also remember that he was mixed up in Senator Carignan's shady funding and in a fundraising activity that led to the Federal Bridge Corporation in Montreal awarding a contract to a firm linked to Conservative Senator Housakos.

How can the Conservatives cozy up to an organizer who has been involved in—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the answer is simple: Mr. Maturi is not employed by the Conservative Party.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government has decided to impress its G8 and G20 friends by spending \$1.9 million to create a fake lake in the middle of Toronto and project bucolic scenes on a giant screen so that journalists who are covering the event but cannot get to Muskoka can imagine themselves out in the country.

Does the government realize it makes no sense to spend so much money to tell people to tighten their belts?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Experience Canada space covers a total area of 22,000 square feet. The total cost of building this facility is

\$1.9 million. Building costs for the water feature are \$57,000. Experience Canada will welcome more than 3,000 media representatives and other guests and, as I said, unlike the Bloc, we are proud to promote Canada.

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the priceless Minister of Veterans Affairs, this is an opportunity to show off for foreign visitors. To the minister, the G8 and G20 facilities are tourist attractions in themselves.

Is the minister aware that by touting these summits as entertainment, he is ignoring the real issues, which include maternal health and the environment?

• (1440)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are going to welcome the world to the G8 and G20. We are doing what all the other governments and all the other countries that host such summits and events do, which is promote our country. What we are doing is quite normal. We have spent money on marketing and promoting our event, we are proud of our country, and we are going to promote it appropriately.

* * *

[English]

OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada has recognized the principle that polluters should pay for damages they cause.

As a result of the gulf disaster, BP's costs are already close to \$2 billion. However, on Canada's east coast, deposits are only \$30 million and there is no strict liability. This could leave Canadian taxpayers exposed to billions in liabilities.

Why has the minister failed to take any action to protect taxpayers and ensure that oil companies assume 100% of the cleanup costs and damages?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we have a solid liability regime here in Canada. There is absolute liability, and companies must provide guarantees. Every project is subject to very thorough assessment by an independent agency, the National Energy Board. On the east coast, it is the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board.

One thing is certain: there will be no drilling projects unless and until these independent agencies are convinced that the environment and the health and safety of workers will be protected.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the lame responses we keep hearing from the minister, it is no wonder Canadians have no confidence in the government's competence to deal with a major spill. The minister keeps repeating that companies file safety and environmental plans. Maybe the minister should check how well that worked with BP in the gulf.

We need a plan to protect Canadians, not a minister who will not accept his responsibilities. The government relaxed the regulations last year. Why does it no longer require backup plans for relief wells?

[Translation]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague should look at the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act, because that is exactly how the law works; it is not like what is going on in the Gulf of Mexico.

Members must look at the facts and look at what the National Energy Board has done to improve our regulations, which are already solid. The offshore petroleum board, in the east, implemented special measures on May 20, 2010. That is action. Yes, there are emergency plans and backup plans that can be submitted by companies and operators in case of disaster. The regulations are already quite strict. No project will operate until—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

* * *

SHELL CANADA

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Montreal's petrochemical industry supports thousands of jobs. Closing the Shell refinery puts 500 direct jobs at risk in the eastern part of the island, yet the Prime Minister and his band of Quebec bashers do nothing. Some 500 families are in trouble and this does not even bother the Conservatives. After all, they have already rejected Quebec.

Do the Conservatives at least plan to respect the general boycott on Shell this Friday?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been extremely active on this file. We are following the matter very closely. Like everyone else, we hope Shell will find a buyer to save the refinery. We feel for the workers and what they are going through, and negotiations are still ongoing. We will follow this matter closely.

* * *

QUEBEC WORKERS

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess the answer to the boycott is no.

The Conservative government has made a point of disregarding Quebec's values and interests when it comes to maternal health, the gun registry, French in the Supreme Court and the environment. It has done nothing about job losses in the petrochemical industry, just as it did nothing to help the forestry industry.

What has the Conservative government done to protect the interests of Quebec workers?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the union itself said that we were very active on this file.

The member wants to talk about the forestry sector. Her party, the Liberal Party, was the one that objected to the softwood lumber agreement that brought no less than \$1 billion back to sawmills in this country and will ensure legal stability for years to come.

She says that we do not care about jobs, but she is the one who should be ashamed.

* * *

● (1445)

*[English]***IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the 2008 election campaign, our Conservative Party promised that if re-elected we would crack down on crooked immigration consultants. We repeated that promise in the throne speech.

Would the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism please inform this House on steps the Conservative government is taking to protect those who dream of immigrating to Canada from crooked immigration consultants?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year, thousands of would-be immigrants and visitors to Canada are exploited by unethical, crooked immigration consultants who sometimes take thousands of dollars from people, exploiting their dream of coming to Canada, and return no services or, even worse, counsel people to commit fraud that hurts their chances of coming to Canada.

This government is taking action. We have introduced today Bill C-35, an act to crack down on crooked consultants and make it a crime, punishable with up to two years in prison, for people to act as consultants if they are not properly registered. We are also taking other measures to ensure a proper accounting of these—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

* * *

G8 AND G20 SUMMITS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the price tag for the Mad Hatter of Muskoka's private shindig keeps rising. We are now moving on to \$2 billion for a four day event. There is the gazebo, the Olympic hockey rink and the boat that will not float. Now the government is telling us that the fake lake will promote Canada on the international stage. We go from ShamWow to scamwow. The Conservative government is abusing the public purse for its personal ego projects.

Oral Questions

Will the Prime Minister take the flippers off the Muskoka maniac, pull him out of the fake lake and send him packing to the backbenches?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we ask for equal opportunity to showcase Canada and to showcase Ontario. We are using part of the budget to promote Canada and to ensure we do the marketing. Over 3,000 media and other officials, as well as heads of government and their delegations, will be here.

We want to seize this opportunity to ensure we tell everybody what Canada stands for, which is a very strong country that wants to attract investment here. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have reserves in my riding that are so poor they do not have schools or playground equipment and I see a minister who is blowing through taxpayer money like he has won the pork-barrel lottery. This is a question of professional integrity.

The Prime Minister promised accountability and trust, so either he did not know what was happening under his watch or he totally supports this misuse of money.

Is the Prime Minister willing to take action or is he going to continue to act like Captain Bligh on steamship Tony's ship of fools?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not the only one who talks about promoting Canada. I will quote Tim West, who is chairman of the board of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, who said, "Previous governments have staged tourism setups, so this not a new concept. From my perspective, we have way too much to gain with the G8 and G20 in Ontario and to minimize this tourism opportunity would be a mistake".

Every time we have tried to do something for Ontario, they voted against it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when asked about the attack by the Israeli army on a humanitarian aid flotilla, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that his government would not support a biased process. We completely agree. That is why we think, as does the international community, that the countries involved must not be both judge and judged in this inquiry.

Will the minister admit that the only way to ensure a credible and impartial process is to have an independent international inquiry?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I was saying yesterday, Canada has called for and obviously supports an impartial, credible and transparent inquiry. Canada is convinced that Israel's inquiry into this tragic incident will be impartial, credible and transparent.

• (1450)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, but will it be international? That is twice now that the government has refused to answer.

Will the government demand that the two UN Security Council resolutions—1850 and 1860—on humanitarian aid to Gaza be respected by Israel?

How can Canada hope to sit on the UN Security Council when it is unable to clearly support resolutions that are adopted there?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we remain concerned about the Gaza situation and the provision of humanitarian aid to meet the basic needs of the people. Canada understands Israel's legitimate concerns about security and terrorist threats against its people. The Gaza Strip, I remind the House, is controlled by Hamas, a terrorist organization, and Israel has every right to defend itself.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone here acknowledges the need to keep the Canadian Forces equipped with the best resources we can afford. However, the Conservatives have decided to sole source one of the biggest single contracts we have ever seen: \$9 billion for new fighter jets.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer has the floor.

Mr. Marcel Proulx: That is \$9 billion, Mr. Speaker, all of it borrowed. Given the government's track record with counting, it will probably be even more.

Why will the minister not allow an open bidding process so that Canadians get the best value for this borrowed money?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yes, this government has committed to replacing the next generation fighters. We are going ahead with many new purchases.

That is a question coming from the member opposite who is a member of a party that gutted the Canadian Forces and forced them into a decade of darkness, would not have bought the C-17 aircraft so useful in the humanitarian efforts in Haiti, was against the purchase of tanks now saving lives in Afghanistan and that sent our Canadian Forces ill-equipped into Afghanistan in forest green uniforms. We will take no lessons from the member opposite.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must ensure—

The Speaker: If we want to know more, we must be able to hear. The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Oral Questions

Mr. Marcel Proulx: Mr. Speaker, we must ensure that the \$9 billion is well spent, especially since it is borrowed money. The Procurement Ombudsman denounces the awarding of a sole source contract. It is even more worrisome when we have a government that is completely incapable of managing a budget.

Will the government undertake to use an open bidding process or will it spend the \$9 billion without any transparency, without any competition?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what this government will commit to is getting the best possible equipment at the best price to benefit Canadian industry.

Again, what is beyond ironic is that this is coming from a member of a party that cancelled the maritime helicopter program, costing our country almost \$1 billion. This is coming, as I said, from a member of a party that gutted the Canadian Forces during its time in office. This is the height of hypocrisy.

I would encourage the member, along with his party, to support the noble efforts of the men and women of the Canadian Forces who are doing us proud every day.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been a year since the integrated management plan for the Beaufort Sea was released.

The plan ensures that development of fragile Arctic waters is based on long-term sustainability and environmental protection. It was created in co-operation with the Inuvialuit environmental groups and industry and has been approved by all departments, yet the government continues to ignore it.

Today is World Oceans Day. Can the minister explain why this vital plan has been sitting on her desk for a year, unfunded and unauthorized?

• (1455)

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot in the north. The member knows it.

We are committed to improving our regulatory systems in the north. We have created legislative changes to improve regulatory processes and enhance environmental stewardship, with a strong voice for aboriginal people. We have recently appointed a federal negotiator to improve regulatory systems.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recognizing again that today is World Oceans Day, last week the House unanimously passed my motion calling for the government to conduct an immediate, thorough, and transparent review and revision of Canadian federal laws on the development of unconventional sources of oil and gas to ensure the strongest practicable Canadian environmental and safety rules.

Can the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development confirm that this review will include an examination of the law and policy on offshore leases in the Arctic?

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hearings, as I understand it, are taking place under the umbrella of the National Energy Board. It will obviously set the terms of reference and the context. It has a very strong, robust regulatory system.

We have had testimony before the committee from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which says that the National Energy Board has the skill base to have the strongest and most robust environmental legislation.

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FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the member for Ajax—Pickering missed an opportunity to table in the House his motion that would derail Bill C-391 and keep the long gun registry as is. Why is this? It seems that he was too busy playing political games and forgot.

The choice is clear on any vote on this wasteful, ineffective long gun registry. Either members vote to keep it or they vote to scrap it.

Can the Minister of Public Safety explain to opposition members why Canadians will not be fooled by their political games?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his effort to support our efforts to scrap the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry, and I thank him for that support.

While the member for Ajax—Pickering and others in the opposition continue to play political games, Canadians know that any vote on the long gun registry is clear. Members either vote to scrap it or they vote to keep it. It is as simple as that.

We call on all opposition members who voted in favour of Bill C-391 at second reading to listen to their constituents, not the Liberal leader and to scrap the long gun registry.

* * *

TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in rural Canada, especially in British Columbia, float planes are an essential and sometimes fragile mode of transportation. The devastating crash at Saturna Island, which killed six people, and the recent tragic loss of life at the first nations community of Ahousaht, appear to have finally attracted the attention and the rhetoric of the minister of transport, but still no action.

Points of Order

How many more tragedies will it take for the minister to address and implement the Transportation Safety Board's recommendation and actually do something to protect Canadians who rely on float planes for transportation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that we are deeply concerned about float plane safety. Our sympathies go to the families of those who recently lost their lives.

We recently put out a statement saying that we would review the various recommendations that have been in place and will do everything we reasonably can to ensure that Canadians are safe when they use this important mode of transportation, particularly on the west coast.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development knows that a developer is planning to build an apartment building on land claimed by the Mohawk community of Kanesatake. No one wants the current situation to deteriorate due to government complacency, as was the case in the 1990 Oka crisis.

Will the Prime Minister and the minister promise to restore the non-aboriginal property acquisition program to protect the lands claimed by first nations?

• (1500)

[*English*]

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we understand what is happening in Kanesatake, at Oka. We know that there have been Canada, first nation, local community, and provincial discussions. We also know that there is no escalation. There is no crisis. The eventual disposition of the land will be up to the local authorities.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the current government has repeatedly claimed concern about the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women. The throne speech highlighted Sisters in Spirit research, and budget 2010 promised \$10 million to address this tragedy. Yet it has been over three months, and no plan has been announced. Sisters in Spirit still has not been informed of any funding renewals.

When will the government announce its plan for spending the \$10 million? When will it finally start taking this problem seriously, and when will it take action to help aboriginal women in this country?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we take all incidents of crime in this country very seriously. I wish, for a change, that we would get the help of the NDP and other members of the opposition on many of these issues.

That being said, I was very pleased that there was over \$10 million in the most recent budget to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered aboriginal people. We are moving forward on this file, over a wide range of solutions and proposals.

We all have a stake in addressing this problem. I hope that this gets the support of all hon. members.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the year was 1992. The setting was the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Canada, under the leadership of then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, proposed a concept of a worldwide ocean day. Since then, World Oceans Day has been celebrated internationally on an annual basis.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment advise the House of the unprecedented and historic undertaking announced by this government on World Oceans Day?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a great question from the member for Nanaimo—Alberni. I want to thank him for his work on the environment.

Yesterday our government tabled an amendment that would create the Gwaii Haanas national marine conservation area reserve and Haida heritage site.

Canada will be the first country in the world to protect a region from the alpine treetops in the mountains to the depths of the ocean floor. This, along with the government's commitment to the creation of a national marine conservation area in Lancaster Sound, puts Canada among the great stewards of the planet's oceans.

I urge all members in the House to support the Gwaii Haanas, an achievement for all Canadians to be proud of.

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention an incident that occurred during oral question period.

After I answered a question, my colleague opposite, the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, with whom I usually have civilized and cordial exchanges, twice very clearly called me a liar. I do not know why. We often, if not always, disagree; however, we always have interesting and intelligent discussions. He clearly went too far by twice calling me a liar. I am requesting that he apologize to the House or that he immediately withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first, I did not ask a question in the House. Therefore, it was not in response to a question that I asked.

When the minister claimed that there was a monitoring plan for oil drilling, I stated, but not in the debate, that the plan did not exist, and I continue to believe that. Nevertheless, I withdraw my remarks.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1505)

[English]

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government and the good people of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission who support a strong Canadian economy, I rise in support of the jobs and economic growth bill.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth bill outline a positive and ambitious plan to strengthen Canada's economy, and a plan that is working. Indeed the IMF just forecasted Canada's economic growth to be at the head of the pack for the G7 and all countries with advanced economies this year and next year as well. The IMF also singled out Canada for praise, saying:

Canada entered the global crisis in good shape, and thus the exit strategy appears less challenging than elsewhere.

This follows an OECD report earlier this month also predicting Canada's economic growth will, by a wide margin, lead all G7 countries this year, so we are off to a good start this year.

Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew by 6.1% in the first quarter of 2010, representing both the strongest quarterly rate of economic growth in a decade and the strongest growth in the G7. What is even better, Canada's economy continues to create jobs. In fact, May represented the eighth month of job gains in the past ten months. In May we saw 24,000 jobs created. This follows a record-breaking 108,000 new jobs created in April. In fact, overall, since July of last year, Canada has created almost 310,000 new jobs.

Clearly our government is on the right track. Our economy is growing and we are creating jobs for Canadians, and it is being noticed around the world. The influential magazine *The Economist* recently called Canada "an economic star". The OECD said that Canada's economy "shines". Standard & Poor's, the world's premier credit rating agency, also said:

Of the other G7 countries...Canada is posting the best fiscal results. Canada also best weathered the financial crisis...is now well positioned to continue to outperform...

World leaders are also singling out Canada. U.S. President Barack Obama praised Canada, saying:

—in the midst of this enormous economic crisis, I think Canada has shown itself to be a pretty good manager of the financial system in the economy...And I think that's important for us to take note of...

This reinforces what we said all along. While not immune from the global recession, Canada's economy did enter it, but will exit it in the strongest position.

However, the global recovery remains fragile. We must stay on track to ensure that our economic recovery remains strong. Our top priority remains the economy and implementing Canada's economic

action plan to create jobs, lower taxes, foster growth and invest in better infrastructure.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth bill is one way our government is staying focused on the economy. I am here to speak about some of the budget 2010 measures that are laying the foundation for Canada's future economic prosperity.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth bill introduce measures that will help businesses access the financing they need to support the recovery, improve the framework of our financial sector and pursue a more forward-looking approach to protecting consumers of financial products and services.

Canada's financial sector has been widely acknowledged as one of the strongest in the world. The World Economic Forum, for example, rated Canada's banking system the soundest in the world. Well capitalized financial institutions and sound regulation have meant that financial institutions in Canada were better able to weather the global financial crisis than those in many other countries, perhaps all other countries. Over the past year, Canada's economic action plan provided measures to support financial institutions and the financial system in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. In particular, the global economic crisis made it difficult for Canadian banks and other lenders to obtain funds from international markets at reasonable costs.

To soften the impact of this crisis, Canada's economic action plan included measures to provide up to \$200 billion to support lending to Canadian households and businesses. This helped to keep credit flowing to Canadian consumers and businesses throughout the crisis and helped Canada's financial sector improve its global competitive advantage.

● (1510)

Nevertheless, ensuring that businesses of all sizes have adequate access to financing to acquire vehicles and equipment is increasingly important as the economic recovery matures.

Our government is not content to rest on our laurels. We are continuing to find ways to improve the financial sector framework.

As outlined in the jobs and economic growth bill, Canada is home to a strong and vibrant credit union industry that provides financial services to millions of Canadian consumers and small businesses. To promote the continued growth and competitiveness of the sector and enhance financial stability, the jobs and economic growth act, Bill C-9, will enable credit unions to incorporate and continue their operations as federal entities. Allowing credit unions to grow and be competitive on a national scale will broaden choices for consumers by helping credit unions to attract new members and improve services to existing members across provincial borders.

Why would we want to delay such a positive part of the jobs and economic growth act? We need to pass Bill C-9. Indeed, let us read what the Case for Progress Committee, a coalition of several credit unions such as B.C. credit unions FirstWest and Vancity, had to say about this measure.

It said that the federal government's plans to introduce legislation that would make it easier for credit unions to operate nationally was applauded and supported by committee, a group composed of credit unions across Canada. It said that the legislation would give Canadian credit unions more choices in their growth options by allowing them to operate outside their traditional provincial boundaries, and would also strengthen the credit union system. It said we were marking a "historic milestone" today, that this new legislation would benefit all Canadians by increasing their choices in selecting a financial institution. It would strengthen the stability and competitiveness of the entire financial services industry in Canada.

From my home province of B.C., Tracy Redies, president and CEO of Coast Capital Savings, praised these measures, saying that credit unions are:

—a very, very vibrant part of the financial services industry in Canada and I think the pending legislation will enable it to continue to grow and prosper and...that's good for Canada.

I agree with her.

If we go to the other side of the country, we can listen to Jamie Baillie, president and CEO of Credit Union Atlantic, who said, "this measure will promote the continued growth and competitiveness of the sector and enhance financial stability...This provides a framework for a more competitive banking system in Canada and will enable further growth of the credit union alternative".

Clearly, this measure is supported from coast to coast and deserves to be passed by the House.

However, this is not all the government is doing to support consumers and to promote the efficient functioning of the financial system. The Canadian payments system is a vital support to the economy, linking Canadians, merchants and financial institutions together and facilitating payment transactions through, for example, credit and debit card networks and clearing and settlement systems.

In November 2009 our government released for public comment a proposed code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry in Canada, which responds to issues raised by stakeholders in the debit and credit card markets. The code, which was developed in consultation with market participants, aims to promote fair business practices and ensure that merchants and consumers clearly understand the costs and benefits associated with credit and debit cards.

In April the government released the final code for voluntary adoption by the industry within a few weeks. To support adoption of the code, the jobs and economic growth act would provide the Minister of Finance with the authority to regulate the market conduct of the credit and debit card networks and their participants if necessary.

We have heard very positive responses since we announced it and participants have already agreed to sign on to the code. For instance, the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers, or CFGI, commented:

Government Orders

The Code of Conduct is a very positive step and we are very pleased to note that many of the concerns CFGI has raised on behalf of independent retail grocers, such as negative option billing practices, have been heard and responded to, by the government.

CFGI also welcomed the decision by the Minister to bring in legislation that will give the government the ability to regulate the market if the voluntary Code of Conduct does not work...the Code...provides retailers with choice and ensures that our members can continue to compete as important members of the food industry and the communities they serve across the country.

● (1515)

The Canadian Federation of Business, the CFIB, was also very supportive. Its president, Catherine Swift, said:

[The] Code constitutes an important step and is timely as we enter the summer season that is so vital to so many businesses, especially coming out of a recession. We are particularly pleased that government is being proactive in helping to lay the groundwork in advance of major expected campaigns on the part of Visa and MasterCard in the debit card industry. These developments will create a better future for merchants and help ensure a fair and transparent credit and debit card market instead of just letting large industry players call all the shots.

This part was confirmed at the finance committee hearings from the Retail Council of Canada when it said:

[We] commend the minister and the Government of Canada for establishing a card payment regulatory framework, and for equipping the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada with the tools it needs to monitor and enforce compliance with the code of conduct changes, changes that are both contained in Bill C-9.

As the Retail Council of Canada correctly pointed out, many of these important changes to help our small businesses will only take effect with the passage of the jobs and economic growth act, Bill C-9.

That is not all we are doing to safeguard our financial sector in the jobs and economic growth act. A few other measures we are taking include: amending the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act in order to enhance the government's ability to protect Canada's financial system from money laundering and terrorist financing activities; amendments to protect depositors in the event of an institution failure; extending the due date for filing annual GST returns from three months to six months after year-end for certain financial institutions; and much more.

While not as high profile, these measures are nonetheless important to the efficient functioning of our financial sector.

The global economic recession clearly demonstrated the importance of a strong, well-regulated financial sector. Around the world, Canadians were bombarded with news of bank failures and bailouts. In Canada, we did not have any bank failures or bailouts, showcasing the strength of our financial sector to the world.

As a result of our strong financial system, Canada is doing better than our G7 partners. We entered this recession later and are exiting it in a stronger position than our international peers.

Government Orders

For the average Canadian this means stronger economic growth and more jobs for Canadians. It means that for the first time in a generation, Canada's unemployment rate is nearly 1.5% lower than the United States. It means that when Canadians go to their local bank branch, they do not have to worry that their bank will close its doors to them.

Clearly the continued strength of our financial system is important for our government and Canadians. While our financial system is strong, we will not rest on our laurels, as I have said, but we will continue to move forward and find ways to further improve our financial system.

Budget 2010 and the jobs and economic growth act would do just that. The actions and measures in this legislation are important and contribute to a well-functioning financial system that meets the needs of Canadians and supports our future economic prosperity.

We must pass Bill C-9, the jobs and economic growth act, to help build our financial sector for the future and, in turn, create the jobs and economic growth that Canadians need and deserve.

• (1520)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member probably knows that whatever happens in the United States eventually spills over to Canada within six months to a year.

The member is also probably aware that there are people in the United States who are concerned about a double-dip recession. There is \$1.3 trillion in commercial loans coming due fairly soon. The commercial real estate market is collapsing in some areas. There is a freeze on credit for small business. The banks are classifying commercial loans as risky and are being very conservative. Manufacturers cannot get lines of credit.

In fact in 2008, for the 400 largest U.S. contractors, 80% of their business was in the private sector. That has now changed and the 400 largest U.S. contractors are doing 80% of their business in the public sector, which is great until it runs out at the end of the stimulus package at the end of 2010. Of course, unemployment will rise.

Given that Canada will have to deal with the aftershock and the after-effects of this, what does the government have in terms of contingency plans if a double-dip recession does occur in the United States later this year?

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is that everything that happens in the U.S. happens here. I would disagree with that premise.

We are a sovereign country. We have taken unilateral action, different action to ensure that we have a strong economy. We are built very differently. Certainly the way that our banking sector is structured demonstrated that during the recent recession. We made \$200 billion available for financing so that businesses and individuals would have access to credit.

The member seems quite pessimistic about where things are going in the future. I am certainly more optimistic than he is. We are looking for a good return to growth and prosperity in the days ahead.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission

on his intervention on this very important bill, Bill C-9, which allows Canada to move forward with its economic action plan.

One of the things we had promised as a government was that we were going to do our level best not to repeat the Liberal performance from about 10 years ago when the Liberals cut transfer payments to the provinces. As a former council member in the city of Abbotsford, I know how much that hurt communities across this country when the federal government balanced its books on the backs of municipalities and provinces.

Could the member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission comment on what our budget does to protect those transfers to ensure that we do not pass the buck for balancing the budget onto the provinces and municipalities?

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. Sometimes I say to my constituents that as a government anybody can balance a budget; when there is almost unlimited access to money, just by raising taxes or cutting the way money is spent, almost anybody could balance the budget. If people had that kind of access in their household budgets, for example, I think they could do that. However, it is how a budget is balanced that is really the key to good government. As the member said, we do not want to repeat how it was done in the 1990s. In fact, we have made a commitment, as my colleague has pointed out, not to do that.

One of the measures in Bill C-9 is to implement the transfer protection payments to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba and Saskatchewan that was announced in December 2009. We need to get that into law. The longer this bill is delayed, as the NDP has done its best to do, the longer it will take to put this and other measures in place.

• (1525)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has increased the air travellers security tax by 50% which now makes this tax the highest in the world. It is actually higher than Holland's which was the highest before. That is going to mean an international security charge of \$25, whereas in the United States, our neighbour and competitor, the charge is only \$5. In fact, the government is not even spending all of this money on security. It is actually collecting more than it is currently spending on security. It is putting Canadian airlines at a disadvantage. We have had a problem for years with Canadians booking with American airlines because the taxes are lower.

By increasing this tax by 50%, the government is driving more Canadians across the border to fly on American carriers at the expense of Canadian carriers. I want to ask the hon. member, why would the government do this and how is this good economics?

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, what is good economics is reducing taxes by \$200 billion. All of those reductions have been opposed by the NDP.

The member thinks that Canadians would drive across the border to get away from paying an additional \$25 airport security fee. I do not know where he got that information from. I doubt that would be true.

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The basic principle is that we believe in security. I do not know if the member is saying he does not believe in that. If he does believe in security, someone has to pay for it. We either have it or we do not have it and somebody has to pay for it. We think the user should pay for it. It could be taken out of general revenue and the tax increases that the NDP would put in place. I guess that would be one way to pay for it. We think it is fair and just for the user to pay for it and that is why that measure is in the budget implementation bill.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his excellent speech and also for his teamwork. As Canada moves forward to face this economic challenge, we have been working together with other levels of government. We have been working together with people in the private sector. I know the member has a lot of experience in his own community of working together.

I wonder if he could comment on why it is so important that the opposition parties get over these political games they are playing, why it is so important that the bill gets passed, why it is so important that this economic action plan continues for the people in his community. Perhaps he could also comment on why this is so successful that Canada is actually leading the world out of these difficult economic times.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, my colleague highlights the fact we are at a very opportune time in Canada. We finally have a coherent foreign policy that takes a place on issues on the world stage. More than that, we are now financially and economically well positioned to lead the world in many ways. In fact many are taking lessons from our financial sector and the changes in Bill C-9 add to that some more. There are many things in this legislation that will help us continue to advance ourselves in the world.

On the point the member made about working together, one thing I have learned the longer I do this job at the local level is that it really is a team game. We cannot do it alone. We need to work together with the provincial governments and the municipal governments, the private sector, the non-profit sector, the NGOs and so on to provide the kind of good government Canadians need and deserve.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the aspects of this budget bill that we really have a lot of trouble with is the change in the environmental assessment process. By moving environmental assessment of oil projects and gas projects over to the National Energy Board, it takes away the right of individual groups to apply for intervenor funding. The National Energy Board may or may not provide intervenor funding on projects. This reduces the opportunity for citizens to speak up about projects that may impact on their environment or the environment around them

How can the member support this kind of change?

• (1530)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Nothing in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, would prohibit individuals from speaking up on these projects.

To the bigger point that the member raised about a different approach to environmental assessment, this is about streamlining. If the member believes that just because something takes longer it is better, I think the opposite is true. My experience with fisheries and oceans, for example, would lead me to believe that the best way is to

streamline as much as possible, especially on the low impact projects, so that we have the resources and the expertise and so on to be able to take a look in a better and more productive way at the projects that are at higher risk. That is the approach we are taking with this legislation.

We want to improve timeliness. We do not want to duplicate things that are done by the provincial government. That really makes no sense and all we would do is drag on the process with poor results.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, I am pleased to speak to the budget bill today.

[*English*]

Since my last intervention on the budget bill in which I only spoke on the first group of amendments, I would like to make a few comments on the second group of amendments that were defeated yesterday in the House that I did not get a chance to comment on.

I, for one, find it completely unacceptable that this bill seeks to give the government unilateral authority to sell off part or all of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to any national, foreign, private or public entity. “Anything goes, no restrictions, let us give it all away and get rid of all traces of government”. That seems to be the philosophy of the government.

The bill would remove parliamentary oversight from any prospective sales of AECL. We have Parliament for a reason: to oversee the government. Canadians elected a minority Parliament for the specific purpose that they do not want the government to be unaccountable on issues like this.

If it makes sense to sell off AECL, let us have it in a separate piece of legislation, not the budget bill, and have the proper committee study the issue. One never knows; one might be surprised. Stakeholders and other individuals who are knowledgeable on this issue may actually provide the government with some positive suggestions.

AECL is currently a government-controlled entity for a precise reason, which is for Canada to maintain its ability to control its domestic atomic energy. As it stands now, Canadians decide what type of atomic research will be done, especially in the area of nuclear medicine.

Canadians determine what to do with discoveries vital to our national interest and the government wants to give up that control to the highest bidder, but in a trend we are seeing all too often, since the government cannot seem to stop spending money we do not have, it is desperately grasping at straws trying to sell everything and anything.

Again, the parts of this bill that relate to AECL would basically give carte blanche to the government to throw away this vital resource. By removing parliamentary oversight, the bill does not guarantee that existing reactors will be refurbished once sold and it does not guarantee that existing or potential new jobs will remain in Canada.

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Ten thousand Canadian jobs are currently linked to AECL directly or indirectly. The fate of AECL should not be decided by the government behind closed doors. It is the same trend that is continuously re-occurring with the government, where it is trying to sneak in a divisive piece of legislation through the back door with no public input, no parliamentary oversight, and all decisions being made under a shroud of secrecy to advance, of course, the Conservatives' secret or hidden agenda.

[*Translation*]

During a debate, we share ideas, and I understand that some issues are complex and can be emotional. But this government is making a habit out of constantly introducing divisive bills.

Because of its inflexible right-wing ideology, it does not want to bring forward its ideas in separate pieces of legislation.

[*English*]

Another divisive item in this bill that should be handled in separate legislation is the formal legalization of the entities known as remailers who handle letters bound for foreign destinations. Several courts have ruled against the practice of remailing, so a change is definitely required.

During finance committee hearings on this bill, we heard compelling arguments for and against private remailers from all three sides, being labour, private business and Canada Post. My issue with this part of the bill is again that it should be in a separate piece of legislation so that the appropriate committee can study the issue. One never knows what good suggestions may come about as a result.

The way this issue is being presented is meant to divide Canadians. In this case, the government is pitting rural Canadians against urban Canadians. During committee hearings, we heard that Canada Post is losing revenues to international companies because international mail that is normally sorted in Canada is now starting to be printed and mailed from international sites.

Canada Post has stated that the revenues lost from remailers are an insignificant portion of their overall business, but what we hear from the government is that 42 rural post offices and 55,000 rural roadside mailboxes have been shut down since 2006 due to these lost revenues. There is a conflict in testimony.

The government has and will continue to cut rural postal services based on its justification that revenues from remailers have been lost. If Canada Post has stated that these lost revenues are insignificant, I would like to know why they would necessitate the closure of rural postal service sites. The only place to get to the bottom of these conflicting assessments is for the proper committee to study the merits of this proposed change.

• (1535)

Sneaking legislation through the back door only serves to make rural Canadians assume that their services have been cut in lieu of urban services. This is just another example of the government trying to ram through legislation without public input, parliamentary oversight, and all decisions being again made under a shroud of secrecy to advance the Conservatives' hidden agenda.

To really know what is going on though we need to look at the numbers. This is after all the budget bill and the thing about numbers is they do not lie. The budget will cost Canadians over \$238 billion this year alone and add over \$25 billion to our national debt. That is providing this finance minister can add. It is \$238 billion and counting. That is a lot of money and Canadians have a right to know how it is being spent.

Based on the government's performance over the past few years I have no confidence that this will be money well spent.

[*Translation*]

Here are some examples of where money should not have been spent. First, although the government announced a freeze on departmental spending in this year's estimates, the Prime Minister's own department, the Privy Council Office, obtained a \$13 million boost in spending for support and advice to the PMO. That 22% increase was in advance of the freeze. The Privy Council Office already saw its budget increase by \$31 million in 2005-06 and 2008-09.

Public opinion research spending has gone up by \$5 million. The increase in the size of the cabinet has cost taxpayers over \$4 million. Spending on advertisements for the economic action plan skyrocketed, surpassing \$100 million. An increase in communication consulting services in the Prime Minister's office has cost nearly \$2 million. Excessive spending on ten percenters reached well over \$10 million.

These six examples show that the Conservatives spend money for themselves and not for the benefit of the community or of Canadians. These costs add up to over \$130 million.

[*English*]

The government has become so undisciplined and wasteful that it has become reaching into the pockets of Canadian taxpayers to fund its own agrandissement and propaganda. Is this accountability? Is this prudence? Is this good governance? I think not.

Instead of spending \$10 million to send junk mail across the country perhaps that money could have been used for research in multiple sclerosis and its potential causes, as my Liberal colleagues asked the government to do in an open letter on May 6, 2010.

[*Translation*]

Instead of spending \$4 million to compensate Conservative members with useless Cabinet appointments, it could invest this money in increasing Internet access in rural or northern communities.

•(1540)

[English]

Instead of spending \$5 million on public polling to help the Conservative government's political operations, perhaps the Prime Minister could have saved that money by simply letting Canadians interact with him instead of making them ask him scripted questions.

Instead of spending an extra \$31 million so that the Privy Council Office can devote more time and energy to protecting the Prime Minister's image, perhaps that money could have been spent developing green technology that would make Canada's economy cleaner and more competitive today.

Instead of spending almost \$2 million on communication support services to help the Prime Minister's Office spin facts to suit its purposes, perhaps that money could have been spent to keep a rural post office open.

Instead of spending over \$100 million to post billboards and screen commercials to help the government take credit for economic stimulus spending, which after all is our money, your money, Mr. Speaker, and Canadians' money, perhaps that money could have been used to get more shovels in the ground and more people back to work as it was intended.

Given the amount of waste the government has been guilty of to date, it comes as no surprise that the budget will add approximately over \$100 billion to our national debt over the next five years.

We have gone down this road before and Canadians know it is a painful one. Between 1984 and 1993 the Conservative government spent Canada into near bankruptcy. We were being compared to third world nations.

As they say, history has a way of repeating itself and here we are again, with a Conservative government that has put us in a situation that has caused Canadians to lose their jobs, lose their services, and today has caused household debt to rise.

Just recently, it was reported by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada that after four years of the Prime Minister's Conservative government Canadian household debt has skyrocketed to a record \$1.41 trillion. That is \$41,740 per person. That is \$41,740 for you, Mr. Speaker, \$41,740 for me. It is two and a half times greater than in 1989.

The government has managed to squander our finances and squeeze Canadians to the point that the former Mulroney government looks prudent by comparison.

[Translation]

The economy is the cornerstone of any country, and that is why, when the Liberal Party of Canada came back into power in 1993, it worked to make the Canadian economy strong and dynamic once it was back on track thanks to years of good management. As well, the Liberal Party made many difficult decisions that allowed it to balance the budget and create surpluses. We cannot forget that the coffers were empty after Brian Mulroney's Conservatives left.

Thanks to consecutive budget surpluses, the Liberal government was able to reduce taxes, finance our social programs such as health

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care, education, research and development, and pay down the national debt.

In addition, as I mentioned in my earlier speech, during second reading we cannot forget that just before being defeated, Paul Martin's Liberal government had reached an agreement with the provinces to give them child care services similar to the Quebec system, that it had negotiated the Kelowna accord with Canada's first nations, that it had reached an agreement to extend the implementation of the Kyoto protocol beyond 2012, and that it had convinced the UN to adopt the Canadian concept of "responsibility to protect" during international crises.

Those are some of the great things that the current Conservative government has done away with.

[English]

Since 2008, 410,000 Canadian jobs have disappeared and few of those jobs have been recovered. Most of the jobs that have been created are temporary, low skilled, low pay, part-time jobs. This is not a foundation on which we can build a prosperous country. In the meantime, the government is bragging about needing fiscal restraint, but it is on record as being the highest spending government in Canadian history.

[Translation]

In fact, since 2006, it took the Conservative government only one year to spend the largest surplus ever accumulated in the history of Canada.

It has created an enormous deficit on top of having the dubious distinction of being the biggest spending government in the history of Canada year after year.

•(1545)

[English]

According to this budget's projections, the Conservatives plan to spend close to \$250 billion in 2014-15. That is \$20 billion more than what they intend to spend this year. How they plan on paying down the deficit in this budget cycle is beyond me. That is why I find it hypocritical that the government constantly claims that we cannot afford to make investments now in areas that would position Canada to emerge from this recession ready to compete on the world stage.

Investing now in green technologies, our labour force, our companies and our students will pay off down the road and keep Canada strong.

The Conservative government has ignored making investments of this nature and has instead spent and spent because a photo op means more to the government than sound policies. It seems that members on the other side of the aisle are constantly spending Canadians' money and posing with ceremonial cheques but no one is seeing tangible results that will strengthen our economy.

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[Translation]

Since there is no national child care system, no agreement with first nations, no money for research, no money for innovation, no money for the environment and no money for education, what happened to that money and what did they spend it on? In hospitals, sick people are still waiting. Seniors are still waiting for their pensions to increase and universities are still waiting for help from the Conservative government.

[English]

Meanwhile, veterans are not being helped with post-traumatic stress disorder. Immigrants are not being helped in order to integrate into our society and succeed in their new lives.

There is no plan in this budget to deal with the strain on our health care system. There is no plan to deal with the challenges of having an aging population. Pensions are not being protected.

These are the most vital topics in Canada right now and the government has proposed nothing to deal with these major issues.

[Translation]

In order to promote saving, we in the Liberal Party are asking the Prime Minister's government to consider our three proposals for reforming pensions: establish a supplementary Canada pension plan to help Canadians save more; give employees with stranded pensions following corporate bankruptcies the option of growing their pensions through the assets of the Canada pension plan; and protect vulnerable Canadians on long-term disability by giving them status as preferred creditors in cases of bankruptcy.

In order to allow Canadians to invest more in a national pension system they can count on, the Conservative government should work with the provinces, retired people, unions and the private sector to establish and implement a supplementary Canada pension plan.

To give Canadians an easy way to save even more for their retirement, a supplementary Canada pension plan seems like an easy solution and should be considered a reform of the income security system, and of old age security and the guaranteed income supplement in particular. This reform would guarantee the pension capital and would ensure that retired people are not left out when companies go bankrupt or in certain economic situations, thus protecting them from future recessions.

The government must encourage citizens to save because we know that one-third of Canadians have no retirement savings other than the Quebec pension plan or the Canada pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. As for the other two-thirds, they do not have enough savings to maintain their standard of living.

The Canada pension plan covers 93% of workers, but that alone is not enough because more than half of Canadian families do not contribute to an employer-sponsored pension plan. Almost \$500 billion in RRSP room remains unused and, according to Statistics Canada, the \$32.4 billion in contributions to RRSPs in 2006 represented only 7% of the maximum eligible contribution. The premiers of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan threatened to create their own plan if the federal government did not establish a supplementary Canada pension plan.

Once again, the Liberals are asking the government to work with the provinces, seniors, unions and the private sector to establish a supplementary Canada pension plan, which would be one possible solution to the low rate of retirement savings.

• (1550)

[English]

Based on the points I have outlined, it is clear that this budget neglects many areas of importance to Canadians. The sheer number of key issues ignored by the Conservatives in this budget is shocking, considering the size of the bill.

[Translation]

What is even worse is that, while the Conservative government unfairly raises Canadians' taxes, it is also spending hard-earned money on frivolous projects and reducing services that Canadians expect to receive to get by in daily life.

This government is a disgrace. It is irresponsible and unpardonable. For these reasons I must vote against this budget.

[English]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I suspect my colleague has some constituents who are connected to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, the nuclear industry in Canada that is located in his riding.

I guess the confusion I have, and which I think many Canadians would share with me, is when my hon. colleague talked about how Bill C-9 contains 900 pages of everything, including the kitchen sink. Anything the government could not pass independently, it rammed into this bill, which is an omnibus bill, a Trojan horse, or we can call it what we want, but most people would call it a disaster.

The bill would also give permission for the government to sell Canada's largest crown corporation, AECL, with no public debate and no discussion, which by law was required. AECL was set up at the beginning so that if the government ever wanted to sell it off, it would need to bring a bill before Parliament for discussion and a debate about whether that was a good idea, how to do it and what the terms of sale were. Instead, the government has gone through the back door and rammed it into a budget bill with no debate at all.

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My hon. colleague's recommendation was that the bill should be broken up into its parts so that we could debate the sale of AECL, debate the environmental watering down of regulations that are in this bill and debate what is happening to Canada Post, which is being stripped of its international mailing rights. We voted on those motions last night. New Democrats moved motions at the committee but the Liberals ducked out of the committee room in order to allow the vote to pass. We had votes in this House last night and the Liberals voted to keep all those things in the bill. We had a vote not more than 12 hours ago on the very thing he is asking for and he voted to keep it in rather than have it out in the light of day. I do not understand how he can stand today and say that this is what should happen, when we had the chance—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I was in agreement with the member all the way until he came to the end and talked about the Liberals. I am glad he is about ready to join the Liberals but, until he reaches that point, my understanding is that at committee the Liberals did vote against the propositions and we did vote against them yesterday. Unfortunately, the numbers were not there.

If we continue to work together perhaps we will be able to make future changes to AECL. I understand the member, as a member of the natural resources committee, can bring forward a motion and have the bill changed.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member had a long, rambling speech and part of that speech seemed to compare our government's approach, our economic action plan, to the failed approach of previous governments that perhaps ran up debt loads that were unacceptable to Canadians.

It was interesting that when we introduced our economic action plan the Liberal leader initially suggested that there should be more debt incurred rather than less debt. Then, in midstream, the Liberals changed their minds and are now decrying the fact that the economic action plan provided a significant stimulus to our economy. What is even more important is that those economic stimuli we introduced into the economy have made a huge difference. They have made us the leader in the world in terms of economic growth, our banking system and all of the economic fundamentals that are driving our economy right now.

Since July of last year, our government has been able to create 310,000 new jobs as a result of putting our economy on a solid footing, unlike many other economies around the world.

How is it that the member can compare the performance of previous governments to the performance of our government which has done such a remarkable job of turning our economy around and being the leader in the world?

• (1555)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I will take part of the member's question as a personal insult in the fact that he said that I was rambling on. Just the fact that someone speaks two different languages does not mean that he has to take it personally. He can at least listen to what is being said before he criticizes it.

In actual fact, my speech had all the facts that the member was asking about and was completely contradictory. He said that this country was proud of its banking sector. However, the only reason we are proud of our banking sector is because the Liberals decided to maintain regulation and the strong banking sector that we have. Had it been up to the Conservatives, they would have de-regulated the banking sector years ago and today we would probably be in a worse situation.

We entered a rough economic time with our house in order and the government has been able to totally blow that—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, my colleague is an accountant and, as an accountant, he has given a very exhaustive, comprehensive overview of the budget. He also is an accountant as opposed to being somewhat of an accountant and he would know the difference between expenditures and revenues. He has also indicated that there are some storm clouds on the horizon with a budget of \$238 billion, with household debt on the increase, with the ability to finance the debt being somewhat called into question and the signs that we will need to make exhaustive cuts.

He mentioned the privatization of AECL and talked about green technologies and so on. As an accountant, what would he advise the government as it appears we are entering into a period of economic uncertainty once again? What would he advise in terms of dealing with the deficit reduction strategy, part of which is not mentioned in this budget at all? There is no mention with respect to how to manage debt that will incur as a result of this type of expenditure.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a good member of Parliament, not because he is sitting next to me but because he is from the proper party and he understands the issue. He understands that when it comes to the government and the role that it plays, it is important to lay not only the foundation but to maintain that foundation so Canadians can benefit from it, and not to play around with people's income and advertise by spending taxpayer money fruitlessly.

In response to my colleague's question, the foundation is the basis of what the government should be doing in order to solidify whether there is a future recession on the horizon, because if it is not today, it will be tomorrow or a few years down the road. As a nation, we should solidify our base and ensure that we run balanced budgets, and the government is irresponsible when it comes to that.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about AECL, which is our largest crown corporation. We have put \$22 billion into it over the life of the company and now the government is looking at selling it off and probably getting maybe \$300 million, if we are lucky.

The member was present when there were 140 workers from AECL in the gallery basically begging the Liberals to vote against this bill and defeat the government. Why is the Liberal Party going along with the Conservatives and essentially allowing them to pass Bill C-9, which he knows is 880 pages long and throws all sorts of items into the mix that do not belong in it, particularly AECL?

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In terms of AECL, the government has commissioned a report about how to proceed and it has never consulted Parliament regarding—

• (1600)

The Deputy Speaker: I have to stop the member there because there is less than a minute left for the member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel to respond.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are opposed to this bill. However, I do disagree with the member on one item. I do not really mind that a bill is 800 or 1,000 pages, it really does not matter. The problem is the separate items that are in the bill that do not belong in a budget bill. That is what the member does not seem to understand.

We had hearings. I am the vice-chair of the finance committee so I understand the issues. The problem is that when the people came for AECL there was no mention of the \$300 million. The member seems to know that \$300 million is the purchase price. The member seems to have information that the rest of do not have—

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the jobs and economic growth act, which implements many key measures from budget 2010, is a key component of Canada's economic action plan. As members likely know, Canada's economic action plan represents our Conservative government's aggressive response to the global economic storm. It is a plan that is helping to protect and boost our economy.

More importantly, it is a plan that is working. Last week, for instance, Statistics Canada announced that Canada's economy grew 6.1% in the first quarter of 2010. This not only represented the strongest quarterly rate of economic growth in a decade but also the strongest first-quarter economic growth among all G7 countries. Benoit Durocher, an economist with Desjardins, said:

It's one more indication of the vitality of the Canadian economic recovery....The measures to stimulate the economy are bearing fruit.

Even better, both the IMF and the OECD predict that Canada will lead the G7 in growth through this year and next year. Additionally, Statistics Canada also reported last week that 24,700 net new jobs were created in May, which was the fifth straight month of job gains. This also represents the eighth month of job gains in the past 10 months. Overall, since July of last year, Canada has created almost 310,000 net new jobs.

Canada's economic growth and continued job creation is proof that Canada's economic action plan is indeed working. With numbers like these, it is not surprising that Canada's economy has been singled out for praise and envy way beyond our own borders. In fact, in a speech in Calgary, former U.S. President Bill Clinton recently said:

I want to compliment Canada; you didn't get burned as bad as everybody else did because you had a more disciplined environment....You have a pretty successful private economy here....

Jim Cramer, a popular financial commentator in the United States on CNBC, recently called Canada “perhaps the world's most stable

financial system”. The influential magazine *The Economist* recently called Canada “an economic star”, further noting that:

...Americans may cast envious glances across their northern border. Despite its umbilical links with America, Canada's economy suffered only a mild recession and is now well into a solid recovery...[Canada's] economy is set to perform better than that of any other rich country this year.

What is more, the OECD itself also recently singled out our economy for praise, exclaiming:

...Canada looks good—it shines, actually....Canada could even be considered a safe haven.

While it is encouraging to see Canada's economy on the right track, a testament to our government's strong economic leadership, the larger global recovery remains fragile. That is why the economy must remain paramount for Parliament, and that is why we need to fully implement Canada's economic action plan.

We must stay on the right track for Canadian families by following Canada's economic action plan both to ensure a strong recovery, and equally important, to support the coordinated global efforts that are under way. We have to stay the course. We must pass the jobs and economic growth act.

The jobs and economic growth act will build on Canada's economic advantage with its measured and ambitious proposed initiatives to, for example, eliminate tariffs on all manufacturing inputs and machinery and equipment; to eliminate the need for tax reporting, under section 116 of the Income Tax Act, for many investments by narrowing the definition of taxable Canadian property; to implement important changes to strengthen federally regulated private pension plans; to implement the one-time transfer protection payments to provinces; and to enforce the code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry through regulatory power, if necessary. Further, it would enable credit unions to incorporate federally, not just provincially; would stimulate the mining industry by extending the mineral exploration tax credit; would implement an enhanced stamping regime for tobacco products to deter contraband; and would ensure fairness for Canadian taxpayers by closing tax loopholes. There is much more.

• (1605)

During my time today, I would like to highlight three of the aforementioned initiatives. Specifically, I am going to speak to the proposed implementation of the one-time transfer protection payment to provinces, the proposed power to enforce a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry through regulatory power if necessary, and the proposal to enable credit unions to incorporate federally.

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First, the jobs and economic growth act includes important support for provinces and territories across our country, support that underlines our strong and ongoing commitment to them. This support also demonstrates our commitment to not repeat the mistakes of the past, when transfer payments to the provinces and territories were dramatically cut in the 1990s under the previous government. As the Federation of Canadian Municipalities recently pointed out:

Canadians can't afford to relive the nineties...when federal...budget deficits were shifted on to their property tax bills, or paid for with cuts to local services.

That is why we have made a commitment to the provinces and territories that they can count on our support and our ongoing support. Total transfers to provinces and territories will increase by \$2.4 billion in this fiscal year, bringing total federal support to \$54.4 billion, the highest level in our history.

Equalization payments to provinces for 2010-11 will total \$14.4 billion. In fact, the Canada health transfer will grow to \$25.4 billion, and the Canada social transfer for 2010-11 will reach \$11.2 billion.

Our government has restored fiscal balance through long-term and fair transfer support to provinces and territories with total transfers increasing by over 30% since we formed government. This unprecedented and growing federal transfer support will help to provide the services and programs for our hospitals and our schools that Canadians rely on.

In addition to that significant federal support, budget 2010 also confirmed that our government will provide one-time payments to protect those provinces that may have faced a decline in the total transfers in 2010-11. This will ensure that all provinces receive at least as much support through major transfers this year as they did last year. This is in recognition of the short-term economic challenges facing provinces as we emerge from this global recession.

Accordingly, the jobs and economic growth act authorizes over \$500 million in 2010-11 transfer-protection payments to affected provinces. Specifically, they are to Nova Scotia, at \$250 million; to New Brunswick, at \$80 million; to Newfoundland and Labrador, at \$8.4 million; to Prince Edward Island, at \$3.3 million; to Manitoba, at \$175 million; and to Saskatchewan, at \$7.3 million.

I note that these vital transfer payments cannot be made until the jobs and economic growth act receives royal assent. The over \$500 million in transfer-protection payments, our ongoing government support, and our commitment to maintain support for provinces and territories has been well received throughout this country.

Listen to the Canadian Medical Association, which has welcomed our ongoing commitment, noting that:

Canada's doctors are pleased to see that the federal government isn't planning to balance the budget on the backs of Canadian patients. As we saw with the cuts to health care in the 1990s, the supposed cure ended up being much worse than the disease.

Listen to the presidents of 13 leading Canadian universities, including the University of Ottawa's president, Allan Rock, who wrote in an open letter to major Canadian newspapers right across the country:

The maintenance of federal transfers to provinces in Budget 2010 is...critically important.

Listen to the provincial governments themselves, like the NDP finance minister of Manitoba, who announced that she was pleased to see the commitment to maintain transfers, remarking:

[T]hey are going to keep the level of payments to the province at the level they committed to....[T]hat was good news for us.

A second aspect in the jobs and economic growth act that I want to highlight are the provisions that would allow the government to enforce a code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry, with the authority to regulate the market conduct of the credit and debit card networks, if required.

● (1610)

Recently, concerns about the practices of card issuers garnered considerable attention and concern in numerous respects, including everything from business practices to marketplace structure. That is why in November 2009, we released for public consultation a proposed code of conduct for the credit and debit card industry in Canada.

The initial proposed code was based on ongoing discussions with small businesses, retail merchants, and consumer associations across our country. During the 60-day comment period, all Canadians were invited to submit their views on how best to monitor compliance with the proposed code.

This past May, after carefully reviewing the tremendous feedback resulting from our public consultations, our government announced a finalized code of conduct. Under the code, small businesses and other merchants will be provided with clear information regarding fees and rates. They will be given advance notice of any new fees and increases. They will be able to cancel contracts, without penalty, should fees rise or should new fees be introduced. They will be given new tools to promote competition, and in particular, they will have the freedom to accept credit payments from a particular network without the obligation to accept debit payments, and vice versa.

I note that the reaction to the code of conduct has been overwhelmingly positive. The Retail Council of Canada heralded it as "a solid victory for merchants across the country and a major step toward addressing imbalances in the Canadian payments system".

The Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors applauded it as an important win for both merchants and customers. It said:

[T]he Government of Canada deserve[s] a great deal of credit for taking critical steps towards developing a Canadian payments system that is competitive, fair and provides clarity for both merchants and customers.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business added:

Government Orders

The Code...will help increase transparency and restore fairness to small businesses and consumers in their credit and debit card transactions....A finalized Code constitutes an important step and is timely as we enter the summer season that is so vital to so many businesses, especially coming out of a recession....These developments will create a better future for merchants and help ensure a fair and transparent credit and debit card market instead of just letting large industry players call all the shots.

A *Vancouver Sun* editorial also cheered and said:

[W]e were pleased to see the code of conduct for credit and debit cards....[It] is an important step toward allowing merchants to have some control over costs and to maintaining a relatively low-cost cashless purchasing alternative that benefits consumers and retailers alike while still allowing for competition between providers....This should be an important change in the retail landscape...

The jobs and economic growth act will help ensure the success of the code of conduct for credit and debit card industries through legislative provisions for monitoring compliance and regulating the industry, if necessary. Specifically, it will enact the payment card networks act, which will give the government the power to regulate the market conduct of the credit and debit card networks and their participants, if and when necessary. It will also expand the mandate of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada to supervise payment card network operators. It will include monitoring their compliance with the code of conduct and any regulations introduced under the new payment card networks act.

For this reason, it is vital that the jobs and economic growth act be passed as soon as possible.

A final and third aspect of the jobs and economic growth act I would like to spotlight is a proposal to enable credit unions to incorporate federally. Canada has a fine tradition of community-based credit unions, and many Canadians have decided to use credit unions for the majority of their financial needs.

That is why our Conservative government is proposing to create a federal legislative framework for credit unions to promote the continued growth and competitiveness of the sector to enhance its financial stability. Allowing credit unions to grow and be competitive on a national scale will broaden choices for consumers and approved services for existing members.

For that reason, the jobs and economic growth act will provide existing credit unions and those desiring to establish new credit unions the option of conducting the business of a credit union and serving their members and communities under a federal charter.

I note that organizations such as Credit Union Central of Canada have long called for this legislation.

A recent report by Moody's Investors Service emphasized the importance of this provision, as it will "lead to credit unions having a stronger national presence".

●(1615)

Tracy Redies, chief executive of B.C.'s Coast Capital Savings, one of Canada's largest credit unions, has even called it historic legislation that "will lead to enhanced competition. It will provide potentially a true national alternative to the big five Canadian banks".

In my speech today, while I have spotlighted but a few select key items in the jobs and economic growth act, it is very clear that

through this legislation our Conservative government is continuing to show the economic leadership that Canadians expect and deserve.

As the jobs and economic growth act implements key measures of Canada's economic action plan, which are vital to secure a sustained economic recovery, it would be entirely irresponsible not to complete the plan's implementation. We must finish the important work that we started in 2009-10. To do otherwise would only serve to endanger our fragile recovery.

Given that, I ask all members in the House to give this key legislation the support it deserves.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments by the member for St. Catharines on Bill C-9. I know the member and his riding of St. Catharines, Ontario well. When he reflects on what he has heard in the committee meetings, it strikes me that those reflections are rather selective.

I know the people in St. Catharines are profoundly worried about their pensions. At the committee meetings, there was a huge call for pension reform with respect to protecting pensions in cases of commercial bankruptcy and increasing the CPP. People are profoundly worried about seniors falling into poverty and the need to enhance the GIS. Yet there is nothing in the budget about those things.

What is in the budget is the finalization of the theft of \$57 billion from the EI fund, something that is also of huge concern in the entire Niagara Peninsula and across the country. Representations were made to the committee about that as well as the privatization of Canada Post, the sell-off of AECL and protecting the environment.

If the member feels as strongly as he indicated today about some aspects of the budget, last night why did he not support severing some of the other key items like EI reform, like the sell-off of AECL and the privatization of Canada Post so we could deal with those as stand-alone matters and he could truly represent the interests of his constituents?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, the member and I serve communities separated only by a small stretch of highway called the QEW. St. Catharines, the riding I represent, was hurt in the last number of months because of the recession specifically with respect to manufacturing. Niagara and St. Catharines depend largely on manufacturing to move themselves forward in terms of having strong local economies. In fact, at one point, those communities were second or third highest in the country, with a 10.4% unemployment rate.

Because of this action plan, because of what we decided to do in 2009 and 2010, St. Catharines and Niagara are proving, on a small scale in the country, that this plan works. They have moved from 10.4% to 9.1% to 8.6% unemployment. They will get below the national average before this year is done.

●(1620)

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague from St. Catharines for his very timely comments on the economic action plan. His community has been very hard hit and he has already articulated how it has rebounded as a result of the initiatives within our economic action plan.

Government Orders

Quite often we hear criticism from the NDP, the Liberals and the Bloc that we are not doing enough or doing too much, but the proof is in the pudding. When we look at the pudding, we find the proof. What is the proof? It is a 6.1% increase in economic growth in the last quarter. We have the safest banking system in the world. Since July of last year, we have created 310,000 new jobs in our country, many of them in the Niagara region and in St. Catharines.

Exactly what kinds of jobs have been created in the riding of my colleague from St. Catharines and what are some of the great announcements coming out of his riding?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I thought I was just about to hear the infamous “a proof is a proof is a proof” quote, but he did not go that far.

However, I want to thank the member for Abbotsford, who has given me the opportunity to further talk about the benefits the riding of St. Catharines and the Niagara region have received because of this recovery plan.

We are building a new bioresearch facility at Brock University, which will consist of over 110,000 square feet. Why are we building it? Because it is the manufacturing of the future that the community of St. Catharines and Niagara will be able to deliver on. Brock University is on the cutting edge of how to do this. It received stimulus funding and that project will be completed by March 31, 2011. There are hundreds of jobs at that facility, which is now currently being constructed.

We can talk about the new performing arts centre that will be built in the downtown of St. Catharines. That will help rejuvenate the downtown.

For the first time in a long time, job advertisements are not getting the type of response they used to because people are working.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly of all the things that do not belong in this 880-page budget implementation bill, the smoking gun, the item that stands out the most, is the issue of the Canada Post remainders.

The fact is the government introduced that measure in Bill C-14 and in Bill C-44 over the last couple of years as stand-alone bills in the House and were rebuffed by this Parliament. It was unable to get it through.

Now the government has snuck it in under Bill C-9 in the hopes that its Liberal allies will close their eyes and vote for it or avoid the vote and allow this to pass.

How can the member, with a straight face, claim that this is a pure budget implementation act when he knows it is not?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I know one thing that this 880-page document will not include, because it never has been included, is the support of the NDP. We have put budget after budget forward that have put people back to work in our country and the only thing they never have included is any type of support whatsoever from the NDP.

The 880-page document clearly outlines exactly what will happen with Canada Post and those remainders. What would it do? It would help, it would preserve and it would maintain 10,000 jobs in the

sector. The NDP is going to vote against that. I would be ashamed if I had to go back to my riding and say that I cost the country 10,000 jobs.

• (1625)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, would the member for St. Catharines elaborate a little further on some of the key benefits to the credit unions?

Huron—Bruce is a rural riding and the credit unions play a key part, whether it is loaning to agriculture or to small business. They do a tremendous job. They are completely tuned into the communities.

Could the member for St. Catharines elaborate a little more so Canadians can hear what a tremendous opportunity this is to grow the credit unions?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hard-working member for Huron—Bruce, who really has done an outstanding job in his time here since being elected. He has put Huron—Bruce back on the map in our country and in Parliament. It is good to see him here today to ask a question on the credit unions, which have a huge impact on his riding and ridings like his across the country.

NDP members are crying out. They are the ones who think credit unions should be allowed more opportunity and they are ones who are voting against it.

Being able to give credit unions the opportunity to work under a federal charter is the right thing to do for our country.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am interested in knowing what the member plans on telling unemployed people in his riding when they find out that Bill C-9, among other things that do not belong in it, would empty out the EI fund and affect the hard-working people across Canada who depend on that fund when they hit on hard times. People in my riding have seen their jobs dissipate without the government's support when it comes to the forestry industry or the issues around manufacturing?

What is he going to tell those workers in his riding who are looking for EI in those difficult days?

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, there are two things.

First, in the last two months General Motors announced in St. Catharines \$480 million worth of investment at General Motors on Glendale Avenue, which will help preserve and create 800 jobs. That says something about how much manufacturing means in the riding of St. Catharines and where things are going.

When she speaks about EI, and I realize she was not here when this budget passed, let us not forget that we passed the budget that moved the whole board of EI away from the way it was being run. It is run independently and has a minimum of \$2 billion to ensure that what the Liberals did with EI reform would never happen again.

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Based on our rules, I believe it is inappropriate for a member to say whether or not a member was here. In fact, I am not even sure what he is referencing in terms of my absence with respect to the budget.

Government Orders

Mr. Rick Dykstra: Mr. Speaker, if the member lets me, I will explain. It was passed in a budget when she was not elected. I would never refer to her as not being in the House. In fact, I know she is in the House a great deal of the time and does work hard. It was not a reference to her attention or membership here. It was in reference to a previous budget when she was not elected.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for clarifying that.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that messages have been received from the Senate informing the House that the Senate has passed the following bills to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999; Bill S-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (auto theft and trafficking in property obtained by crime).

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 Winnipeg South Centre, Maternal Health; the hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, Oil and Gas Industry; the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, Vancouver 2010 Winter Games.

* * *

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Windsor West.

It will not surprise members that I am speaking in opposition to the Conservatives' budget implementation bill at third reading. We in the NDP moved 62 amendments to the government's budget that would have immeasurably improved the bill by taking out the most contentious sections and allowing them to be dealt with in stand-alone bills. Sadly, with the complicity of the Liberals, all of them were defeated in this House last night. I therefore have no choice but to vote against the unamended budget bill.

It is worth reminding people at home who may be watching this debate today what is at stake in this bill and specifically what changes we tried to make.

There were six groups of amendments that dealt with Canada Post, AECL, the National Energy Board, environmental assessments, employment insurance and the air travellers security charge. The NDP amendments would essentially have deleted all sections relating to each of these categories. Frankly, these sections should never have been in the budget bill in the first place. Each piece is of such importance that all six should have been brought forward as separate bills subject to separate scrutiny by this House and in committee and subject to public hearings with affected stakeholders.

In fact, the law explicitly states that if the government is contemplating the sell-off of a Canadian asset like AECL, then it has to be brought to the House of Commons as a bill. Instead, the government buried it on page 556 of the budget. AECL is the largest crown corporation in Canada and it is completely irresponsible for the government to sell it off without any transparency and without any accountability.

We should not be giving away our nuclear crown corporation to a foreign company in a fire sale. Over the course of AECL's life, Canadian taxpayers have put \$22 billion into building the company. The only public estimates of what the government might receive in a sale suggest that we would be lucky to get \$300 million if we sell it now.

The process has been shrouded in secrecy since the beginning. The government commissioned a report from Rothschild on how to proceed and has never consulted Parliament on its contents. Now the Conservatives are trying to push the sale through the back door by burying the groundwork in Bill C-9, the budget bill.

Parliament and Canadians need to be consulted and involved in the process. Otherwise, if the government simply gets its way, Canadian taxpayers are going to get ripped off and high-paying jobs will be lost.

That is why we put forth our amendments in the House. It is imperative to separate out the AECL privatization measures and force the government to bring them forward in a stand-alone bill. The proposed sale of AECL must be closely studied, and we will do everything in our power to ensure that the government cannot just force it through in a budget that is being used as a Trojan horse.

The same is true for the sections dealing with environmental assessments and the National Energy Board. Here, too, the government is using omnibus budget legislation to weaken Canada's environmental protection laws. These are non-financial matters and they do not belong in the budget.

The government's approach is becoming a bit of a pattern. In last year's budget bill, the Conservative government gutted the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This year's budget bill takes aim at the act that is most important in protecting our environment. This is not about streamlining the process. It is being gutted. These changes will undoubtedly result in damage to our environment, and Canadians will be on the hook to clean up the mess. Putting these costs on future generations is not conservative, it is unconscionable.

What is most galling is the process by which this law is being eviscerated. Parliament, in its wisdom, has prescribed that a review of the law and recommendations for reform be undertaken this year by a designated committee. This comprehensive review is already slated to come before the parliamentary committee on environment and sustainable development. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance has stunningly dubbed such a review as "frivolous". So it comes as no surprise that the government has chosen instead to short-circuit the process that would hear and consider the views of interested stakeholders and other concerned parties and fast-track changes through its budget bill.

Government Orders

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 a diminishment of public rights, including clear access to intervenor funds and lessened requirements to consider environmental factors.

Also, the Minister of the Environment will be empowered to narrow the scope of any environmental assessment with political considerations potentially influencing decisions.

Finally, one of the key triggers for federal assessment, federal spending, is significantly exorcized with almost all federal stimulus funded projects to be exempted.

● (1630)

Addressing long-term liabilities from unmitigated environmental or health impacts should not be shunted aside for short-term political gain from streamlined or fast-tracked project approvals. Canadians will pay the costs.

Similarly, Canadians will be paying the costs of the ill-conceived erosion of Canada Post's exclusive privilege to handle international letters. I have had the privilege of speaking at length on this issue twice before in the House, so I will try to be brief today.

At the heart of the issue is that international mailers, or remailers as they are commonly known, who collect and ship letters to other countries where the mail is processed and remailed at a lower cost. In doing so, they are siphoning off \$60 million to \$80 million per year in business from Canada Post. Yet Canada Post needs that revenue to provide affordable postal service to everyone no matter where they live in our huge country. In fact, one ruling of a Court of Appeal in Ontario stressed the importance of exclusive privilege in serving rural and remote communities and noted that international mailers are "not required to bear the high cost of providing services to the more remote regions of Canada".

Canada Post won this legal challenge against the remailers all the way to the Supreme Court. What is the so-called law and order government doing in response? It is standing up for the international mailers which are currently carrying international letters in violation of the law. The Conservatives are allowing them to siphon off business from Canada Post and they snuck the enabling legislation into the budget bill. Once again, the budget is being used as a Trojan horse and the Conservatives are hoping that no one will notice. Well, New Democrats noticed and that is why we moved to delete all of the sections related to international mailers from Bill C-9.

We also noticed of course that the government is imposing a new tax on Canadians through this budget. This is a new flight tax that is expected to raise \$3.3 billion over five years. Ostensibly, it is for better airport passenger screening, but only \$1.5 billion of money raised will be going to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority. The rest appears to be going straight into government coffers. Even if people believe that the new security measures such as the 44 virtual strip search scanners are better than regular pat-downs, the bottom line is that the Canadian security charge is now the highest in the world without any commensurate increase in aviation safety. Whether it is called a user fee or a new tax, it is an ill-conceived cash grab by the government and deserves much greater scrutiny.

Finally, I want to talk about the changes to EI that are buried deep in the budget and I will cut right to chase. When the Liberals were in power the then finance minister took almost \$50 billion of workers' money out of the employment insurance program and used it to cut taxes for his friends in corporate Canada. Since taking power in 2006, the Conservatives have continued to rob workers of what is rightfully theirs. Instead of seizing the opportunity to do right by hard-working Canadians in this budget and returning all of the employee and employer contributions to the EI fund, the budget bill before us does the unthinkable. It legalizes the theft of \$57 billion. It takes the \$57 billion and simply adds it to its general revenues. That is the biggest theft in Canadian history and it is being perpetrated in the House of Commons and the Senate.

That is not what we were elected to do here. On the contrary, for the last year and a half, our country has been battered by a tsunami of job losses and we as elected members have a responsibility to mitigate its impact on the hard-working Canadians who are the innocent victims of this recession. That was the original reason for creating EI. It was established so workers who lost their jobs would not automatically fall into poverty. EI is the single most important income support program for Canadian workers and we have a duty to protect and enhance it. So no, we cannot just let the budget implementation bill rob Canadians of hope by being complicit in emptying the entire employment insurance account. We cannot and will not let this pass with our consent. We cannot and will not support the bill that is so fundamentally at odds with the best interests of our constituents.

● (1635)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the air travellers security charge and pointed out that the tax will now be raised 50% by the government. It will be the highest tax in the world, even exceeding Holland's. The government is only spending part of that money on airport security. It will be using the extra money it is raising from Canadian travellers for general revenue.

The sad part of this whole exercise is that the international security charge will now be \$25 whereas the one in the United States is only \$5. For several years we have been losing Canadian passengers to American air carriers. The government is the new best friend of the American airline industry because while Canadians have been travelling with American carriers over the last three or four years because the taxes are lower on air fares in the United States, it is going to make it even more difficult for the Canadian carriers to stay afloat and remain competitive with the Americans.

How in the world is the government trying to be competitive when it does things like this?

Government Orders

•(1640)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona is absolutely right. That new tax is nothing but a tax grab by the Conservative government. It has nothing to do with enhanced airport security. Therefore, it has nothing to do with traveller protection.

If the government were really serious about protecting travellers in Canada, it might want to have a look at the incredible bill that was brought forward by the member for Elmwood—Transcona. It was a passengers' bill of rights that would have made substantial improvements for people who use flights regularly or perhaps only once a year for travelling on vacation. For people who are stuck either at terminals or on the tarmac, his bill offered real protection to airplane travellers.

That bill was sadly voted down with the support of the Conservatives. The Conservatives voted against the bill. That is a disgrace. His bill merited support. The new surcharge on air travellers that the Conservatives are proposing certainly does not.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a follow-up question. The member raised the issue of Canada Post and the remailers, and I really think that this is the smoking gun in this 880-page omnibus bill. The Conservative government has tried to throw in a lot of things that do not really apply. The sale of AECL is one of them, but certainly the remailers is the most blatant example.

I say that because the government, independent of this measure, introduced the remailer issue under Bill C-14 and Bill C-44 over the last two or three years. It presented them in this House. These bills were debated in this House and they were not passed by this House. It could not get these bills through.

Seeing a weakness over on the Liberal side in the opposition, the government has thrown everything into this bill. Things that do not belong have been thrown into the bill because the government knows that the Liberals will go along with it and pass it through as law.

Would the member like to make some comments on that point?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, I of course agree. The road down to privatization of Canada Post should never have been in the budget bill. Twice before we have seen this in the House as stand-alone bills. That was an appropriate way to present the matter to this House. Of course the opposition rallied. We made sure that those two bills did not pass, but that too is a part of democracy.

The member for Elmwood—Transcona is also right that basically, the Liberals sold out the workers at Canada Post. Last night we had an opportunity in this House to delete the sections of the budget bill that dealt with Canada Post. We had that opportunity. Unfortunately the Liberals voted with the government so the sections remain in the budget bill.

I find one thing absolutely incredible about that. I have been in this House listening to speeches about the budget at second reading. We have been at committee with the bill. We are now here at third reading. I have heard Liberal member after Liberal member get up and say, "We care passionately about protecting Canada Post. We are with you, CUPW. You can count on us", and last night, when they

had the opportunity to show which side they were on, what did they do? They voted with the government. They sold out the workers at Canada Post and they led us down the path of privatization of Canada Post.

It was an absolute disgrace and I was ashamed on their behalf last night in this House.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege always to rise in the House of Commons, but sadly Bill C-9 is coming to a conclusion with most likely its passage and I would like to speak against the bill for a number of different reasons.

It is an omnibus bill, so it is a bill that has several additional chapters added on to it. The government has chosen the Americanization of our legislature in many respects. It is similar to state and Congress bills that have riders and pet projects that are added to pass legislation in the United States. What has happened here is that cabinet ministers' pet projects and agendas are moved separately.

I am going to spend a lot of time talking about the bill, but I am not going to necessarily attack the Liberals. I am hopefully going to appeal to the Liberals and the progressive forces who are there to come forward, to change their ways, and vote against the budget.

The reality is that the Conservative government will not fall on this with the G8 and G20 coming. To declare these things as confidence, Canadians would be upset in many respects. Normally those issues that we are talking about should be going to legislation and should have the full debate.

This is a high water mark in terms of what is happening to Canadian democracy and also the repercussions of what is being proposed. I have already seen this.

I saw the thousands of jobs that have been lost, as well as thousands of workers thrown out on the streets in the strike, for example, at Vale Inco in Sudbury. The government changed the Investment Canada Act through a previous budget document, which has now resulted in a foreign takeover that is locking workers out from a fair deal, whereas we could have had a significant difference had that legislation gone through the normal process.

Viewers across the country really need to understand that the government has grouped together and piled on a series of significant social policy changes that are even outside the scope of the discussion of whether or not we should be building fake lakes, whether we should be spending money on employment insurance, whether we should be giving corporate tax cuts, or whether we should be increasing pensions and the politics around that.

This is about a further add-on of legislative changes in hundreds of pages that do not receive accountability. They do not get the input of Canadians. They are excluded from that, whether they are the individuals sitting at home who want to contribute when the government talks about changing Canada Post, who live in a rural community and perhaps would be losing that service, or whether they are in the city and dealing with smog and the environment, or whether they work for an organization actively trying to push for change to public policy. They are being denied the right and usual process in the House to change our ways about doing things.

Government Orders

We are also missing, which sometimes happens in the House, resolutions at the table, with debate in the House, and at committee with witnesses and all those things.

The Liberal Party, by not making a stand on that, is providing this window of opportunity for basically a bully government to get its way, to change public policy through the back door. It is afraid to do that and knows it cannot do that through the democratic process democratically that we normally have.

That is a significant departure from what we have had in the past. We have had this happen a couple of times recently with the Conservatives with regard to the Investment Canada Act and we have seen the hollowing out of the country. We have seen the debacles that have resulted with U.S. Steel, and as I mentioned, Vale Inco. As well, we have a series of divestments in the mining industry that otherwise would have had greater scrutiny.

We have seen the loss of Nortel. That is all because the Investment Canada Act was changed without due process. Pensioners were ripped off, employees have lost their jobs, and we have lost the opportunities of RIM, for example, to become a greater Canadian iconic company that could have brought in some of the technology from Nortel because the government changed the process and created a new process without diligence.

We have seen that happen with the Immigration Act. Canadians are upset about the Immigration Act no matter which way they feel about it. The Conservative government is responsible because it has been fiddling with it without having the proper process.

That is what is unacceptable. It is a watershed moment when it decided to pile it on even further and farther which will cost significantly down the road when we look at the Environmental Assessment Act that is going to be changed.

● (1645)

If we do not have the proper process in place or accountability, if people peddle their pet projects or get permission to avoid the process, we could end up hurting our economy and the environment, and I have seen that happen before.

I saw the government's short-natured approach when we looked at the Navigable Waters Protection Act. It was changed in a budget bill. We heard significant uproar from native fishermen, anglers, and a series of other groups who had no opportunity to consult.

Now the government has decided to up the ante. We just need to look at what the government is going to do with AECL, our nuclear power industry. It is important to note that 30,000 value-added jobs are in this industry in Canada. AECL has demonstrated that it is one of the most reliable operators in the world. It has demonstrated that it can actually be a progressive force for nuclear energy, but also making sure that it is not connected to weaponization.

AECL has led the way in many respects and it is now going to be sold, probably to the lowest bid. The government is desperate and it is trying to make up for the deficit. Everyone knows that so bids will come in low. That is unacceptable because billions of dollars of taxpayers' money has been invested in AECL.

I come from the auto industry. That industry has seen the loss of many value-added jobs. The manufacturing sector has lost many value-added jobs. The forestry sector has lost many value-added jobs. The effect is not only the bang at the moment when people are sent home and do not know what their future will hold but it also has an echo effect on the community, when their EI runs out or when they no longer have a pension or benefits so they cannot afford to send their kid to college or university.

We are undermining ourselves significantly by not doing the proper planning. It is frustrating when we see some of the things that are happening.

There is a big stink right now with regard to the \$2 million fake lake, which is now being called a pavilion. Let me put some perspective on this \$2 million lake that is being built in Toronto and is going to be filled in after the summit.

The government only has \$8 million in this budget for the Great Lakes, the most important natural resource on this planet. It provides freshwater which is not only a commodity but essential to our everyday living and our farming communities. This is causing regional conflict across this country. It will be the new gold of the future.

The government is providing \$8 million for the Great Lakes, yet in Toronto it will dig a hole, fill it with water, put out some Muskoka furniture, add some screens and some fences, and it is going to cost \$2 million. This fake lake is probably going to get more money than Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and Lake St. Clair. It is going to get more than all the Great Lakes. This fake lake is getting \$2 million and meanwhile \$8 million has to be divided up even though we know freshwater is one of the most significant things that we have.

Lake levels are down right now and that is affecting our economy. We have already witnessed that fact. The shipping port through Windsor and that area is one of the busiest in the world. It has actually had to lessen the loads to make sure that they can actually get through. A whole series of other issues related to dredging are going to emerge. Environmental contaminants occur as a result of dredging. We will lose the use of our waters, whether we use them for pleasure, recreation or the economy.

What do we get from the government in this budget? We get \$8 million for that and \$2 million will go toward something that will be dug out, filled with water, carved up, and then three or four days later be filled back in.

We have to borrow this money as the government has raked up a record deficit. We will have to pay interest on that money. Whether it be the money for corporate taxes, the tens of billions of dollars that will have to be raked over until 2014, whether it be \$6 billion for implementing the HST, we will have to pay interest on that.

Everything we do right now counts because we do it at a premium. We do it at an extra cost, and interesting to note is that it is being done on a credit card. The government's solution is to try to change the channel.

I ask the Liberals to think about this because it is significant for our economy and for our democracy. Now is the moment to call the government on the carpet.

Government Orders

•(1650)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on a really excellent speech. He touched on many of the issues that really do separate us from supporting this budget and supporting the kind of Canada that we see with the Conservative Party. It is a Canada where people are not engaged and where their right to be involved in decisions about how their environment is affected by projects is taken away by this budget bill.

One of the most important aspects of our society that has developed over the past 40 years is our ability to stand up and say that we do not like what is happening in our neighbourhoods. Governments in the past have seen it in their wisdom to make sure that citizens, through organizations and individual effort, were given support to make those arguments in front of environmental assessment panels.

Now that we are switching many of these projects over to an agency like the National Energy Board, that ability will be gone. The ability of citizens to get the resources to present coherent arguments at environmental assessment panels will be gone. It is a basic fundamental right that Canadians have fought for and have got out of governments in the past.

How does my colleague see this particular effort, that has gone forward from the Conservative Party, fitting in with—

•(1655)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Windsor West.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. This is basically out with the new and back in with the old. Today in the House of Commons, the Conservatives used one of their questions to talk and brag about Brian Mulroney. At the same time, they have spent a lot of time trying to distance themselves from Brian Mulroney.

Something interesting is happening here, especially with these agencies that are going to get more power. We have seen that the Prime Minister is incapable of resisting the temptation of putting political hacks and special favours into these commissions as well the senate. The people from the former Alliance and former Reform Party, and those who have signed to the Wildrose Alliance Party must be thinking this is déjà vu all over again.

Now we have record spending with less accountability. Now we have a system put in place again that brings in some of the old practices and takes away the elected officials' capability to respond to them.

We have to really wonder about all of those people who talked about those issues and felt them so dearly that they even brought some of the members of Parliament here to flip-flop and cross the floor. Why would they continue to support this when they are bringing back the old and throwing away the new?

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest travesties of this omnibus bill, Bill C-9, is the sale of AECL, a measure that in itself should mandate a legislative initiative from the government. It is hiding it in this omnibus bill. AECL is our largest crown corporation. The Canadian taxpayers have put \$22 billion into it. The government is looking at selling it at

a time when it would be lucky to get \$300 million for our investment.

I think the public should be demanding that the government at least do this in a transparent way. The government commissioned a report from Rothschild on how to proceed. It never consulted Parliament about its contents. We want to know why the government is sneaking this measure into an omnibus bill like Bill C-9.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, clearly, it is to avoid accountability. It is unfortunate because we could get a better process for that. We could have had the opportunity to understand some of the work that is happening out there. I think it is afraid for that to come forward because then we would have the chance to see the type of scientists that we have and their skill sets.

I had a chance to be at a press conference with some of the workers. They were here in this chamber watching one day. It is incredible to see the value and commitment that they have. If that story gets out there along with the serious nature and vulnerability of the work that they do, it could expose a really bad decision to do that. However, that would at least put it out there for debate.

Unfortunately, we are not. Unfortunately, we are beginning a process right now that is going to erode the ability for us to actually be a major world player and also to maintain that work that is so valuable. Lastly, it really is showing that we are distancing ourselves from our traditional world path, which has been nuclear power and public safety.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to intervene on behalf of the residents of my constituency of Mount Royal, a great, diverse and committed constituency, and I will seek to reflect and represent their concerns and hopes as they have conveyed them to me.

As my constituents would put it, a budget is not simply a financial statement, it is a statement of values. It is not simply a balance sheet but constitutes a set of priorities and principles underlying those priorities.

Accordingly, what I would like to do, in addressing the budget, is not only to address what the budget says but what it does not say, and also, how interspersed in the budget and comingled with it are a series of government initiatives that may in fact exclude the very instruments that are necessary for purposes of protecting the concerns of people in my constituency and beyond. I will give one example of the many I can give in this regard.

On May 14, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the federal government was obliged to apply the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to proposed development projects within traditional aboriginal territories. In this case, the Quebec government filed an action seeking to exclude the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act from being applied to mining projects in the province because the province claimed jurisdiction over the development of those resources.

Similarly, the Supreme Court of Canada recently held and confirmed the important roles that environmental assessment and public participation play in development projects when it denied federal permits for the Red Chris mine in British Columbia.

Government Orders

In a ruling this past January, the court determined that the federal government violated the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act by limiting the environmental assessment to a small component of the mines while avoiding assessment and wider public scrutiny.

Taken together, what these two judgments demonstrate are both the importance of public participation and environmental assessment and how the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act authorizes and allows for both public participation and environmental assessment. Yet, the federal government is now attempting to weaken this important legislation.

If one goes through the 900 pages of the federal budget, it will not leap out, but buried in those pages are a series of amendments that would effectively grant the environment minister broad discretion as to how and in what fashion the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is to be applied to development projects.

As well, in a related amendment, there is a proposal to authorize the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission to assume responsibility for environmental assessments of large energy projects, where these responsibilities would now be held by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

I bring these forward as case studies of where the budget has interspersed matters, comingled with the budget and in fact buried in the budget a series of initiatives that would marginalize the power with regard to both public participation and environmental protection, and imbue the executive authority with broad and discretionary power that would undermine both objectives of public participation and environmental assessment.

I will now address the budget with respect to those matters that are not covered, just as they were not covered by its overseer framework, the throne speech. For example, if we look at the throne speech, it was replete and well stated with a series of commemorative anniversaries.

• (1700)

However, if we look at the present budget, we find that with respect to those commemorative anniversaries, there is no reference to the fact that 2010 is the 25th anniversary of the coming into effect of the equality rights provision of the charter, which is effectively an organizing principle for the building of a just and egalitarian society.

Indeed, in 2005, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the coming into effect of section 15 of the charter, at the time that I served as minister of justice and attorney general of Canada, we proclaimed 2005 as the year of equality and, to that end, ushered in a series of exhibits, initiatives and events, all intended to convey the importance of equality as an organizing principle, as I put it, for a just society.

As we said then and I reaffirm now, the test of a just society is how it treats the most disadvantaged in its midst, how it treats its children, its violated women, its immigrants, its refugees, its poor, its elderly and its sick. That was the cause for proclaiming 2005 as the year of equality. I regret to say that this anniversary is being passed over in silence in 2010 and finds no parallel budgetary expression in the budget itself. Nor is there any reference in the budget of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms itself, even though this has a

transformative impact not only on our laws but in how we live our lives.

As I said in the beginning, the budget is not just a financial statement. It is a statement of values. It is not just a balance sheet. It is a statement of principles and priorities, and these have been somehow airbrushed out of the throne speech and then, correspondingly, airbrushed out of the budget.

Indeed, if one looks at the budget in terms of referencing the concerns and providing for them, there is only passing reference and mention to the issue of women's rights. There is no mention, for example, of the compelling need, as continuously represented to me by my constituents, of restoring and giving budgetary expression to the court challenges program, which became a bulwark for the protection of women's rights and minority rights in this country.

Nor is there any mention in the budget or provision, and this, too, is a matter of fundamental principle and policy, for a comprehensive and sustainable civil as well as criminal legal aid program, identified unanimously by all the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of justice at their annual meeting in 2005 as a priority for the justice agenda. The lack of such a program, I might add, also impacts adversely on the most vulnerable of our society, on women, on children, on minorities, the elderly, the poor and the like, therefore further exacerbating their plight and further exacerbating the concern of inequality.

I will now turn, in the second half of my remarks, to the compelling concern, again as conveyed to me by my constituents, of violence against women, which I trust will find expression in the upcoming meetings of the G8 and G20, in that we hear referencing to the matter of violence against women as being a persistent, pervasive and pernicious evil.

Seventeen years ago, at the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the clarion call at the time was that "women's rights are human rights and there are no human rights that do not include the rights of women". Indeed, the women's movement energized the conference, not only with their advocacy of women's rights but with their compelling concerns for human rights as a whole.

Seventeen years later and in the aftermath of the 100th anniversary of the founding of International Women's Day, it is tragic to note that not only are women's rights still not seen as human rights, not only is the promotion and protection of women's rights still not a priority on the national and international agenda, but discrimination against women remains, as UNESCO characterized it even then, as a form of gender apartheid, that violence against women is a pervasive, persistent and pernicious evil, and therefore should be put on the agenda at the G8 and G20 summits.

• (1705)

As women's rights leader, Charlotte Bunch, put it on the occasion of the Beijing Declaration, and astonishingly enough the situation has not improved since, she said:

Vast numbers of people around the world suffer from starvation and terrorism, and are humiliated, tortured, mutilated, and even murdered every year, just because they are women.

Government Orders

Indeed, as the new UN special rapporteur on violence against women, Rashida Manjoo, put it:

Violence against women violates human dignity, as well as numerous rights, including the right to equality, physical integrity, freedom and non-discrimination.

I believe that equality and equal protection doctrines demand that we address violence against women, in all its manifestations, as discrimination against women.

As I have stated in this House before, violence against women is a multi-dimensional assault on women's equality and human security. Women cannot achieve equality if they are subjected to violence in their daily lives. The opposite is also true. Women's inequality increases their vulnerability to violence and limits their options for leaving abusive situations and relationships.

It was this narrative of discrimination and violence against women, indeed, the nexus between the two where inequality is a precursor to violence and violence is an assault on women's equality that inspired and underpinned the first ever G8 international conference on violence against women held this past September in Italy, and which I trust deserves to be revisited in the course of the G8.

The conference brought together victims and witnesses to violence, NGOs engaged in combatting violence against women, scholars, journalists, human rights advocates, and, most important, the ministers involved in that conference, many of whom came from African, Asian and Middle East countries.

What struck me then, and what I wish to share with this House now, was the moving witness testimony, particularly as put forward by the victims of violence and witnesses to violence, and on the issue, for example, of domestic violence, which they spoke of as being too often ignored, marginalized or sanitized as a private issue, something to be hidden, something to be ashamed of, something to be contained within domestic walls.

At the G8 conference on violence against women in Italy, it came out of the shadows. In coming out of the shadows, it reminded us of the pernicious and pervasive assault. It reminded us of why this must be seen as a universal human rights issue and why it should be put on the agenda of the G8.

Accordingly, may I briefly address two case studies of this violence and its underlying assault on women's equality. First, the evil of trafficking in women and girls, and second, mass sexual violence in armed conflict.

In the matter of trafficking, what we are dealing with is the commodification in human beings, of treating human beings as cattle to be bonded and bartered or as goods to be bought and sold, what I would refer to as the global slave trade, and which, again, is an issue that should be addressed within the framework of the G8.

We know that this grotesque trade in human beings now generates upward of more than \$12 billion a year. It is the world's fastest growing international crime. We know that the majority of victims who are trafficked are women and girls under the age of 25, and that many trafficking victims tragically also include children.

We know that the victims of trafficking are desperate to secure the necessities of life and that exploitation is at the core of the crime and the evil of trafficking. We know that no matter for what purpose they are trafficked, all trafficked persons suffer deprivation of liberty and

physical, sexual and emotional abuse, including threats of violence and actual harm to themselves and their family members.

Accordingly, if we are to develop a comprehensive and cohesive strategy to combat trafficking, we need to stop thinking in terms of abstract silos, of thinking of human trafficking as an abstract or faceless problem, of thinking of it only as an international law concern, a criminal law problem, a law enforcement problem, an immigration problem, public health problem or an economic problem. It is each and all of these and more.

● (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The member's time is up.

[*Translation*]

It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, June 3, 2010, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of third reading of the bill now before the House.

● (1715)

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1740)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 63*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Baird
Bernier
Blackburn
Block
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Armstrong
Ashfield
Benoit
Bezan
Blaney
Boucher
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Cadman
Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)

Private Members' Business

Carrie	Casson	Folco	Footé
Chong	Clarke	Freeman	Gagnon
Clement	Cummins	Gameau	Gaudet
Davidson	Day	Godin	Goodale
Dechert	Del Mastro	Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Devolin	Dreeshen	Basques)	
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra	Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Fast	Finley	Holland	
Flaherty	Fletcher	Hughes	Hyer
Galipeau	Généreux	Ignatieff	Jennings
Glover	Goldring	Julian	Kennedy
Goodyear	Gourde	Laforest	Laframboise
Grewal	Harper	Lalonde	Lavallée
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hiebert	Layton	LeBlanc
Hill	Hoback	Lemay	Leslie
Hoepfner	Holder	Lessard	Lévesque
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	MacAulay	Malo
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Maloway	Marston
Kent	Kerr	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Masse	Mathysen
Lake	Lauzon	McCallum	McGuinty
Lebel	Lemieux	Ménard	Mendes
Lobb	Lukiwski	Minna	Mourani
Lunn	Lunney	Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Mark	Mayes	Nadeau	Neville
McColeman	McLeod	Oliphant	Ouellet
Menzies	Merrifield	Pacetti	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson	Plamondon	Pomerleau
Norlock	O'Connor	Proulx	Rafferty
O'Neill-Gordon	Obhrai	Ratansi	Regan
Oda	Paradis	Rota	Savoie
Petit	Poilievre	Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Preston	Raiit	Siksay	Silva
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Simms	Simson
Reid	Richards	St-Cyr	Stoffer
Richardson	Rickford	Szabo	Thi Lac
Ritz	Saxton	Thibeault	Trudeau
Scheer	Schellenberger	Valeriote	Vincent
Shea	Shiple	Volpe	Zarac— 126
Shory	Smith		
Sorenson	Stanton		
Storseth	Sweet		
Thompson	Tilson		
Toews	Trost		
Tweed	Uppal		
Van Kesteren	Van Loan		
Vellacott	Verner		
Wallace	Warawa		
Warkentin	Watson		
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)			
Weston (Saint John)			
Wong	Woodworth		
Yelich	Young— 138		

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bains
Beaudin	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Cannis	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Comartin
Crombie	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Donnelly
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faille

PAIRED

Members

Bachand	Boughen
Braid	Deschamps
Gallant	Guay— 6

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1745)
[English]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-389, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this House and across this country, we are privileged to be able to express ourselves freely and to live to our fullest potential as citizens of Canada. It is important, however, that we remain forever vigilant in our work to ensure that all Canadians enjoy the human rights which our citizenship rightly bestows.

Private Members' Business

I am reminded of a statement by Nobel prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi, who said, "Please use your freedom to promote ours". These are simple words, but they are invested with tremendous meaning and substance. Several of my colleagues have noted during these debates that this bill, dealing with equality and human rights protection for transgender and transsexual Canadians, lacks the benefit of first-hand experience. This is true. There are indeed no transgender or transsexual people currently serving as members of Parliament.

However, in keeping with the spirit of the words of Aung San Suu Kyi, we are given the unique opportunity and privilege to promote the freedom of others as outlined in the provisions of this bill. Human rights are precisely as the term states. What the bill is addressing is a right, not a privilege. Canadians are, by virtue of our democratic traditions and our commitment to equality, protected with respect to our most basic human rights and freedoms.

When contemplating the provisions of this bill, it can be reasonably surmised that what has been proposed should really not require debate. In essence, this bill ensures that transgender and transsexual Canadians are afforded protection under the law with respect to their basic human rights in a manner consistent with that which is enjoyed by every other Canadian. It is simply a reaffirmation that all Canadians share the same rights and opportunities, and that these require equal protection under the law.

Indeed, it is remarkable, if one were to think about it, that in this day and age we continue to find ourselves in a position of having to debate the need to include a specific group under the umbrella of human rights law as well as protection under the Criminal Code. One cannot help but reflect on similar debates over the past several hundred years, when people like those who are transgender or transsexual were the subjects of discriminatory practice and indeed victims of hate crimes.

Like parliamentarians of years past, we are called in our time to embrace and support the inclusion of transgender and transsexual Canadians in the most fundamental of our laws, those which protect the most basic human rights and which also offer protection from criminal acts of hate and discrimination.

In debates of this kind, we are often tempted to resort to statistical data to make our case. We may, at times, focus too much on these numbers. Indeed, several members have referred to statistics when speaking about the actual number of Canadians who are transgender or transsexual and living in Canada.

I believe that while it is important to reflect upon the statistics, we must also be vigilant when doing so. Human rights do not need to be measured in numbers simply because they are universal in character. As someone who has held a long and abiding commitment to human rights issues, I recognize that there is little currency to be found in debating numbers. The reality is simply this. All human beings, regardless of their numbers, are invested with basic human rights, freedoms and protection under the law, which are inalienable and non-negotiable.

I recognize that there are those who may argue about the need to amend our laws to specifically protect transgender and transsexual Canadians. The reality is that there is a clear and pressing

requirement for such action. There is ample evidence, both statistically and anecdotal, that confirms that transgender and transsexual Canadians experience disproportionate discrimination and even violence based on who they are and how they choose to live their lives. This is unacceptable.

The bill we are debating today may not eliminate these realities, but it will most certainly offer greater protection to those who are victims of such discrimination and lead to that day when transgender and transsexual Canadians will enjoy the freedom and security that they so rightly deserve.

It is important to remember that positive action in matters such as this is our responsibility as parliamentarians. For example, it was not that long ago that gays and lesbians in this country faced similar challenges to those we are debating today. Fortunately, many of us in the House are too young to remember the more violent and reprehensible violations of human rights experienced by gays and lesbians in Canada, but they were indeed troubling and serious acts of injustice.

• (1750)

Mr. Speaker, 1965 is not really that long ago. Yet, in that year a Canadian gay man was declared a dangerous offender simply because of his sexual orientation and the belief that was presented to a Canadian court that he was likely to continue to be sexually active. This man was not released from prison until 1971.

I make note of this incident to highlight the need for us to be proactive in protecting human rights for transgender and transsexual Canadians. Following the imprisonment of this man, Bill C-167, an omnibus bill, was introduced in 1967 by the then justice minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, which decriminalized homosexuality and was the foundation upon which great strides were made for gays and lesbians in this country.

Indeed, under two more Liberal Prime Ministers, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, gays and lesbians were allowed to marry, which represented another enormous step forward for human rights in Canada. Today we are called to be bold and progressive and, indeed, as courageous as Pierre Trudeau or Prime Ministers Chrétien and Martin. Their courage demonstrated that it is incumbent upon parliamentarians to take proactive action to ensure that the human rights of all Canadians are fully protected.

Historically, it has taken too long to address all the challenges to human rights and freedoms that have materialized over the past many years. Many of them have been based on race, religion or sexual orientation, but all have experienced the day when as a society we determined that action had to be taken.

Today my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas is calling upon our fellow parliamentarians to do not only what is required of us but what should be expected. We have often heard that a true measure of a society is the manner in which it treats those within it that are most vulnerable to abuse or discrimination.

Clearly, as we have heard during the course of this debate, transgender and transsexual Canadians have more than their share of discrimination, violence and unacceptable alienation. Bill C-389 is not designed to confer on transgender and transsexual Canadians anything other than that which they are entitled.

We as Canadians and parliamentarians are being called by history and generations of Canadians yet to come to do that which is fair and just: ensure that all Canadians are treated equally and respectfully under the laws and traditions of our country. It is for this reason that I encourage all of my fellow members of the House to join with our colleague from Burnaby—Douglas and vote in favour of Bill C-389.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House to debate Bill C-389 introduced by my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas. This is a bill I am very glad to see.

When I talk about a bill, I usually refer to situations in my own life to illustrate what I am saying. Once again, I want to remind hon. members that if you have never walked a mile in the shoes of someone who is discriminated against, if you have never done what someone has to do to assert themselves, be seen as a whole person and enjoy the same rights as everyone around them, if you have never done that, then it is hard to understand the despair and the problems experienced by people who live with a sword of Damocles constantly hanging over their heads, the sword of Damocles that is discrimination. This bill does not refer to racial discrimination, but that is what I am going to talk about, because that is what I know.

At the age of 17, I fell madly in love with a black African who descended from people in the Belgian Congo. It was 1967, and when I fell madly in love with him, I did not realize just how much I was going to learn about the problems people can have when they do not have the same physical appearance or the same culture as those around them.

When we wanted to get married in 1970, the parish priest refused to marry us because he said our children would be mulatto, and he did not want any mulatto children in his parish. My father spoke out against the priest and insisted that the church allow me to be married in church. The curate agreed to marry us.

But I had already seen that people can be discriminated against even if they have done nothing wrong. My husband had done nothing wrong, but he was born black, and others held that against him. He tried so hard to find work. On the phone, he sounded like a Quebecker, and was often told that the job was available, but once he showed up, the job was already taken. Whenever I went looking for an apartment for the two of us, there was always a vacancy when I called to say I was coming to see the place, but when I showed up with my husband, the apartment was always rented.

Then, what the priest feared came to pass. I had my first child, a beautiful mulatto boy. We tried to raise him in the knowledge that we loved him and that nothing in the world could ever hurt him. But one day, when he was four, he was taking a bath, and he asked me why the kids he played with called him a Negro. He said that he was not a Negro. I did not know what to tell him. It broke my heart. I did not know how to comfort my child and make him understand just how stupid and mean people can be, how they just do not make sense sometimes. I did not know how to help him understand that. But I understood. I understood that anytime one person discriminates against another, anytime people find a way to discriminate against others, they do irreparable damage.

Private Members' Business

The bill that my colleague introduced will put an end to a type of discrimination that has been around for a very long time. We do not choose to be born a man or a woman. We do not ask to have a different gender identity than the one we are born with. We do not ask for that. We have no choice. We also do not ask for our gender expression to be different than anyone else's. Children are children, and live like children.

• (1755)

But as children, they may realize that they are not in the right body, that they do not have the right gender identity. A boy might realize that he should have been a girl, and a girl might realize that she should have been a boy.

Unfortunately, until now, very few people have been aware of this reality or realized how much they are harming their child when they do not want a boy to dress up as a girl, or a girl to play with a boy's toys.

Our society does not view that as normal, but what could be purer, more natural and more whole than a child? If their sexual identity seems natural to them, then why should we, as adults, not accept that? If children instinctively understand who they are and who they want to be for the rest of their lives, why is it so difficult for adults like us to understand and accept that? Why is it so hard for us to give people an opportunity to be heard when they report discrimination, hate propaganda or violence because they have chosen to express their sexual identity? I do not know.

Maybe some of us think that we have all of the answers, that we know better because we make the laws. That is what we do here in the House. However, before we make any decisions about people's rights, we should think long and hard. We may well be putting the lives of our own children into the hands of people who will discriminate against them. In many cases, such decisions will affect people we know but who have kept their true selves hidden because there is still shame associated with expressing one's sexual identity openly.

Would people we do not know but who seem normal and likable suddenly be different if they chose to express their sexual identity? Would they no longer have the same morals and values as before? Not at all.

If we are honest with ourselves, we have to admit that our understanding of all of the dimensions of human beings is medieval. I am glad that my colleague introduced this bill, which will put an end to years of injustice.

Before coming here today, I received a message from Brian Rushfeld urging me not to vote for this bill because it would have terrible consequences and result in abnormal and abominable sexual activities. What is so abominable about a man who identifies as a woman or a woman who identifies as a man? Can anyone tell me? I see nothing wrong with that at all. Mr. Rushfeld's concerns are exaggerated, and it will be my pleasure to vote alongside my Bloc Québécois colleagues in favour of this bill.

Private Members' Business

• (1800)

[English]

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill C-389. I would like to thank the member for Burnaby—Douglas who has been an outstanding critic for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and transsexual issues for our party and in fact for all Canadians.

This is a very important bill that is before us today. Sitting here in the House as we come to the close of a very busy day where we just passed that monster budget bill, it is very good to hear some of the speeches that are taking place. I especially want to thank my colleague, the member for Laval. I know that she always speaks from her heart about the rights and dignity that all people have. It was good to hear the speech that came from the Liberal member earlier as well.

I note that the bill was seconded by 12 other members of Parliament from different parties. That is really significant. It tells us something about this bill that deals with fundamental human rights for transgender and transsexual people who have been denied rights for a very long time. When we see members across the floor supporting the bill and speaking from a personal point of view, it tells us this is something that is very powerful. We hear the stories and messages, whether they are from our own lives, or from the lives of people we know, just as we heard from the member for Laval about her own personal experience of what it means to face differences and how it is dealt with by the church, or religion, or by the system itself and how that impacts on people's lives in sometimes a very hurtful way and sometimes even in a violent way.

I do feel very proud that we have this bill in the House and the work that has been done by the member for Burnaby—Douglas. He has held consultations across the country. He has brought this issue forward not only in our own caucus but in the queer community overall, as well as in the broader Canadian society. That is one of the good things we can do as members of Parliament. Often we are told that we do not count, that we are not part of the government, that we are not this, that we are not that. This bill is a reflection of what an individual can do in building those kinds of alliances and expression of understanding and education to actually move something like this forward and to say that there is a problem in that the Canadian Human Rights Act does not yet contain a prohibited grounds of discrimination that would protect transgender and transsexual members of our society. The bill is very important.

I have had the honour to speak recently at a couple of events. One was at a high school here in Ottawa, for Pride Day just a few weeks ago as part of Jer's vision. It was really good to go to a local high school in Ottawa to speak to all of the grade 10 students about pride issues, about what it means to be gay or lesbian, or transgender, or transsexual, or bisexual. I have to say that a lot has changed.

When I spoke to those students in the high school I could feel that within that community there was a lot of understanding. People were more open about issues and willing to understand how people are different. At the same time there was a recognition that bullying still takes place. There are still people who are targeted. Certainly the research that is being done in Canada shows us that transgendered

and transsexual people are among some of the most people at risk in our society. They face discrimination, whether it is in the workplace, whether it is in housing, whether it is in society generally. Not only are they vulnerable, but they are most vulnerable to face violence.

While on the one hand I think we can all say that we have come a long way and that rights have been enshrined and that we have made advances legally, politically and culturally, we also have to acknowledge that homophobia still exists, that discrimination still exists and that the group that is most vulnerable to this is certainly transsexuals and transgendered people.

• (1805)

I had a second occasion recently in my home community in Vancouver to attend an event that was organized by the Pride Education Network. It conducts a program in schools called Out in Schools. It was wonderful to see students come to a local movie theatre to watch a film that has just been produced in Vancouver called *Beyond Gay—The Politics of Pride*. This is a marvellous film that takes us all around the world.

A lot of members in this House have attended pride parades. The one in Toronto is coming up in July and we have ours in Vancouver in August. This film is so remarkable because it gives a history of pride parades around the world and what is taking place. Hundreds of thousands of people come out in Toronto, Vancouver and Ottawa to celebrate pride and diversity. We see this in the United States as well.

This movie takes us through not only the history of pride festivals in Canada but it also focuses on places around the world. I will mention a couple of places. In Moscow, the pride parade has been banned and organizers have faced incredible harassment. The mayor of Moscow could be seen in the film making the most outrageous, hateful comments against gay and lesbian and trans people. In Poland, armed police had to make a corridor for people who were celebrating pride to conduct their march and rally.

I was pleased to attend this movie and the discussion that followed, particularly with young people. It gave people an understanding not only of the incredible changes that have taken place in our society, but the fact that great challenges still remain.

Here in Canada we believe that we are very advanced, and we are at many levels. As was noted earlier, the Canadian Human Rights Act provides protection based on sexual orientation. Our former colleague, Svend Robinson, a member of Parliament for over 25 years, did outstanding pioneering work on this issue. His private member's bill was brought into law to ensure that sexual orientation was protected under the Criminal Code as a hate crime.

A lot of work has been done. Those of us who have been working on this issue and are aware of what is going on in the community know that the most significant protection that has not happened is for transgendered and transsexual members of our communities.

Private Members' Business

Back in 2004 two students from Carleton University, Langdon and Boodram, undertook a survey to determine what is taking place in the trans community. Not surprisingly, they found significant levels of discrimination in housing, employment services, including unwelcome comments at work, unwelcome comments while living in accommodation, discrimination in bars, restaurants, schools, universities and colleges. Other surveys have taken place since then.

There is no question that these protections are needed. This bill needs to be brought into law. Then we need to raise the bar on education and awareness if we truly believe that we are a diverse society and that all people have the right to protection, rights and opportunities.

I hope that the bill will pass second reading and go to committee. It is important that we hear from witnesses firsthand because no trans people have spoken in the House. It is important that they be heard at committee so that their experience can be brought forward and that this bill can be passed into law.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in the debate about the bill we are discussing today, Bill C-389, which was introduced by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

Before I begin, I would like to remind the House that our government is proud to uphold the principles of respect, diversity and equality that are expressed in Canadian laws. Our government also believes that all Canadians should be protected from crime in our country, as is demonstrated by our justice agenda.

After much thought and careful examination, it seems obvious to me that the amendments proposed in this bill are useless and unclear. That is why I will be voting against this bill, for legal reasons that I will now explain.

I would first like to talk about the uselessness of this bill. During the first hour of debate on this bill, some members stated that transgender Canadians have specific problems related to employment and in the lodging and services sectors. However, these members played down the fact that transsexuals are already protected against discrimination based on sex under the Canada Human Rights Act, a federal law.

As hon. members no doubt already know, federal and provincial human rights tribunals already protect transsexuals against discrimination in employment and services.

The validity of this protection against any discrimination on the prohibited ground of sex—or gender—has been upheld by the courts. But even though transsexuals are already protected against discrimination by Canada's tribunals and courts of law, that is not enough for the member for Burnaby—Douglas.

He is insisting that we include transgender individuals explicitly in the anti-discrimination legislation and the Criminal Code. As he said in the first hour of debate, transgender Canadians cannot feel part of society if they are not protected by human rights legislation. In fact, they should say they are protected, because the courts have

upheld the validity of discrimination complaints filed by transsexuals.

The member is proposing to amend legislation that currently protects transsexuals against discrimination. What he really seems to be proposing is therefore rather symbolic.

On what do we base our decision to symbolically add one minority group instead of another?

This bill proposes changes to the law, not just symbolic debate or measures. And changes to the law have real, not symbolic, repercussions.

For example, guaranteeing additional protection for one minority group can have unwanted social and legal consequences for another group. We must know the exact repercussions of legislative amendments and we were not given this information by the member who sponsored the bill.

I would now like to raise a second point: the amendments proposed by Bill C-389 are vague and undefined. The pertinent article of the Canadian Human Rights Act reads as follows:

For all purposes of this Act, the prohibited grounds of discrimination are race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability and conviction for which a pardon has been granted.

The bill would add to this long list gender identity and gender expression. It is important to note that the term “expression” is nowhere to be found on this list. The law protects religion, which also includes religious expression.

In the first hour of this debate, the hon. member for Don Valley West stated the following, in response to the Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, who noted that the bill was not specific enough.

• (1815)

Basically, he was saying that maybe we do not have to know all the answers. Maybe we do not have to have all the definitions nailed down. If we want to talk about gender identity and expand it to gender expression, perhaps our leadership would be welcomed around the world.

However, perhaps significant, long-standing, strategic reasons exist for carefully examining the exact meaning of these legislative changes. Maybe other countries have significant strategic reasons for not including “gender expression” as a separate concept in their provisions on discrimination or hate propaganda.

It is a well-known fact that clarity is crucial in drafting legislation. Canadian legislative drafters primarily refer to Ruth Sullivan's book entitled *Sullivan and Driedger on the Construction of Statutes*. It indicates that the first obligation of a legislative drafter is to be precise; the second is to be clear; the third is to be concise. There is no obligation to be inspiring or amusing.

Private Members' Business

However, when we look at the changes proposed in Bill C-389, none of these terms are defined. As a result, we cannot be sure of the meaning of "gender expression" and how it might be interpreted by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal and the courts.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, I know how important it is to protect all Canadians from discrimination and hate crimes. I am proud that Canada is recognized internationally as a country that cares deeply about respect for diversity and equality. Those principles are part of our Constitution and our laws, both provincial and federal.

Bearing that in mind, members of the House must ask themselves whether the amendments in Bill C-389 are clear and/or necessary. The proposed amendments may seem simple, but the legal consequences may be complex and unpredictable.

I will therefore vote against this bill for the legal reasons I outlined earlier.

● (1820)

[*English*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the bill. The hon. member who moved the bill has worked very hard on this for a long time and is very committed to the issues of equality for all.

I support the bill for many reasons. When I first became a member of Parliament in 1993, as a physician, I saw what discrimination based on sexual orientation cost my patients. I saw the high levels of suicide and discrimination. I saw the law discriminated against access to medical care, to dental benefits, to medical benefits in every way.

Persons who were same sex couples and had lived together for many years were unable to do the simple things that a heterosexual couple that had been together for a year could do. In other words, if a partner was dying or ill, the person did not have the right, no matter how long he or she had lived with that partner to make decisions with regard to care and with regard to funeral arrangements in the event the partner passed away.

As a physician, this did not allow me to do my job or to take care of my patients in a manner that should be beyond any kind of discrimination whatsoever, as stated in the Canada Health Act. As a result, the Liberal government brought forward these issues, and today we have equality based on sexual orientation.

However, the bill speaks to another issue where, as a physician, I saw a great deal of discrimination. This is a medical diagnosis. The concept is there are persons who we like to call transgender persons. They have problems coming to grips with their sexual identity. They then go to see a physician. There is a definite medical diagnosis that states these people need to look at their identity gender change. There are many things they need to access. They need to access psychiatric care in terms of decision making and in terms of the diagnosis. Once that is done, there are all sorts of medical options available such as the necessary medication for the change to occur, surgical interventions, et cetera.

Depending on what province these patients live in, many do not have access to that kind of medical care. The Canada Health Act

states very clearly that we cannot discriminate against people if they require medically necessary care. As a diagnosis, this falls under the heading of medically necessary care and all of the pieces that come in between.

For a medical reason alone, we once again have a group of Canadians that do not have access to the care it needs when it needs it regardless of its ability to pay, or geography or pre-existing conditions, portability and all the pieces of the Canada Health Act about which we need to talk.

For medical reasons alone, even if we did not bring on the reasons that pertain to discrimination, to equality within the country, to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to the concept that we cannot discriminate against any Canadian because of his or her particular group identity, this fits into all of those things.

However, as a physician, I really want to speak to the fact that we are denying certain members of our society, based on their group and identities, access to good care when they need it.

I have had many patients who struggled to decide if they did have a gender identity problem or if they needed to move into the next stage, which is to have whatever medical care they need to help them to deal with this issue. They were the transgender patients. Not only did they not have access to the health care they needed, or access to the ability to deal with a lot of psychological as well as the physical trauma they underwent during that period of time, many of these people faced a totally different kind of discrimination.

They faced discrimination from the heterosexual community and, in many instances, from within their own communities sometimes because no one knew who they were. They did not have access to simple things like washrooms because they were considered neither fish nor fowl. No one had decided who they were. That kind of discrimination is psychologically devastating to a person, if we put aside the medical needs for a minute.

● (1825)

When people do not know who they are and do not have access to counselling to help them deal with these issues in a real way in order to find out who they are and why they are trapped, the whole concept of lack of control over anything they do affects their psychological ability to live normal lives, to walk into a community and to express themselves once they have had a diagnosis made.

For people who had money and were able to go to another country to get whatever medical care they needed to become transgendered persons, when they returned to Canada the discrimination was extraordinary. As a physician, as an MP and as a Vancouverite, I have been around the community and I have seen the pain, the discrimination, the isolation and the inability to be welcomed anywhere by anyone because of the concept of people not accepting people for who they are. This is an extraordinary thing to live with.

We need to look at the number of suicides and the different addictions people have to help them get out of the place where no one accepts them. We need to deal with this issue because it is of profound importance to a group of Canadians.

Private Members' Business

If we believe in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we buy into our Canada Health Act, we must take every step necessary to, first, make every Canadian equal under the law, and, second, by being equal under the law, the law and the nation makes a statement that we will not accept people being discriminated against in this country where we have chosen to set up a charter that speaks in section 15 to the issue of minority rights.

We cannot say that one minority has more rights than another. The minute we start saying that someone has more rights than another person, we immediately set up a criteria of different levels of people who are accepted in society. One thing we all know is that when people are not accepted in society, they will rise up to seek their rights.

We are talking about basic human rights and with human rights comes access to all of the things that human beings can enjoy: the ability to live in freedom and seek opportunity and potential wherever we can; to have access to justice, education, health care and all of the things that allow us as human beings to realize whatever it is that lies within us and in our potential to live meaningful lives; and to be a part of communities that accept and embrace us.

We are discussing a fundamental human rights issue. As I said, the subsets of it are access to medical care, freedom and equality under the law. Those are just chunks of things that we bring in under the subheading of the basic human right to life, to the freedom to be who we are, to choose who we wish to be, to live in a manner that co-exists with other people and to live as a lawful human being who does not harm others and can become a productive and contributing member of society.

Those are fundamental things that we all want. We can deny other people for all sorts of trumped up reasons. There are always great reasons. We can cite legal precedents and discuss the fact that we do not understand the meaning of the words and what they pertain to, but that is a red herring. The bottom line is that we actually know in medicine what this means. There is no question in medicine what this means, no question at all.

Therefore, we need to start thinking about the people who live in our country and what kind of government and Parliament we are that we would allow people to live in fear with discrimination and without access to the basic human rights that other people have. I support this bill and I will be voting for it to go to committee.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-389 presented by the member for Burnaby—Douglas. I know he has worked on this bill since 2004, for six long years, and this is the first time it has been debated in the House. I have listened to some very excellent speeches on the bill. We are in the second hour of debate.

Bill C-389 would add gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act and sections of the Criminal Code dealing with hate propaganda and sentencing for hate crimes. We are following up on a recommendation made as early as 2000 by the Canadian Human Rights Act Review Panel.

The bill would help protect transsexual, transgender and gender nonconformist people in Canada from the very severe discrimination they face in numerous aspects of life such as discrimination in employment, a staggering unemployment rate, housing, obtaining government and social services, including health care, official identification with consequences for banking, education and other services, business and other areas, as well as incitement to hatred, assault, sexual assault and murder.

Various studies have quoted in detail the discrimination by which trans people are subjected. Currently the Northwest Territories is the only legislature in Canada to have passed such a measure, while other cities of Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver offer certain protections.

Although some provincial human rights commissions have found that transsexuals are already protected under grounds such as section disability, it leaves the issue invisible and it may not cover everyone who is discriminated against because of the gender identity or expression. Explicitly prohibiting discrimination on both grounds, gender identity and gender expression, will ensure a broad coverage of people who are discriminated against due to their nonconformity with social ideas of gender. It would also conform to Canada's international statements on the issue and would follow the lead of more than 100 U.S. jurisdictions that offer such protection.

In 1986 in Manitoba, the attorney general of the day, Roland Penner, attempted to introduce initially to the NDP government caucus of which there were 30 of us at the time, and it was a majority government by only one or two members, a bill to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in the Human Rights Code. I am sure it was a first in Canada. It was a very traumatic experience for a lot of people. After several ill-fated attempts in just getting it accepted and through the caucus, he was able to convince the government caucus to proceed, with the aggressive support of four of us, one being the chairman, Mr. Steve Ashton, who is the father of our current Churchill MP and is still an MLA and cabinet minister in Manitoba, the current city councillor, Harvey Smith, who was a former MLA, Marty Dolin, who was a very dynamic and no-nonsense MLA and strong advocate for social change, and myself as well.

We had the support in those days of the Liberal leader, who had a caucus of herself, and she was a very strong advocate. In spite of my differences with her over the years, she does a great job in the Senate. She is one of the more active senators and I really appreciate the work she does there.

Private Members' Business

However, we encountered very strong opposition from the Conservative opposition of the day. In the provincial legislature it is a little different. The committee structure is different from Parliament's, where pretty much everyone who wants to appear at committee gets their 10 minutes to present. While we had a number of people present in favour of the legislation, we had hundreds of people being brought in by different church organizations. I recall the member for Laval's excellent speech earlier today. Several church groups organized and brought in hundreds of people. We would sit there until midnight, night after night, listening to these presentations, and I remember it very well.

• (1830)

We had some difficulties, even within our own caucus, convincing people that this legislation was not there to promote any type of lifestyle. We had to convince people that we were simply bringing in a human right, that we were including this measure in the Human Rights Act and that people were not allowed to be discriminated against in terms of employment, finding an apartment and other areas.

The opposition, however, became very nervous about all of this and suggested that somehow the government would, at the end of the day, be promoting. Well, the world did not come to an end because of what we did in 1986. If anything, more jurisdictions adopted what we did then.

After six and a half years in government as premier of Manitoba, I believe Howard Pawley, as the premier today, will tell us that what he did in terms of including sexual orientation in the human rights code of Manitoba was one of his proudest achievements of his six and a half years. I do not think he would have thought of it and said that at the time but, as time went by, he recognized that as a milestone.

I would say that even the Conservatives in the Manitoba legislature today would look back, I believe, with some embarrassment about how they responded and acted at that time.

Doing the right thing is often difficult but, when it comes to human rights, they are fundamental in a democratic society. We cannot take any shortcuts when it comes to human rights.

I expect that my email machine will be on overdrive tomorrow, and that is to be expected. There have been a lot of big changes in society since the 1960s and I think the member for Laval captured it very well when she described her situation in the 1960s. I can relate to that as well, as I think many people can. For the benefit of society, things have changed. There are more open-minded people today than there were in the 1960s. I think of a lot of it has to do with the educational process. When people have issues explained to them and when they understand the issues better, they will be more accepting.

The fact is that the world did not come crashing down because of what we did in 1986. There are many other jurisdictions that are dealing with issues like this.

I want to take a moment to recognize two trailblazers, who the member for Burnaby—Douglas knows as well, Mr. Chris Vogel and Mr. Richard North from Winnipeg. I remember meeting Chris Vogel when I was a student activist back in 1971 at the University of

Manitoba. Chris Vogel was active in organizing gays for equality at the University of Manitoba.

Many years before gay marriage even became an issue in Canada, Chris Vogel and Richard North were married. I think it was probably the first gay marriage in North America. I did not want to forget to mention Chris Vogel and Richard North before my time ran out.

• (1835)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to conclude the second reading debate on my private member's bill, Bill C-389, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression).

This bill would add gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act and to the hate crimes and sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. This would ensure full human rights protection in areas of federal jurisdiction for transsexual and transgender Canadians.

The bill had its first hour of debate on May 10 and its second hour tonight. I would like to express my appreciation to all those who participated in the debate for their thoughtful comments, and I do mean everyone. Everyone who participated in the debate did so respectfully. I know that folks in the transgender and transsexual communities appreciate the participation of all members who chose to speak, just as they appreciate the 12 seconders of the bill.

Two concerns were raised in the debate that I would like to address.

The first was that the terms “gender identity” and “gender expression” were not defined in the bill. This is true, but it is also entirely consistent with the Canadian Human Rights Act which does not define other listed prohibited grounds of discrimination. That is no accident. It was deliberate. These terms are widely used here in Canada and around the world, and Canada, including the current government, has supported international agreements and statements where they are used. They are accepted terms, defined both in practice and in jurisprudence.

The second concern was that explicit coverage in the Canadian Human Rights Act and in the hate crimes and sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code was redundant, given the fact that decisions had already been made supporting the full human rights of transsexuals and transgender Canadians and the fact that the provisions of the Criminal Code were open-ended. This, too, is true, but a strong argument can be made for the importance of adding to the existing list.

Those who are subject to discrimination and prejudice in our society need to see themselves clearly in our laws. This confirms their place in our society. It confirms that they are valued members of our society. Without explicit recognition, the lives and struggles of transgender and transsexual people remain invisible and their issues remain unaddressed.

Adjournment Proceedings

Accessing these protections through a convoluted process using other possibly related categories, usually the categories of sex and disability, diminishes the protection and limits our understanding of the causes and effects of the particular discrimination. A right that has to be explained is not a particularly effective right.

Clarity is also helpful in terms of public education. The clearer the law, the easier it is to explain who is protected and why.

Both these issues could be fully explored at the standing committee should the bill pass second reading. Needless to say that while I believe they are reasonable issues to raise during this first round of debate, I know that they would be completely and satisfactorily answered in any study of the bill by the standing committee, and I look forward to that opportunity.

This has been a historic debate. For the first time, this House has considered the situation of transsexual and transgender Canadians, the prejudice and discrimination and violence they face as they live their lives, and one of the most important remedies to those circumstances. There can be no doubt that trans Canadians face significant challenges and that they do not yet enjoy full equality in our society. Progress is being made. Some jurisdictions have acted to explicitly protect the human rights of trans Canadians. Some employers have acted to prevent discrimination. Some landlords, some health care providers, many unions, institutions, organizations and religious groups have acted. Many families have come to know and love their trans children, siblings, and parents in ways they would never have imagined.

However, there is more to be done. This bill would ensure full and explicit human rights protection in all areas of federal jurisdiction.

A word to members of the transgender and transsexual community: no matter what ultimately happens with this bill, they should know that there are many in this place and thousands—no, millions—across Canada who love them and know them as they are, who recognize their experience, their gifts and their full humanity. We stand in solidarity with them until our goals of justice and equality are achieved.

●(1840)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

●(1845)

[English]

MATERNAL HEALTH

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand here and follow up on a question I asked on June 2, 2010.

Some members may recall that I asked the Minister of International Cooperation to elaborate on comments she made at the Standing Committee on the Status of Women on May 26. At that time, she quoted the Cairo plan of action on population and development as it related to maternal health. I asked her quite deliberately why she had neglected one sentence. She quoted one sentence, skipped one sentence and moved on to the next.

I want to read into the record the sentence the minister neglected to say at committee and that she would not elaborate on in the House. While she was talking about the plan of action, she quoted the sentence that said:

In no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning.

However, she chose to omit the following sentence:

All Governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are urged to strengthen their commitment to women's health, to deal with the health impact of unsafe abortion as a major public health concern and to reduce the recourse to abortion, through expanded and improved family planning services.

I said at the time that the minister cannot pick and choose what sentences to use when she is quoting an international agreement. In doing so, she deliberately did not provide full information either to committee members or to members of the House.

I want to reiterate that when we deal with maternal health and unsafe abortion, we have to remember that there are 20 million unsafe abortions each year. Unsafe abortions are in fact a leading cause of maternal death, and we have learned that a disproportionate number of the women who die are between the ages of 15 and 19.

As I indicated, 13% of total maternal deaths are from abortion, and 68,000 women die every year from unsafe abortions. That breaks down to 186 every day, or one every eight minutes. We also know that maternal deaths result in motherless children, who have a higher mortality rate. They are 10 times more likely to die prematurely.

I could cite many of the experts who appeared before the committee and talked about the full range of reproductive health services that are required for women when dealing with maternal health for women worldwide. It is incumbent upon a minister, in providing information, either to a committee or to the House, to provide the full information and to not be selective in what she chooses to say or not say.

Adjournment Proceedings

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's track record on foreign aid is impeccable. We have doubled our aid to Africa, and we have doubled our total aid to a record \$5 billion. We are making our aid more effective, focused, and accountable. The goal of foreign aid is obvious. It is to reduce poverty in developing countries. Improving the lives of mothers and children is the foundation for achieving sustainable poverty reduction.

What the opposition is failing to mention on this issue is the simple fact that the NGOs that support our initiative are experts. We worked with World Vision, UNICEF, RESULTS Canada, CARE Canada, Plan Canada, and Save the Children. These NGOs support our initiative, because they know, through their expertise, that it is an excellent initiative. These NGOs have not been caught up in the scare tactics of the opposition.

I want to repeat some of my points from earlier speeches. Our government is not interested in reopening the debate the opposition is pushing. The Liberal leader appears to be taking a page out of the failed Liberal playbook on smear and fear tactics.

Our G8 initiative is about saving lives. Our G8 initiative is about low-cost, results-driven solutions that will help mothers and children in an effective, focused, and accountable manner.

Committees have heard plenty of testimony supporting and applauding the government's initiative. We have heard testimony identifying Canada's unique expertise with regard to midwifery and micronutrients. Our contribution to this initiative will bring that expertise to the world. Our partners will bring their expertise.

I want to make sure that the Liberal member opposite is very aware of those facts. The opposition is trying to smear the government in an attempt to score political points and spread an irrational fear against this government. It has sensationalized this debate.

Canadians want to see us operate on the world stage in a manner that brings people together. Canadians want their government to be a world leader, and this Prime Minister has taken it upon himself to ensure that we get the job done on maternal health.

According to the World Health Organization, every year more than 500,000 women die during pregnancy and childbirth, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, from largely preventable causes. These women are giving birth in conditions that are entirely unsanitary. Our initiative is working to change that, and I urge the opposition to get on side with us and on the side of the NGOs.

Every year, three million babies die within their first week of life. Every year, almost nine million children in the developing world die before their fifth birthday from largely preventable diseases.

A few weeks ago, in Halifax, all G8 development ministers unanimously agreed that improving the health of mothers and children is a top priority for the G8. As the secretary-general of the UN, Ban Ki-moon has said, "We know how to save mothers' lives". That is the objective of our government, plain and simple.

• (1850)

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, I would, in fact, question who is using smear tactics and political rhetoric in this debate.

Members on this side of the House support the government's initiative but say that it does not go far enough. There is no question that we are all committed to reducing the deaths of women from unsafe abortions. However, why is the government picking who can live and who can die? Why is it ignoring the 70,000 women who die each year from abortions? Why is it ignoring the motherless children who are left? The member opposite cited the number of deaths of children. Many of those children are motherless children without the nutrition and without the opportunity.

I want to quote Jill Wilkinson, president of Women Deliver, who said, "Women need access to family planning programs and modern contraceptives. And they need access to skilled care", we agree, "before, during, and after childbirth, especially access to emergency obstetric care....Women also need access to safe abortion services when and where they are legal".

Hon. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, over the past months, the Minister of International Cooperation met with representatives of our Canadian non-governmental partners, such as CARE, UNICEF, World Vision, and Save the Children, who shared their collective experience and their knowledge with her. They helped plan this initiative.

Our government is entirely in step with international NGOs. This is not about reproductive rights. It is about preventing the unnecessary deaths of mothers and children.

This debate, regrettably, has fallen into the hands of the Liberal leader. The debate we are having tonight is a creation of the Liberal leader. It is not to help mothers. It is designed to help him with his failing leadership.

In contrast, the actions of this government and the Prime Minister will save lives.

VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER GAMES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to follow-up on a question that I asked on April 26 regarding the government's expenditure on the Canada pavilion at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

I do want to reiterate the fact that these games were very successful. A number of leaders spent over a decade making sure these games would be as successful as possible. I am speaking of people like Gordon Campbell, the Premier of the province; Jack Poole; John Furlong, the chief executive officer of the Vancouver organizing committee; the athletes; and the paralympians.

This was an extraordinary moment for Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada. It was an opportunity to savour the fact that half a million people would be coming from all over the world to visit our city and country. It was also an opportunity to make the most of the fact that business people and investors would see our city, our province, and our country as a place to invest or do business.

Adjournment Proceedings

The B.C. pavilion was an excellent example of a way to utilize that opportunity. Over 100 meetings or events with various associations and sectors of business were held there to show what Canada had to offer to a whole range of sectors.

The Canada pavilion on the other hand was a rented tent that was not even open at the beginning of the Olympic Games. It was an embarrassment. Commentators from a wide range of backgrounds were amazed that this was the pavilion which would showcase Canada and Canadians to the world.

My question back in April had to do with that tent. It contained a variety of sport video games and some videos from Parks Canada that had been borrowed from the ministry and very little else. There were some lineups to get into the pavilion but that might have been due to the fact that it shared its location with a live site and a beer tent sponsored by the city of Vancouver.

We have never received any accounting on how the \$10 million was spent. The government has not been transparent. That was a waste of money. The pavilion was a very poor product for Canadians considering that the government borrowed the \$10 million.

I would ask the minister to give an accounting of the \$10 million that was spent on the Canada pavilion at the games.

• (1855)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has indicated that she would like some accounting. I will give her some numbers, absolutely.

At the outset, I would remark that the Canada pavilion was, of course, a tremendous success. She has indicated there was a lineup. In fact, there was a lineup. There was a lineup from the beginning of the games, right through to the closing of the games. In fact, 7,178 visitors visited the Canada pavilion on the first day and 137,163 visitors in total lined up during the games.

Once they were inside the pavilion, visitors were treated to entertaining and engaging interactive activities that highlighted innovative Canadian technology.

The member may think those are meaningless video games, but I would point out to her that one of the big things that is actually developed in Vancouver and in her part of the world are video games and interactive technologies. I am surprised that she would slam them in the House.

Visitors were able to participate in sports trivia games, watch videos highlighting Canada's sports legacy and legends, and view some extraordinary experiences available in our national parks and must see tourist destinations. It was a unique experience. It was truly Canadian.

In fact, the member remarked about the Canada pavilion itself. The Canada pavilion was built by Canadians boasting things about Canada. It was a true expression of Canada. It was well attended, as I indicated. There were lineups there all the time. It was a big part of the success of the Vancouver 2010 games.

I am really surprised that the member has even brought this forward. She asked about transparency. I know the member has

asked and received costing, and so forth on this. She knows what it cost to build it. There is no lack of transparency there. She knows what it cost to operate. There is no lack of transparency there. She knows how the contract was awarded. There is no lack of transparency there.

I think the real bottom line is that the member embarrassed herself when she asked these questions. She embarrassed herself because she spoke poorly of something that attracted tens of thousands of visitors and these visitors were all very impressed with what they saw. They were impressed with the experience, which was a big part of the success of the 2010 games, a success that this government worked very hard with other partners, including the B.C. government and of course Vanoc.

We worked together to ensure that the Vancouver 2010 games were a success and they were.

• (1900)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, this was a \$10 million boondoggle with a contract that went into the pockets of an American company because it was a complete botched job by the government.

Unfortunately, it is \$10 million of borrowed money because the government has record deficits. The dollars that the government is spending beyond what it is earning is unbelievable. The fact that it does not believe that it has any obligation to account for these dollars is an unfortunate arrogance, which we are seeing now in a billion dollar boondoggle with the few days of conference that are being planned with the G8 and G20, a fake lake for \$20 million, and hundreds of thousands of dollars for assets that are nowhere near where the meetings are taking place.

Therefore, this lack of accountability by the government is an embarrassment to Canada. It is spending dollars that it is borrowing. The government has no ability to manage funds or provide accountability to the public.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: We will take no lessons in operating our finances from the tax and spend Liberals, Mr. Speaker.

The member indicated that this was an American company. Too bad that the actual headquarters for this company, its Canadian headquarters, is in the riding of the Liberal member for Mississauga—Brampton South. Perhaps it would like to move to Peterborough. I would welcome it there. I would certainly see it as a Canadian company employing Canadians. Of course, it also has jobs in other ridings, for example, the Liberal member for LaSalle—Émard. However, I guess the member would prefer that in this case it not be considered a Canadian company employing Canadians.

This was a project built by Canadians for Canadians.

The member also talked about the financial record of this government. What is great about the financial record of this government is 6.1% economic growth in the first quarter. That was the expansion of the GDP. There were another 24,000 jobs created just last month and over 300,000 jobs were created since July. That is the record of this government.

Adjournment Proceedings

That member should be embarrassed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:03 p.m.)

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