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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the signing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

[Members sang the national anthem]

ROYAL ASSENT

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Government House
Ottawa

March 23, 2011

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, will proceed to the Senate chamber today, the 23rd day of March, 2011 at 3 p.m., for the purpose of giving royal assent to certain bills of law.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace

The Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

RAY WALTER AND KEN REA

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to two fallen firefighters, Ray Walter and Ken Rea. These two brave men were killed in the line of duty last Thursday while battling a fire in Listowel, Ontario.

Ray and Ken were not just firefighters, they were also community leaders. Ray was vice-president of the Listowel Kinsmen and a second generation member of the North Perth Fire Department. Ray leaves behind his wife Holly.

Ken was a founding member of the Atwood Fire Department and active in the Atwood community. He leaves behind his wife, Louise, three children and three grandchildren.

Ray and Ken showed true courage and dedication as firefighters by entering a burning building to protect their friends and neighbours. Let us hold their example as an inspiration as we mourn their loss.

I know that all hon. members will join me in honouring these two brave men who gave their lives while serving their community.

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[Translation]

ACADIAN AND FRANCOPHONE WOMEN

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 6, 2011, I had the honour to attend a dinner at the Campbellton Civic Centre, organized by Femmes acadiennes et francophones de Campbellton in honour of International Women's Day 2011. The goal of the event was to highlight the volunteering done and contributions made by a number of women in their respective communities. I would like to take a moment to highlight the work of the nine women who were recognized: Sister Thérèse Daigle, Lucille Boudreau-Doucet, Nicole Légaré-Dumont, Julienne Perron-Haché, Gisèle Thibodeau-Laviollette, Lorraine Parisé-Léger, Lyne Raymond, Diane Bécharde-Robichaud and Monique Arseneault-Savoie.

I sincerely thank them for the time and effort they have invested for the good of their communities. It is very much appreciated. I would like to give special thanks to the organizing committee, chaired by Lorraine Ahier, who helped make this event a huge success. I also thank Denis Poirier for the wonderful music he provided for the evening. It was a pleasure for me to attend this event. To the nine honourees, I say thank you and congratulations.

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ANDRÉ LACHAPELLE

Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a great missionary who was taken from us on March 12, 2011. My cousin, André Lachapelle, the sole Quebec victim of the tragedy in Japan, was a priest who dedicated his life to all Christians. His nickname was “le Japonais” and though he returned home only once every two years, each of his visits was a celebration.

Statements by Members

Last summer we celebrated his 50 years of priesthood in his birthplace, Saint-Jacques-de-Montcalm. He was deeply and sincerely committed to the missions in Japan. He was ordained in 1960 and left for his first mission to Japan the following year. In 2010, he received a certificate from the Japanese justice department thanking him for 25 years of service at the Sendai prison. He had also written three books in Japanese.

Memorial masses were celebrated in his honour: one in Laval for foreign mission priests and one in Saint-Jacques for family and friends. I know that for a man of religion, death is not the last sleep, but the final awakening. *Sayonara domo arigato.*

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the government announced that it would support the building of a highway from Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk, a project that I have personally supported for a number of years and one that is in environmental assessment at the request of northerners. It is a great project but where is the money?

Unfortunately, there is no money assigned to do this. Nowhere in the government's detailed spending estimates is there a budget line for this highway.

What do we find in the main estimates? We find a cut of 70% to funds for the safe use, development, conservation and protection of the north's natural resources, and a 58% cut to funding to promote the social, political and scientific development of the three territories.

Northerners remember how the Conservatives promised Iqaluit a port but never delivered. We remember the armed ice-breakers now shelved. We remember a food mail program that caused prices to climb. Hollow promises all.

Northerners will not be waiting for this new hollow promise to come true. If the Conservatives really want to help northerners build this road, then it should be in the main estimates.

* * *

● (1410)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan will keep taxes low and continue to create jobs for all Canadians.

What was the response of the opposition coalition? Together, it said no, no to seniors, no to municipalities, no to laid off workers, no to rural doctors and nurses and no to homeowners who want to make their homes more energy efficient. Shockingly of all, the coalition said no to our brave volunteer firefighters who put their lives on the line every day.

Today it is clear to all Canadians that the opposition coalition is the party of no. No to balanced budgets, no to small businesses, no to our brave men and women in uniform, no to jobs and job creators and no to farmers. The only thing the coalition wants is an election that Canadians do not want.

I look forward to returning to my constituents in Lambton—Kent—Middlesex to tell them about this Conservative budget.

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FILIPINO CANADIANS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, given the societal turmoil happening in the world today, I bring to the attention of the House a significant world event a quarter of a century past.

Twenty-five years ago, the Filipino people changed, without bloodshed, a dictatorship that they had detested to a democracy that they have since enjoyed.

People power has since been shown to work in other countries when a courageous population is determined to effect change.

Filipinos and Canadians of Filipino origin can truly take just pride when they celebrate the 25th anniversary of their people power revolution this year.

It is a Filipino legacy and an inspiration to a world committed to the democratic ideals of freedom, human rights, peace and justice, as my friend Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, a former MP, so beautifully reminded me last week. He continued to say that it helps remind everyone that freedom is so precious a human aspiration that the people of a nation, when long deprived of it, willingly face the danger of death to regain it.

I ask all members to join me in saluting the Filipino community in Canada in its celebration of people power.

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PAKISTAN

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, March 23, marks the anniversary of the 1940 Lahore resolution that called for Pakistan's independence.

For the thousands in the hardest working riding of Calgary Northeast and those across Canada with roots in Pakistan, I wish them a happy republic day.

Pakistan has come a long way but continues to face threats from a small group of radical extremists. A great champion against such radical extremism, Shahbaz Bhatti, was cowardly gunned down three short weeks ago. We in this House know that Mr. Bhatti's legacy will continue.

On the streets of Cairo, in Benghazi and all around the world, we see men, women and children standing up to claim the freedom, democracy and human rights for which all human hearts cry.

While oceans separate us, we stand with them united in the cause of freedom.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with budget 2011, the Conservatives have failed in their duty to ensure a better life for our vulnerable seniors. The funding announced is only half of what seniors need to reach the low income threshold.

The Conservatives are proposing a guaranteed income supplement top-up benefit of up to \$600 a year for singles with an income under \$4,400 and up to \$840 for couples with an income under \$7,360 a year. That is woefully inadequate.

Only one in three GIS recipients will benefit from this measure. Thus, the government has rejected the demands of the Bloc Québécois and seniors' advocacy groups, including FADOQ, which are still calling for the GIS to be increased by \$110 a month. Furthermore, the budget does not include any retroactive GIS payments or automatic registration for the estimated 40,000 eligible seniors in Quebec.

The Conservatives have some nerve, trying to save a few pennies at the expense of our most vulnerable seniors. How shameful.

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[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Finance tabled our government's new budget. It is a solid budget, a budget I encourage opposition members to support. It is a budget that seeks to implement phase two of our economic action plan, a plan that has served Canada well, effectively navigating us through the worst of the global recession.

The budget reiterates our government's commitment to Canadians. We will keep taxes low. We will undertake additional targeted investments to support jobs and growth. We will control government spending and stay on track to eliminate the deficit. Unlike previous Liberal governments, we will not cut transfer payments for crucial services like health care and education. We will not give in to opposition demands to impose massive tax increases.

Our budget includes sound measures that address the needs of hard-working Canadians and it contains significant new supports for families and local communities from coast to coast.

It is the budget Canada needs to keep our economic recovery on track.

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●(1415)

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, from the overcast skies of St. John's this morning came the government's Challenger jet. Why, we might ask? It is to allow the desperate government to make a quick pre-election announcement. While the Minister of National Defence ducked inside the terminal for a quick political photo op, he kept the Challenger idling on the tarmac for two hours.

The government spent over \$70,000 to fly the Challenger to St. John's. It has lost focus and has abandoned seniors, students, families and hard-working Canadians. It is so ironic that the minister neglected the opportunity to tell Newfoundlanders about the proposed cuts in his budget.

Why did the minister not tell them that his government plans to cripple Marine Atlantic? Why is he gutting the DFO budget? Why did he not tell them about the huge cuts to ACOA?

Government ministers want to tramp around the country on expensive jets making commitments that we cannot trust. We want permanent EI pilot projects and meaningful GIS increases for our seniors. The government is failing Canadians.

Once again, the government has been busted abusing its authority and demonstrating nothing but contempt for taxpayers, but Canadians will not be fooled with these election goodies.

* * *

ISRAEL

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, an explosion occurred in a crowded market in Jerusalem. Canada strongly condemns this cowardly act of terror against the Israeli people. Our sympathies are with the victims, their families and with the people of Israel.

Terrorism must be rejected as a means of achieving political ends. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace can only be reached through negotiations. These heinous acts of terror cannot be tolerated. Those behind this criminal act must be brought to justice and held accountable.

Further, we urge both parties to return to peace negotiations as soon as possible to stop the further escalation of violence and civilian casualties.

Our government stands by the people of Israel on this tragic day.

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GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada has recently dropped in the UN ratings for gender equality. A key factor in this is the increase in maternal death rates in this country.

Specifically, the Canadian maternal mortality ratio has been growing steadily since 1990. In fact, the number of deaths has doubled. There are many factors that contribute to this, including rising obesity rates, more caesarean sections and an increase in overall maternal age.

To reverse this trend, we need investment in education and women's health, more specifically, family-centred care that promotes the healthy, normal process of pregnancy and birth.

Statements by Members

Another factor affecting gender equality is access to regulated, affordable child care. Yesterday's budget ignored the needs of Canadian families. The government failed to take steps to increase the number of affordable regulated daycare spaces.

Like their Liberal predecessor, the Conservatives refused yet again to introduce a national child care program that would give Canadian women a much needed boost in the direction of equality.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents keep telling me they do not want an election and they absolutely cannot understand why the opposition would force the country to go to the polls at this time.

The opposition will be voting against help for seniors, against bringing more doctors to the regions, against infrastructure projects and against all the measures for helping families.

I am sure that when voters are forced to go to the polls they will remember that the coalition of the Liberal Party, the NDP and the Bloc is only interested in raising taxes, cutting jobs in the regions and stirring up old quarrels just to be in power.

Our Conservative government has listened to the regions, held consultations and presented a responsible budget that will not put an extra burden of debt on our future generations.

Keeping the economy vibrant and keeping taxes low in order to stimulate growth and employment are what people expected from the budget, not an unnecessary election.

* * *

● (1420)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we already knew it, but the 2011 budget is yet further evidence that the environment is not one of the Conservatives' priorities.

While the Bloc Québécois was calling for an end to gifts for oil companies, the Conservatives have made slight adjustments to some of the subsidies granted to the oil sands, bringing them back to the level of those granted to the traditional oil and gas industries, which is a ridiculous decrease.

While barely \$100 million will be allocated to the development of clean energy, the Conservatives are granting over \$405 million to Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to help cover its losses. Had the government invested in the enhancement and extension of the eco-energy program, the \$1.3 billion that AECL has been given over the past four years could have been used to ensure that ongoing efforts were being made to protect the environment.

The Kyoto framework is the basic means of meeting the strict reduction targets; however, the Conservative government is not taking action.

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister plotted to orchestrate an election with an out-of-touch budget that gives billions for stealth fighters, prisons and corporations, but only crumbs for families.

The finance minister has ruled out any compromise, and the Conservatives already have new attack ads on the air that prove they have wanted the budget to fail all along.

By hiding the cost of their prisons and stealth fighters from Parliament, the Conservatives have misled the House and all Canadians, which means we cannot trust their budget numbers.

[Translation]

The Prime Minister's inner circle has been charged with violating the Canada Elections Act and is also the subject of two RCMP investigations. Now, there is going to be an election to prevent the Auditor General from reviewing the \$1 billion that the Conservatives wasted on G20 photo ops.

The Liberals can no longer support this government, which is out of control and out of touch and which is misleading Canadians and threatening our democracy.

The Prime Minister does not make the rules; Canadians do.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next phase of Canada's economic action plan is critically important to Canada's economic recovery. It is a low tax plan of critical importance to the financial security of Canadian families.

However, the Liberal leader, the NDP and Bloc Québécois have united once again, as a coalition, and are prepared to defeat this budget.

It seems not to matter to the opposition that this budget includes sound measures that address the needs of hard-working Canadians, provides strong initiatives to support job creation and continued economic growth and contains significant new supports for families and local communities from coast to coast.

The budget provides the opposition parties with a clear choice: whether to place their own political ambitions ahead of the financial security of Canadians and recklessly force an unnecessary election because they are thinking only of themselves.

Members of the opposition still have the opportunity to put the interests of Canadians ahead of their own political opportunism, and we encourage them to do precisely that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, spending billions of dollars on stealth fighters, corporate tax cuts and megaprisons means the Canadian family has to be shortchanged.

There is nothing in the budget on affordable housing. There is nothing in it on child care. There is nothing to support our health system. These are the priorities of Canadian families.

Why is the Prime Minister out of touch and out of control?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget presented yesterday by the Minister of Finance focuses on the priorities of Canadians, whether it is most vulnerable senior citizens living in poverty, there is help for them; whether it is support for volunteer firefighters who do an extraordinary job in communities across Canada, there is support for them; or whether it is support for health care, which will have risen by 36%, an unprecedented commitment to public health care.

The Liberal Party, and he will not know because he was not here, cut health care by \$25 billion. I know that because the member for Toronto Centre told me so.

• (1425)

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the priorities of the government make no sense to Canadians.

It spent more in a single day at the G20 than it spent on seniors in a year. It is about to spend a thousand times more on jets than on helping students get a college or university education.

No Canadian can understand those priorities. Why is the Prime Minister so out of touch?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the priority of the Liberal Party is to bring Canada into a reckless election and to form a coalition with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP. That is not in the interest of hard-working Canadians.

What Canadians told us, when we consulted on this budget, was seniors living in poverty needed help, and it is in there; that volunteer firefighters needed support, and it is in there; that the men and women who worked in our hospitals needed an increase in transfer payments to the provinces, and it is in there.

The Liberal leader should put aside his own narrow partisan interest and do the right thing for Canadians and support the budget.

[Translation]

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we cannot support this budget because its priorities are not good for Canadians. There is 1,000 times more for prisons than for crime prevention among teenagers. There is nothing for affordable housing, nothing for child care services, but there are billions of dollars for fighter jets, megaprisons and corporate gifts.

Oral Questions

Why is the Prime Minister so out of touch with the priorities of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party cannot find billions of dollars for these fighter jets and cannot find billions of dollars for these alleged prisons he talks about.

Let us look at what Canadians are saying about the budget.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said, "The government should be commended for standing up to the opposition calls to undo job-creating business tax relief".

The Canadian Labour Congress said, "This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada".

Environmental Defence said, "We applaud the decision to renew funding for the Chemicals Management Plan".

These are good benefits to Canadians. He should set aside his own ambition and stand up for Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have another problem with this government. The RCMP is investigating Mr. Carson, the Prime Minister's former chief of staff. Four of the closest collaborators of the Prime Minister face accusations of election fraud, and the government is this close to being found in contempt of Parliament.

Will the Prime Minister and the government finally take responsibility for their abuse of power?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not tolerate anyone breaking the law.

We brought in tough reforms to make Canada's government more accountable. We believe in those reforms. We brought in the five-year ban on lobbying. When these allegations were brought to our attention, we immediately informed the authorities. That was the right thing to do.

Another right thing to do would be for the Leader of the Opposition to put aside his calls for the government to raise taxes by \$6 billion and get behind our job-creating economic action plan contained in the budget.

Hon. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is the Conservative government is on the edge of being found in contempt of Parliament. The RCMP is investigating the Prime Minister's former chief of staff. Four of the closest collaborators of the Prime Minister face accusations of election fraud.

After the contempt that this pattern reveals for Canadians and for their institutions, is it any wonder that the government will be rewarded with contempt in return?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the leader of the Liberal Party who is showing contempt for Canadian voters. He does not accept the fundamental democratic principle that the person with the most votes wins elections. He wanted to establish a coalition government with the Bloc Québécois and the NDP and now the coalition is back again. That shows utter contempt for Canadians.

What should be the right thing for Canada is to get behind this low tax plan to create jobs, more hope and more opportunity.

* * *

● (1430)

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservative government tabled a budget that ignores the needs of Quebecers. This budget confirms what we have known for quite some time: the Conservatives have abandoned Quebec.

Does the Prime Minister realize that this bad budget, combined with his many affronts to democracy and his contempts of Parliament, confirm only one thing: Quebecers can no longer have confidence in such a government?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Finance, presented a budget yesterday that is entirely in keeping with Quebecers' aspirations and priorities: economic recovery, job creation, a rate of taxation acceptable to everyone. But what does the Bloc do every time we present a budget to support the Quebec economy? It does not support it and votes against it.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, what he has just said is not true. In 2007, we asked for \$3.9 billion; we received \$3.3 billion and supported it. Let him keep spreading lies.

This government is thumbing its nose at Canadians as well as at the House of Commons. It has spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on a pre-election campaign. It purposely presented a budget that would be unacceptable to all the opposition parties. The Prime Minister had the gall to say again yesterday that he does not want an election. For someone who does not want an election, he is sure behaving as though he does.

Does the Prime Minister realize that, by acting this way, he has lost the confidence of Quebecers?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for the past 20 years we have heard the same speeches and the same whining from the party of all talk and no action. What have they delivered for Quebec in the past 20 years? Nothing.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we do not spend our days grovelling. We stand tall. The budget proves that the Conservative government could not care less about Quebec. There was nothing keeping it from compensating Quebec for harmonizing its taxes. As far as the Quebec government is concerned, everything is settled. The Conservatives are playing games. If the Prime

Minister wanted to avoid an election, all he had to do was pay Quebec the \$2.2 billion it is owed.

Does the Prime Minister realize that his indifference towards Quebec will trigger an election? As Quebec's finance minister said, Quebecers will decide.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have had productive discussions with the Quebec government and with the finance minister about the HST. We hope to sign a deal soon. We will continue these discussions with the Quebec government.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, these games have been going on for 20 years. The Conservative government continues to help the wealthy: oil companies keep getting tax cuts, banks can keep on racking up fortunes that are sheltered in tax havens, yet the government still refuses to pay its debts to Quebec.

How can the Minister of Finance explain the fact that he is unable to treat Quebec fairly but that he is able to help his banking friends and the oil companies? Either he is incompetent or he is being disingenuous.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, they are going to show their true colours. The member was part of a PQ government. There are others in that group who were members of the PQ. They never once asked for this. They never stood up for Quebecers; they simply kowtowed to industry.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government and every Canadian knew where we stood. We wanted to ensure that this budget would be addressing the needs of middle-class families and giving them a break.

The facts: too many people are out of work. Yesterday, the Conservatives presented a job-killing budget that sucks far more out of the economy than it puts back in. They missed their own job targets by more than 240,000 jobs, according to their own figures.

Why is the government putting the needs of Bay Street ahead of the needs of people who are out of work?

● (1435)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the fourth party had bothered to read the budget, he would know that more than 480,000 net new jobs have been created in this country. This is the best job creation record in the advanced economies of the world.

The IMF looks at Canada and says this is the best place to invest in the next five years. It looks at our financial systems and says this is not just the best financial system in the G7 or the G20, it is the best financial system in the world.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows he is not telling the truth because one of his own ministers was in the breakout room when we were studying the budget. He knows full well he is not telling the truth on whether we read the budget.

Oral Questions[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister knows very well that part-time employment is at a record level. There are 150,000 fewer full-time jobs than before the recession. He has abandoned the unemployed, yet banks and oil companies continue to get huge gifts.

Why does the Prime Minister prefer to have an election instead of helping middle-class Canadian families?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, there is a tremendous benefit to reading the document. As I said yesterday, it is not that long a read. It is one of the shortest budgets in the last 20 years.

There is a wonderful chart in there that shows the job creation and it shows, contrary to what the member opposite says, that about 75% of those 480,000 jobs are full-time jobs in high paying industries.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister just proved my point, that the government has not replaced the full-time work that was lost in the recession, and the middle class is suffering as a result. Maybe he had better read his own document.

Now the government is preventing Canadians from investing in the best retirement savings plan: the Canada pension plan. The government wants to come up with its own scheme, so that Bay Street can get a slice. That is the government's plan.

I want to build a Canada where Canadians can retire in dignity. We proposed it. Canadians want it. Why would the government not deliver it?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the leader of the fourth party is demonstrating his uncanny ability not to let the facts interfere with his argument.

We have negotiations ongoing with the provincial governments, as the member opposite should know because he has been in this place long enough. He ought to know that the federal government cannot unilaterally alter the Canada pension plan. We share jurisdiction with the provinces. There are rules. They are constitutional. We need two-thirds of the provinces to agree, and two-thirds in terms of population. We are continuing to work with the provinces on modest improvements to the CPP.

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ETHICS

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 28, 2009, three months after Bruce Carson left the PMO, the former minister of the environment had a bilateral meeting in Washington with Steven Chu, the energy secretary. Eleven other people attended: seven American senior department officials were there with Dr. Chu; the Canadian ambassador, and two staff from Mr. Prentice's office; so was Bruce Carson, not the private citizen but as introduced as special adviser to Minister Prentice.

Would the Prime Minister explain why his former staff continued to enjoy privileged access at high level private discussions months after he was supposed to have left the government's employ?

● (1440)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been serious allegations raised around Mr. Carson. The matter has been correctly and immediately referred to the relevant authorities. We expect every single Canadian to obey the law. This is an important law. It's a law that is so important that we made it a matter of first priority to table it, pass it, and push through caucus. We believe that everyone who breaks the law should face the full force of the law.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, five months later the Conservatives sent Mr. Carson to yet another international climate change summit, this time as one of Canada's four official delegates. Mr. Carson was there as the representative of the Prime Minister.

However, Mr. Carson's day job was to advise the oil and gas industry on energy and climate change policy. Every Canadian knows this is a conflict of interest. The RCMP may now be investigating how Mr. Carson used his special access. However, the Prime Minister owes Canadians an explanation of why, when, and how Mr. Carson was given this kind of access in the first place.

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not unusual at these climate change negotiations to invite a variety of people representing industry, environmental groups, labour groups, first nations, Inuit or Métis people.

I remember, when I was minister of the environment, even inviting the member for Parkdale—High Park. The difference is that with these delegates we generally elect them to spend the whole time there and not go home halfway through the meeting.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how do you spell cheat?

[*Translation*]

We will try again in French, to see if the member can give us an answer.

The Conservatives say that Bruce Carson left his position in February 2009. I hope everyone is keeping up with me so far. The problem is that Carson spent the rest of the year escorting Conservative ministers. In 2009, the American Department of Energy listed Carson as a special advisor to the Minister of the Environment, Jim Prentice, during a meeting. But Carson was such a good escort that in September, Prentice did not even attend the multilateral meeting at the American state department and Carson went without him.

So, when did he leave his position again?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friend from Bourassa that he has a rather interesting use of vocabulary and a different sense of the word than I would have thought, and certainly in relation to this file.

Oral Questions

Here is what we know. Serious allegations were raised with the Prime Minister. He did the right and proper thing, and immediately referred the matter to the three relevant authorities. I hope they will do two things. I hope they will conduct an investigation into the matter. Second, I hope they will use the full strength of Canadian law on anyone who broke it.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me try something else.

The Conservatives created the Canadian School of Energy and Environment at the cost of \$15 million, which is nothing to scoff at. Carson's biography on the school's website indicates that since joining CSEE, Carson has taken on several roles at the request of the Minister of the Environment, Jim Prentice, the former Minister of Natural Resources, and the current Minister of Natural Resources. Oops—the cat is out of the bag. Now Carson is talking about the Conservatives' Quebec lieutenant and the Minister of Labour.

Do these ministers feel the need to confess anything to the House or the RCMP? Can they tell us what is going on with their friend, Carson?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these slanders and outrageous implications by the member for Bourassa will not create a single job. They will not help a single senior living in poverty. They will not help volunteer firefighters and they will not help health care workers.

That is what our budget does and the Liberal Party should get behind it. It is the right thing for Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, true to form, the Conservative government continues to ignore the urgent needs of the unemployed and did not include any measures in its budget to help them. Worse yet, instead of vastly improving the employment insurance system, the Conservatives are going to help themselves to the employment insurance fund, as the Liberals did, in order to subsidize those who are better off.

Does the government realize that its indifference toward workers in Quebec is what might trigger an election?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member and his colleagues had taken the time to read yesterday's budget, they would know that we are proposing to extend a number of things, such as two pilot projects, the targeted initiative for older workers and improvements to the work sharing program, which has already helped 280,000 people and protected jobs. They did not even read the budget before deciding to vote against it.

● (1445)

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is in fact because we read the budget that we are going to vote against it.

The government claims that the changes proposed by the Bloc Québécois and the unions would entitle people to one year of benefits for 360 hours of work. That is not true. For the Gaspé, for example, an unemployed person who has just enough hours to be eligible will only be entitled to 32 weeks. In Chicoutimi, it is 20 weeks.

Instead of hiding its indifference toward the unemployed behind lies, will the government commit to not stealing from the fund and to improving the employment insurance system instead?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in the budget, we presented four proposals for extending improvements to the employment insurance program and helping the unemployed across Canada. As usual, the Bloc said it will vote against these measures. It has already voted against five additional weeks and against the program to help long-tenured workers and the targeted initiative for older workers. It always votes against the interests of the unemployed in Quebec and the regions. It is shameful.

* * *

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in the budget to revitalize the forestry industry. A mere \$60 million has been allocated for research when the Conservatives were able to find \$10 billion for the automotive sector, which is concentrated in Ontario.

The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union is condemning the lack of immediate assistance for workers. The union notes that the government has instead “thrown the poorest of the poor a few crumbs”.

How could the Conservatives table another budget that does not meet the desperate needs of the workers and regions affected by the forestry crisis?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, for months, this member has been trying to convince the Canadian public that providing the forestry industry with assistance in the form of loan guarantees was the right thing to do. He is now just continuing to propagate this misinformation.

We are partners with American companies in the automotive industry. We in work in partnership, without any contract to prevent us from doing business with them. In the forestry industry, we are competitors.

When will he understand that we signed an agreement to protect the industry that the Liberals abandoned from 2000 to 2006?

*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE**

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget does not address the needs of farmers in Quebec. The government is refusing to improve the income stabilization programs. It is not providing adequate compensation for the additional costs related to the management of specified risk materials. Furthermore, it is making \$400 million in cuts to the agricultural sector, a sector that is very important to our regions.

How could the government present a budget that completely ignores the needs of agricultural producers in Quebec?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, which government announced in its budget that there would be no income tax hikes? The Conservative government. Which government said in its budget that there would be no tax increases? The Conservative government. Which government is investing \$50 million in innovation to help farmers? This government.

We presented a budget that addresses what Canadians need in their everyday lives. We are supporting natural caregivers, families and volunteer firefighters. There are all kinds of assistance measures in our budget.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now know how the Conservative government will pay for its corporate tax cuts, American-style prisons, and untended fighter jets. It is cutting services in Atlantic Canada by closing Service Canada sites, cutting \$7 million to Marine Atlantic, cutting \$32 million to ACOA, and cutting \$85 million to Fisheries and Oceans. The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council said that there was little in this budget of direct benefit to Atlantic Canada.

My question is this. How did the Atlantic Conservative MPs allow this to happen?

• (1450)

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member is how the small business people in her riding would feel about her not supporting a credit for hiring new employees. How would the volunteer firefighters in her region feel about her not supporting a credit for the hard work and the sacrifices they provide? How will they feel about her not supporting the great investments we have made in Marine Atlantic and the great work that is being done to promote the economy in her region?

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can tell him how they feel about the increases in payroll taxes.

Not only is the government slashing and burning funding for Atlantic Canada, now we also find out about more abuse of power. The Conservatives are under investigation by the Public Service Commission for stacking the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency with political appointments.

Is there no end to what the Conservative regime will do to reward its own? Has it no shame?

Hon. Rob Moore (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a bit of news for the hon. member. We are the first government to commit stable funding to important ACOA programs such as the Atlantic innovation fund and the innovative communities fund. We are the first government to invest where her government failed.

When it came to Marine Atlantic, we delivered on this side of the House for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We are going to continue to deliver. We are going to support her constituents, even if she will not.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government will never learn. What they do not like, they hide or deny.

Why is the minister refusing to table the reports on the diagnostic testing of the Champlain Bridge? We would at least be in a position to know exactly what is happening.

Will we choose to spend billions on fighter planes and megaprisons rather than investing in this bridge?

Will workers in the greater Montreal area have to swim to work?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Champlain Bridge is very important to entrepreneurs and the people of Montreal and Canada. We have invested a great deal of money in this corridor because the bridge is very important. Furthermore, I spoke with the Quebec minister this morning, and we discussed the bridge's condition and its safety. The future is clear: we must have discussions with the Government of Quebec about the future of—

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

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am asking for the test results because he says the bridge is safe. I doubt that. The minister does not seem to have understood: this is the most important road infrastructure in the country. Unfortunately, he does not give a damn.

They will readily spend billions of dollars on fighter planes and megaprisons. But those who have to go home every night, and go back to work every morning, have to make do with their old bridge.

Enough of this nonsense. They must stop playing with people's safety. When will there be a new bridge?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we are not playing with people's safety. That is why when I spoke with the CEO of the federal bridge authority, when I talked to the engineers a month ago in Quebec, they said that the investments we have made in the bridge will keep it absolutely safe for the next 10 years.

At the end of the month or thereabouts, there will be a report given to us on options for the bridge. Everyone knows the bridge will need to be replaced in the long term, but what we cannot know without that option paper presented to us yet is if it contains light rail, if it contains a rapid transit option, if it contains a bus option. Those options will be presented to us and, of course, we will make a decision working hand in hand with the Quebec government.

* * *

*[Translation]***THE BUDGET**

Mr. Bernard Généreux (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the makeshift coalition led by the Liberal leader has finally found a pretext to reunite and try to take down the government. This time it is the budget. Any reason will do.

Can the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us what this budget contains to help every region of Quebec?

• (1455)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the great job he does and for his question.

Our budget clearly takes into account the everyday needs of Canadians. For example, a couple that has a child involved in arts activities will receive a tax credit. Volunteer firefighters will, too. As well, seniors who are not finding the guaranteed income supplement to be sufficient will receive an additional \$600 per year. A number of measures have been added, without any tax increases. Our government is a responsible one.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada is one of the richest countries in the world. Yet, we have hundreds of thousands of seniors living below the poverty line. When the NDP met with the minister and the Prime Minister, we reiterated the fact that this is a priority for our party. We find it unacceptable that we live in such a rich country, yet the seniors who built this country are left to live in poverty.

Why would the government rather trigger an election than help all of the seniors who are living below the poverty line?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting low income seniors.

We are proud of the fact that our actions have played a part in cutting the low income rate among Canada's seniors from 21% in 1980 to 5.8% in 2008, one of the lowest rates in the world. We have increased guaranteed income supplement benefits, cut taxes for

seniors, introduced pension income splitting and invested in seniors' housing.

We will keep working hard to deliver for seniors as demonstrated in our budget yesterday.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have to ask the Conservatives what kind of priority guides their thinking? Is this a tough on seniors policy? Is it more important for them to give even more money to the chartered banks than they received last year? They made \$22 billion in profits and used half, \$11 billion, for executive bonuses. Next year the Conservatives want to give a further \$3 billion in corporate tax cuts. For every \$1 they came up with for impoverished seniors, they found \$10 for Canada's richest corporations.

Their proposal would leave hundreds of thousands of seniors below the poverty line, and in a country as rich as ours, that is just not acceptable.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is coming from a party that has consistently voted against any seniors' help. It is shameful.

In our budget yesterday we elevated the poverty line for seniors. Across the country, 680,000 seniors will benefit from yesterday's budget submission.

* * *

*[Translation]***CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE**

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a letter published in *La Presse*, the Minister of Transport continues to deny the facts. Although engineers have said that some sections of the Champlain Bridge could collapse, the minister continues to claim that the bridge is safe and that construction of a new bridge can wait.

Does the Minister of Transport realize that it is his indifference to the needs of Quebec that could trigger an election?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly the Champlain Bridge is an extremely important bridge. That is why we are investing almost \$400 million in it over the next 10 years to make sure it stays safe.

I am not an engineer. A good question to ask is: whom do we ask about this? We ask the engineers who inspect the bridge. We ask the CEO who oversees the bridge. We work with the provincial government, which works with us to make sure the bridge is safe.

Oral Questions

Of course the bridge will have to be replaced in the longer term. However, Montrealers should know that the bridge is safe and will be safe. We will be working closely with the Quebec government to make a long-term plan for its replacement in the years to come.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives managed to find the money needed to build a new bridge in Windsor, Ontario. They even advanced \$550 million to help Michigan pay for its share. However, when the time comes to replace the busiest bridge in Canada, which is in Quebec, they cannot come up with the money. That is just wrong.

When will Quebec's needs get the same attention as the needs of Ontario and Michigan?

[*English*]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): That was a good question, Mr. Speaker. How much money are we going to spend on the new Windsor bridge? We are going to spend zero taxpayer dollars. It is a P3 project. It will not have a single dollar in it.

Perhaps that is an option for the Champlain Bridge. The reason we are not saying that is because we are going to wait for the report to be tabled with me. When that report is tabled, options will be presented to us, including design ideas, whether it should include a railway, whether it should include rapid transit, whether it should include a bus route. There are lots of options. We are certainly not going to go into this willy-nilly.

While the bridge is safe, Montrealers should use it.

We will be working with the Quebec government to design an option.

* * *

• (1500)

[*Translation*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the Ottawa River, the Conservative budget delivered yesterday confirmed our worst fears. Our public servants are very astute and had already suspected that the Conservatives might make some cuts. Instead of strengthening our economic recovery, the Conservatives are spreading uncertainty regarding job security for thousands of families in the national capital region.

The Conservatives have a habit of getting rid of public servants who are doing their jobs, but do they not think that they are going a little too far?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we said yesterday, about 11,000 people leave the public service every year. My colleague mentioned that jobs are sometimes eliminated from the public service, but it was the Liberals who did that. They eliminated many public service jobs 10 years ago. It was very strange.

[*English*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Conservatives are very keen on firing public servants who do not follow their ideology. This is getting a bit much.

On both sides of the Ottawa River, tens of thousands of families did not sleep well last night after the Conservative budget confirmed that over 20,000 jobs would be slashed from our hard-working, dedicated public service.

Why are Conservatives revving up the chainsaw and threatening our cherished public services?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is really taking things to an extreme.

It is bad enough that they ignore the fact that our budget that we just tabled gives the highest levels ever for health care, for seniors, for research, for education, along with lowering taxes. However, now what they are trying to do is to frighten public servants.

There are about 11,000 public servants a year who leave the public service. We have been very clear that in no way, shape or form are we going to replicate what the Liberals did in the mid-nineties, slashing tens of thousands of public servants overnight and throwing them out on the streets.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not natural for us to work with Conservatives, but because every Canadian deserves fair access to health care, we tried to work with them to get results for the five million Canadians who do not have access to a family doctor.

The Conservative budget had no money for doctors. They decided that political games were more important than the needs of Canadians.

Can the minister tell us why she abandoned the more than five million Canadians without access to a family doctor?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member claims to care about the health of Canadians but will be voting against the budget.

A vote against the budget means there will be no funding for neurological and health research. A vote against the budget means there will not be additional funding for doctors and nurses in rural and remote communities. It will also be a vote against increased health transfers to provinces and territories.

That is a vote against Canadians.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's budget the government had an opportunity to address the needs of Aboriginal families, but it chose not to.

Oral Questions

There is nothing for education, nothing to support friendship centres, nothing to provide clean water, and nothing to increase safe, healthy housing across Canada, especially in the north.

The government's answers to these grim conditions are projects that only reduce the government's own liability, like replacing fuel tanks. Why did the minister choose to ignore the calls to make strategic investments for first nations, Métis and Inuit?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is delivering strategic investments that will help improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians. Since coming to office, we have more than delivered on education, water, housing, economic development and human rights.

The Liberals ignored aboriginal peoples and northerners for a long period, while the NDP have shamefully voted against all of our important investments. We are the party that delivers for first nations, Métis, Inuit and the north.

* * *

• (1505)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Filipino Canadians work hard to build this country. A recent example of nanny abuse was shocking. We know that nannies had substandard working conditions, had their immigration status threatened and passports confiscated so they could not flee.

Today the *Toronto Star* reveals that one of the nannies was coerced into a gag order, preventing her from talking to media or law enforcement. Alarming, this all happened in the house of a member who sits across the floor in the Liberal caucus.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell this House what the government's position is on immigration abuse?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Immigrant women enjoy the same rights and protections under provincial labour laws as Canadian workers. If they are being abused they should report that abuse to the relevant provincial agency.

Our government is ensuring immigrant women know their rights. Whether it is abuse or exploitation, immigrant women have the right to speak out.

The real question is, would the Liberal leader not take a stand on this issue and state that treatment like this is wrong and is unacceptable?

* * *

INDUSTRY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week I had the opportunity to visit the Diamond Aircraft facilities in London. The company is still waiting for a decision on a \$35 million loan from the government. The Ontario government came through with its \$35 million a year ago.

Meanwhile, hinging on the minister's decision are 500 future jobs and the possible layoff of 200 existing employees.

Why has the minister loafed around for a year, leaving hundreds of Canadian families facing possible layoffs?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is this government has already given this particular company \$20 million through our aerospace program. It has asked for an additional \$35 million, on top of the \$20 million.

It is our responsibility, as keepers of the taxpayer interest, to ensure that we do our diligence on the books of a company like this, and that work is ongoing.

* * *

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, concerned about the fact that the Conservative government is trying to exclude the Davie shipyard from a major request for proposals, the National Assembly of Quebec unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to be fair. The Conservatives and the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse have to stop sabotaging Davie's recovery.

Why did the government change the request for proposals midstream, thereby giving the Davie shipyard less time to restructure?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the solvency requirement was not changed at any time during the process.

[English]

The obligation for a company to be solvent is par for the course for any government contracting.

Let me say, when this company was in a very difficult financial situation last year it was this government that supported a \$270 million loan through EDC to help this company along.

The truth is, Davie is pre-qualified to bid in this competition. We hope that it will be able to put forward a bid if it is solvent.

The Speaker: Order. That will conclude our question period for this afternoon.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Teodor Baconschi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during question period the government House leader said that the Canadian Labour Congress had endorsed the government's budget. I would like to bring to the attention—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1510)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I think the Conservative members would agree that was not an applause line for them once they hear the rest of my point of order.

In fact, earlier today the president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Kenneth Georgetti, wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance in which he said:

Dear Minister: I am deeply troubled to hear you are misleading the public that the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) gives unqualified endorsement of your government's budget, released yesterday.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Scott Brison: He goes further. He says:

We have certainly opposed your government's planned corporate tax cuts...To suggest, as you have been stating in the media that the CLC fully endorses your budget is misleading and we respectfully request you cease making these statements.

I would like to table this letter for the House and for the government.

I am certain that the Minister of Finance or the government House leader will want to correct this mistake that they have been repeating in the House and in the media.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Kings—Hants have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

The hon. Minister of Finance is responding to this point of order.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on *CTV News* yesterday, Mr. Georgetti said as follows:

I'd say to the NDP—

Hon. Ralph Goodale: It is disgusting.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Does the member for Wascana want to hear or not? Take it easy, you will get a hernia and hurt yourself.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jim Flaherty: He said that "I'd say to the NDP leader, there's enough in this budget that we want to look at it seriously in the labour movement. We would think that would be...if we were at a negotiating table, we would take the offer".

The Speaker: I am quite sure, after hearing what I have heard, that this appears to be a dispute as to facts. I would suggest it has nothing to do with procedure and therefore I do not think we have a point of order on this one.

Is the government House leader rising on the same point?

Points of Order

Hon. John Baird: It is to respond.

The Speaker: We have had a response from the minister, with all respect. We will hear another point of order later.

The hon. member for Hochelaga.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé: Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made a mistake. I have here two documents, dated 1997, from the finance minister for a Parti Québécois government to the federal finance minister, claiming compensation for the harmonization of the GST and the QST. The truth is that the Liberal government in which the member for Pontiac served never sought compensation for the tax harmonization. I am therefore seeking the consent of the House to table these documents.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Hochelaga have the unanimous consent of the House to table these documents?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on another point of order.

I want to clarify my comments when I talked about the Canadian Labour Congress quote. I was not suggesting that it endorsed the budget, it was just to comment that it had said, and I quote:

This is a win for every senior living in poverty in Canada and we're proud to have played a significant role in that campaign on their behalf.

MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do rise as well in the defence of the member for Winnipeg, Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Yesterday, I raised in the House an issue of \$10.00 being charged to participate in a conference call by the member for Kings—Hants, the Liberal finance critic. I want to report two things.

The Minister of State for Democratic Reform had the following happen to him.

He answered the main line and it was a recorded message from the hon. member for Kings—Hants indicating that, "You have been selected to participate in a live telephone town hall meeting today at 6:45."

I want to defend the Minister of State for Democratic Reform. He has never donated \$10.00 to the Liberal Party of Canada.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today because I can understand the frustration of the Bloc members who, after 20 years of inaction in the House, are interfering in matters they know nothing about. They have absolutely no understanding of the complex issues involved. However, that is no reason to mislead the House. I would ask the member for Québec to withdraw her remarks, for she is misleading the House regarding an extremely important issue, and this casts doubt on the credibility of Public Works and Government Services Canada and the minister.

As proof, I submit that the fairness monitor concluded that the preparation stage for the shipbuilding strategy was carried out fairly. In this context, fairness means that decisions were made objectively, without any personal favouritism or political influence. Fairness includes factors such as openness, competitiveness, transparency and compliance.

I ask the member for Québec to withdraw her remarks—which were clearly an example of political interference in an independent process—so as not to impugn the integrity of the people involved and, more importantly, in order to clarify the facts. I think people look ridiculous when they make unfounded, misleading statements about a topic they know nothing about.

Since we are talking about contempt of Parliament in the House, I think the member is in contempt of Parliament for making such inappropriate, misleading remarks in the House.

The member must do the only honourable thing and apologize. The member should clearly state that the government is treating the Davie shipyard, its workers and the entire Quebec City region completely fairly.

• (1515)

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse is nervous because he has not managed this file well. That said, the claims he made about my colleague lying have to do with the political debate.

The government found original ways to help the automotive industry in southern Ontario by investing in GM, for example. The government was able to help the industry. But it is not able to make the same kind of effort for Davie in Lévis. If he wants to continue with the debate we will do so, but I think that this has to do with the debate and not a point of order.

The Speaker: I am sure that this has to do with the facts. This is not a matter of procedure that would justify a point of order.

There are disagreements from time to time, especially after question period. It is too bad, but I cannot resolve these problems. These issues do not have to do with procedure. I think that I have heard enough. We can continue.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE 1994

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House and pursuant to Standing Orders, I would like to table, in both official languages, the agreement entitled Modifications in the Schedule V of Canada to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994, pursuant to Article XXVIII of that Agreement, of the concessions relating to tariff item 3504.00 regarding certain milk protein concentrates notified to the World Trade Organization, dated March 21, 2011.

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INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AGAINST DOPING IN SPORT

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to table the following documents: Amendments to Annex I and Annex II of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, adopted in Paris and dated November 16, 2008; Amendments to Annex I of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, adopted in Paris and dated October 28, 2009; Amendments to Annex II of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, adopted in Paris and dated January 29, 2010; and Amendments to Annex I and Annex II of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, adopted in Paris and dated November 16, 2010.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8)(b) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 15 petitions.

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Southern Governors' Association, which was held in Birmingham, Alabama, United States of America, August 27 to 30, 2010.

* * *

• (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the responsibility to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security entitled, "Report on Canadian Security Intelligence Service Director Richard Fadden's Remarks Regarding Alleged Foreign Influence of Canadian Politicians".

[Translation]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage regarding the mandate and funding of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Pursuant to Standing Order 92(3)(b) the committee hereby reports that it does not concur in the fifth report of the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business and is of the opinion that Bill C-486, An Act respecting the negotiation and conclusion of treaties, should remain votable.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 92(3)(b) the report is deemed adopted.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I move that the 27th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented on Monday, March 21, be concurred in.

For the first time in Canadian history, a parliamentary committee has found the government in contempt. The Conservatives are breaking the rules to attack the ability of Parliament to function and to hold the government to account. It is breaking the rules to hide the cost of its ideological agenda. That Conservative regime expects members of Parliament to vote on legislation without knowing how much that legislation will cost Canadian taxpayers. It is fiscally irresponsible, negligent and fundamentally undemocratic.

Four months ago members of the finance committee ordered the Conservative government to provide documents detailing the cost of its crime legislation. We asked for the numbers and analyses behind 18 U.S.-style crime bills. Parliament has a right to this information, as you pointed out so clearly in your ruling, Mr. Speaker. As members of Parliament, we must have this information in order to do our jobs on behalf of Canadians.

Canadian taxpayers have a right to know how much this legislation will cost them. After all, they are the ones footing the bill. All members of Parliament have a fiduciary responsibility to Canadian citizens. When a constituent asks how much the legislation we just voted on will actually cost, we have a moral and fiduciary responsibility to answer that question.

We must do our homework and examine the government's books. We must ask the government questions about its assumptions so we know how it arrived at the numbers in its legislation and budget. We must determine whether the government's spending plan is sensible, realistic and reflects the priorities of Canadians.

All members of Parliament have this responsibility. That includes members from the Conservative Party on the government side. No member of Parliament should be complicit in helping the

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government keep Canadians in the dark. However, for four months the Conservative government, with the help of government MPs, has been stonewalling and hiding the information we need to do our jobs. For four months the Conservatives have ignored the democratic will of Parliament. For four months, they have refused—

• (1525)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 924, 925, 926, 927, 928 and 933.

The Speaker: Order, please. I do not hear a point of order from the government House leader. Is the minister rising to table some documents?

We have an interruption.

ROYAL ASSENT

• (1535)

[Translation]

A message was delivered by the Usher of the Black Rod as follows:

Mr. Speaker, His Excellency the Governor General desires the immediate attendance of this honourable House in the chamber of the Senate.

Accordingly, the Speaker with the House went up to the Senate chamber.

And being returned:

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that when the House went up to the Senate chamber, His Excellency the Governor General was pleased to give, in Her Majesty's name, royal assent to the certain bills:

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The Speaker: Before the royal assent, the hon. member for Kings—Hants had the floor. I now recognize the hon. member for Kings—Hants so he may carry on with his remarks.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members of Parliament have the responsibility to hold the government to account. That includes Conservative members of Parliament as well. No member of Parliament should be complicit in helping the government keep Canadians in the dark. However, for four months the Conservative government, with the support of government MPs, has been stonewalling and hiding the information we need to do our jobs.

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For four months, the Conservatives have ignored the democratic will of Parliament. For four months, they have refused to come clean and tell Canadian taxpayers how much they will have to spend to foot the bill for the Conservatives' U.S.-style prison agenda.

At first the government ignored the finance committee's order to produce the documents on how much the crime bills would cost. The government did not even so much as acknowledge the request before the deadline. Then on December 1, one full week after the deadline, the government gave its first response. In that response, the government said:

The issue of whether there are...costs associated with the implementation of any of the Government's Justice bills is a matter of Cabinet confidence and, as such, the Government is not in a position to provide such information or documents.

According to that Conservative regime, members of Parliament should not know how much legislation will cost before they have to vote on these pieces of legislation. For this denial of information to Parliament, the Conservatives' reason is cabinet confidence. This is a blatant falsehood. This is arrogance and deception personified by the government.

The Conservatives believe that members of Parliament should vote blindly, but the law is clear. As members of Parliament, we have a constitutional right to that information on how much the legislation will cost.

Therefore, on February 17, my hon. colleague, the member for Wascana, moved a motion in the House demanding that the government provide this information to the House. After three months of saying that it could not provide any information, the government then responded that afternoon with a few numbers. However, the information was incomplete. The government only provided information on five of the eighteen crime bills. There was no analysis, no information on how the government arrived at the few numbers that it did provide and there was nothing about how this legislation would affect the provinces and the cost to the provinces.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reviewed the information that the government provided, up to and including February 17. This is what the Parliamentary Budget Officer had to say about the government's response, "The Government of Canada has not provided the finance committee with most of the information that it requested".

The Parliamentary Budget Officer went on to say:

The data tabled by the GC, does not provide FINA (or the PBO) with analysis, key assumptions, drivers, and methodologies behind the figures presented. Further, basic statistics such as headcounts, annual inflows, unit costs per inmate, per full-time...employee, and per new cell construction have not been made available.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer went further. He said, "As requested in the FINA motion, the PBO is also unable to determine whether" the data tabled by the Government of Canada would indicate whether "the requisite monies have been indeed set aside in the Fiscal Planning Framework and whether the departmental Annual Reference Levels of the affected federal government departments have been adjusted to reflect the change in requirements".

In this report, the Parliamentary Budget Officer also had some fundamental questions, which are of great importance to the House.

He first asked, "Is the information requested by FINA relevant and necessary to parliamentary decision-making?" His answer was, "Yes. It is required for parliamentarians to fulfill fiduciary obligations under the Constitution".

• (1540)

Mr. Page asked a second question: "Is it collected regularly by the Government of Canada?" His answer: "Yes. The information is collected, analyzed and challenged as part of the Government of Canada's expenditure management system".

He asked a third question: "Does Parliament have the right to the information?" To this fundamental and important question, the Parliamentary Budget Officer answered: "Yes. The Parliament of Canada is under a constitutional obligation to review any information gathered during the EMS process that it views as necessary for the discharge of its fiduciary duty to the Canadian people to properly control public monies".

Given the Conservative government's blatant disregard for Parliament, given its continued abuse of the system and the breaking of the rules in order to hide the costs of its U.S.-style prison agenda, given all of this, I rose in the House and brought the matter before the Speaker as a matter of privilege.

On March 9, the Speaker gave his historic ruling, finding a prima facie question of privilege. With his guidance, I then moved a motion asking the procedure and House affairs committee to investigate these actions by the government and provide the committee's recommendations to this House.

The committee heard from expert witnesses on the issue of Parliament's right to know how much this legislation will cost. The committee heard from the House of Commons law clerk and parliamentary counsel, Mr. Robert Walsh, who said very clearly that the costs associated with legislation before the House are not covered by cabinet confidence. In his testimony, Mr. Walsh said:

...the basic principle is that the House should receive whatever information it seeks for it to do its function in holding the government to account or, as you mentioned, in reviewing legislation.

He went on to say:

The decisions made by the House of Commons are only as good as the information members of Parliament have to help them make those decisions.

The current Prime Minister once said:

Without adequate access to key information about government policies and programs, citizens and parliamentarians cannot make informed decisions, and incompetent or corrupt governance can be hidden under a cloak of secrecy.

That was a rare moment of candour from the Conservative Prime Minister and one must wonder, based on the Prime Minister's own words, what incompetence and corruption the Conservative government is trying to hide under its cloak of secrecy today.

During its investigation, the committee also heard from Mr. Mel Cappe, a former clerk of the Privy Council. Mr. Cappe told the committee that the government's decision to hide the information under cabinet confidence was "unjustified". I will quote from the committee report. According to Mr. Cappe, "Once a bill has been introduced the costs of that bill cannot be considered a cabinet confidence and must be provided to parliamentarians to enable them to arrive at an informed opinion".

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The committee also heard from Mr. Alister Smith, the associate secretary at Treasury Board, who told the committee that under the Treasury Board guide to costing the government must analyze the fiscal impact of federal legislation on the provinces.

The committee heard that parliamentarians not only have the right to know how much federal legislation will cost the federal treasury, but we also have a right and a responsibility to know how much federal legislation will cost provincial governments.

On the afternoon of March 16, once again the Conservatives demonstrated their contempt for Parliament by providing over 700 pages of documents to the committee without giving committee members any time to examine the information before hearing from the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety.

● (1545)

It was a data dump on the committee 15 minutes before the ministers were to do their presentations. It was a publicity stunt aimed at convincing the public somehow that the government had finally come clean when, in fact, it had not come clean. It was a charade. It was another example of the government's disrespect for Parliament and another example of why Canadians cannot trust the government to tell them the truth, to give them the real facts and costs of its agenda.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer continued his work after the government dumped this data on the committee. The Parliamentary Budget Officer studied this massive binder and concluded, in a report to the committee, that:

There remain significant gaps between the information requested by parliamentarians and the documentation that was provided by the [government], which will limit the ability of parliamentarians to fulfill their fiduciary obligations.

Examining the grid in the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report to the committee, it is clear that the government failed to provide three-quarters of the information that had been requested by the finance committee and, in fact, demanded by the Speaker's ruling.

With this, the committee concluded that:

1. that the government has failed to produce all the specific documents ordered to be produced by the Standing Committee on Finance and by the House of Commons;
2. that the government has not provided a reasonable excuse;
3. that the documents tabled in the House and in Committee do not satisfy the orders for production of documents; nor do they provide a reasonable excuse;
4. that this failure impedes the House in the performance of its functions; and
5. that the government's failure to produce documents constitutes a contempt of Parliament.

The lengths that the Conservative government has gone to hide the costs of its legislation show not only a contempt for this Parliament, but also a contempt for the people of Canada who chose this Parliament. The Conservatives are showing contempt for the Canadian taxpayer who has to foot the bill for these pieces of legislation.

I remind all members of this House, including members of the Conservative Party, that regardless of what party we represent, we all have an equally important fiduciary and constitutional responsibility to the people of Canada to demand that the government provide this information to the House of Commons.

I would remind this House, including the Conservative members, that in being complicit with the government and helping the government hide this information from Canadians, the Conservative members of Parliament are not doing their jobs. They are not standing up for Canadians. In fact, they are attacking the interests of Canadian taxpayers by not telling them how much this legislation will cost. They are not fulfilling perhaps the most important responsibility we have as members of Parliament, and that is to defend the democratic institutions that keep us free.

What I find troubling about the government is that at every turn we have a Prime Minister and a government that not only stymies Parliament and attacks this institution, but it attacks the public service, the courts and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is an historic decision by Parliament, by the committee, to find the government in contempt. It is the first time in the history of Canadian Parliament that a government has been found to be in contempt of Parliament. It is the first time in the history of the British parliamentary system that a government has been found to be in contempt of Parliament.

● (1550)

This is not a good moment in Canadian history. This is a sad moment in Canadian history. It is sad for our Parliament and for Canadian citizens.

At a time when Canada should be doing more to help a troubled world build a more peaceful and stable democratic world, it has never been more important that we defend these democratic institutions that keep us free here in Canada. We will lose our moral authority to make a difference in the world and help it achieve a more peaceful and democratic future if we do not passionately demonstrate the importance of those institutions here at home.

We fully expect that the House will concur with the findings of the committee and we hope that this will help Canadians understand the importance of defending these institutions. We hope that members of the Conservative Party will wake up and recognize their responsibilities and join with us today in standing up for the people who elect us and not defend a government that is once again shutting down this Parliament and denying us the right and responsibility we have to defend the interests of Canadians.

● (1555)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a true travesty that we are spending this time dealing with this motion today.

Last week was a constituency week when members of Parliament should have been in their ridings hearing from their constituents who sent them here to represent them, but instead there was a motion that required the procedure and House affairs committee to spend three days on hearings. During that time, we heard from multiple witnesses. Three ministers of the Crown appeared. With less than a day's notice, two of them appeared for a second time to answer the questions that were asked of them by committee members. Many other witnesses appeared. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent in convening our procedure and House affairs committee last week.

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At the end of those hearings, that opposition member and his coalition partners presented a motion to the committee. I want members to listen carefully to the motion, which read, “that they would not allow any summary of evidence to be presented in that report”, after two full days of hearings and hundreds of thousands of dollars to get those witnesses here, as well as all of the required material that was prepared for it. At the end of that time, they had the audacity to ask that no summary of evidence be included in, what they said could be a maximum, two-page report.

How can the member stand here and defend democracy when, at the end of a two-day hearing, he actually asked that no summary of evidence be included in the record? Then, because the opposition members had the majority, they could pass any motion they wanted to pass. Of course they would pass the motion. How can that be called democracy?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, I find it curious that the hon. member is complaining that there may have been thousands of dollars spent last week to make democracy and Parliament work, when in fact we are trying to determine the costs of billions of dollars of spending by the government. He is actually saying that we should not invest a few thousands of dollars to study bills that cost billions of dollars. That is absolutely ludicrous.

If he would take the time to actually read the report that was written by the researchers of the committee, he would find quite a thorough summary of evidence and testimony in that report. What he would find is that people like Mel Cappe, the former clerk of the Privy Council; Rob Walsh; Ned Franks; and, in fact, every witness, except the ministers of the Conservative government, agreed that the government was hiding behind a phony excuse and was using cabinet confidence when no cabinet confidence applies to the costs of legislation once it is tabled in the House.

If he read the report, the hon. member would also learn that he has a responsibility. When he is in his constituency over the next 36 days, I hope his constituents ask him why he did not demand that the government tell them, as taxpayers, the truth about the costs of the crime legislation.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments and the questions coming from the government members.

It is interesting to hear them suddenly concerned with costs of a meeting when they expressed no such concerns about costs of building many prisons across this country. This coming from a Conservative government that claims to care about the economy and about taxpayers' dollar.

When the Parliament of Canada clearly asked the government for documents, for four months it decided not to provide them. At the eleventh hour, we saw another barrage come from the minister.

What we are debating today is contempt of Parliament. For many Canadians not familiar with the procedures of this place, which can be arcane, I thought I would look up “contempt”, so that we could help folks, particularly the Conservatives, understand what it is they are being charged with by this Parliament.

A lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike. Open disrespect for a person or a thing. Open disrespect for what this Parliament stands for.

The principle role of Parliament is to hold the government to account, regardless of party affiliation. Conservatives should be as occupied with this question of costs in building new prisons as the opposition members are.

I can remember, Madam Speaker, and you will as well, somewhat fondly, the Conservative government filibustering a climate change bill that simply asked the government to report on its efforts on climate change. That is what the bill did. The Conservatives held it in committee for months, saying that a report needed to be costed, that they would not pass any bill that had not been properly costed. I remember it well because day after day they filibustered the committee trying to do its work in an effort to fight dangerous climate change.

Now we come to this, something that obviously costs money and the government has shown contempt, not just for the members of Parliament but for who we represent and for this very place. Why suddenly this concern for costs of a meeting when we are talking about billions of dollars and contempt for our very democracy?

• (1600)

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, the hon. member points out the hypocrisy of the Conservative members on this issue.

In fact, if the government had simply answered the questions four months ago, there would not have been any costs required. Parliament would have been given the information needed for members to do their jobs.

It is the Conservative government that is responsible for any incidental costs associated with this process that we have had to go through over the last four months.

I could never have predicted four months ago when as a member of the House of Commons finance committee, I moved a motion. I fully expected the government to comply and respond to that motion.

The member also raises a very important issue. When we are talking about initiatives around climate change and the environment or on social investment for children or for early learning and child care, the government will always say it will cost too much, or when we are talking about building new prisons, I guess for their unreported criminals, the government refuses to give us the data and implies there is no cost.

What we have here is a government that will hide the cost for its narrow neo-conservative Republican U.S.-style criminal justice agenda and will embellish the costs of actions taken to avert climate change or invest in children.

That is the deliberate misuse of information and the twisting of information in the tradition of the Republicans in the U.S. to twist the facts and deny the public the truth. It shows disrespect for taxpayers and disrespect for citizens.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I did not catch the member's entire speech, but we had a discussion earlier today with regard to the tax credit for volunteer firefighters.

Although it is a sort of step in the right direction, and it has been something we have been advocating for quite some time, it certainly is not as fulsome and does not include as many firefighters as we would have included with a refundable tax credit.

Would my colleague like to comment, especially on those firefighters in rural communities who do not make a great deal of money, who are on a fixed income? Is it going to be of any benefit to them?

I know in Glace Bay there is a small honorarium paid to firefighters. They currently access the \$1,000 exemption. I see where it is going to be of little help to those firefighters.

Could I get the member's comments, overall, on that provision?

Hon. Scott Brison: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives have failed to make this credit refundable. A Liberal government, as part of our rural Canada proposal for volunteer firefighters, would introduce a fully refundable tax credit for volunteer firefighters.

This means that hard-working, low income Canadians, many of whom are juggling more than one part-time job just to pay the bills, will not be treated fairly by this Conservative plan. It means that many volunteer firefighters, who are low income Canadians in our small communities, will not benefit from the Conservative plan.

Can members imagine, and this speaks to values, a Conservative government that actually brings in an initiative that will discriminate against low income Canadians? That is what the government is all about.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1605)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. The hon. member's time has elapsed.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Madam Speaker, I guess I should just point out right at the outset that this is what I dealt with all last week: a member who just would not stay within the boundaries of what he is supposed to talk about; a member who just would not stay within the boundaries of his time; and, I am sorry to say, a side of the table that just would not stay in the bounds of politeness. It was about as discouraging as it might get.

I have made plenty of mistakes in my life and I am happy to admit them. Long before politics I knew the member for Kings—Hants and found him to be a very honourable gentleman. This week he has tried my patience on that one, as to whether I really truly believe it at all any more.

The other mistake is I thought I had the best job in the world. I came here as a member of Parliament some seven years ago and I

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thought, "I can't believe how good this is. You're representing your people and it's just incredible".

I got to be the chair of procedure and House affairs, a chair of a committee of the House, and I have been proud of it. I have been very proud of it. It is not often that a chair will get up on a fairly partisan issue that we are talking about here, but I got to see this first-hand last week from the end of the table, not from the side of the government, not from the side of the opposition, but from the side that had to watch it, much like the TV cameras had to watch it last week. I would like to give members my view of what we are talking about here.

So, the second mistake that I have made is I came here thinking this was the best job ever and that we really, truly could get along, and do great things and things that we are all proud of.

After two very long days looking at this issue last week, I am not certain I want to share with my grandkids what I did those two days here in Parliament. I am not sure I want to share with my grandchildren, and I am sorry I do not have any yet, but my future grandchildren what I saw from an abuse of, truly, the procedures.

The member for Kings—Hants, somewhere in his, I was going to say statement of facts but I would have to assume, then, there were facts in there, got up and said that it was about defending taxpayers and it was about defending the democratic systems.

I am happy to say I am the chair of a committee that does defend democratic systems. Last week when we attempted to do that, I saw every dirty trick and every rudeness. It was just over the top. I will explain some of them to members, and Madam Speaker, I know you have seen some of them. I know you have even seen how rude some of us can be even in this House. It was over the top.

I want to tell members that there is a group of people out there who really truly do watch us on TV. We were the only act in town last week. The only thing happening was the procedure and House affairs committee and so, many people watched it. I guess if we go by the CPAC channel, we watch and see what is going on. I have to tell members there are groupies, there is a group of people out there, and I said groupies, I guess maybe we should use that term, who sent emails. I have received emails from across this nation last week about the job of being the chair of the procedure and House affairs.

There were a lot of suggestions as to what we should do to some of the members, and I have to suggest that sometimes during some of those very long sessions last week, I thought some bad thoughts about what I should do to some of those members, too.

Hon. John McKay: And they're all in your caucus.

Mr. Joe Preston: You can see, Madam Speaker, the heckling from the other side. It happened last week, too. It was that way, too. It just was.

Let us just talk a bit about what we attempted to do last week.

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I do not sit on the committee for finance. As I shared with members, I chair a different committee. However, the report came to this House from the finance committee looking for information. That is what the report was about. The committee members felt they needed more information, so they moved a motion and asked the Speaker to find a case of privilege, saying that the information had not been delivered to them.

● (1610)

Maybe some members do not know this, so I will give them a bit of an education on what happens when a motion of privilege is moved. What we first get from the Speaker is a *prima facie* case, a legal term. I am not a lawyer but I understand it well enough to say that it means that the Speaker has found, on the surface, that someone else should look at the case. Therefore, the case was moved to our committee.

As a matter of convention, since I have been the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs the Speaker normally comes and explains to us how he arrived at his decision, the basis for his thought. We were not able to do that last week because, as many members know, it was not a week the House was sitting and so not all members were available to us. Thus the committee was not able to start in the way it would normally do with a study.

The other thing that was different last week, and I have already pointed this out, is that the member for Kings—Hants was there but not as a standard member of our committee. He does not usually sit on our committee.

I take pride in the fact that committee members get along. Our standard committee is made up of the whips of most of the parties and other more senior members of the other parties, including our own. I have found over the period of time I have been the chair that we have certainly been able to get along and maybe even accomplish the impossible every now and again, just by being able to get along, by not making issues partisan or over the top. It is not about trying to get that press clip on the evening news.

The committee seldom meets in public, and so it was really different to be before TV cameras all of last week and have to deal with them too, because I do find there is a difference. I will admit to being a bit at fault here also. When we know a TV camera is on us, we maybe act a little differently than usual. We might take the roundabout way to get to our point because we think it might make a nice clip on a website or on the evening news, instead of just working with the people across the table and getting to the facts and, as a member just said, defending taxpayers and democratic institutions. Instead of just working to do those two things, we chose to make a show of it. We chose to make it look like a circus at times, at other times like a daycare and at other times somewhat like warfare. It really went over the top.

The issue comes to the committee and we have to look at the whole thing to see if it really is a *prima facie* case and we spend a great deal of time looking for facts. The reason we hold these committee meetings is to look for facts. We call witnesses. At the beginning, we very co-operatively ask each party for a list of witnesses they would like to hear from. Each party hands in a list of people, including some experts on the system. Surprisingly enough,

oftentimes the same name is on the lists provided by many of the parties.

The member for Kings—Hants mentioned Mel Cappe, an eminent former clerk of the Privy Council and a professor now at the University of Toronto. I would love to spend some time in his classroom. I really enjoyed listening to Mel Cappe while he was at committee. He is a very knowledgeable gentleman.

Rob Walsh, the House of Commons law clerk, often comes to our committee because we deal with those types of issues. He was probably on more than one witness list.

We are going to have a permanent name tag made for Ned Franks because he attends almost everything we study at the procedure and House affairs committee. He knows his constitutional law. He knows things about the House of Commons. He knows where all the bones are buried. We can pretty much ask Ned anything and he will have an opinion on it. We did find at committee that there certainly were times when Ned had two or three opinions. I mean no offence, because he would admit to it, but there were many times when after a case was made by one of the sides at the table, he would change his view and see that side.

Therefore, we all put together a witness list, including ministers such as the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety, who were both there on the first day of our study.

● (1615)

The member for Kings—Hants is correct that a lot of information was given. It is my understanding that some months ago, a document was given, a foolscap piece of paper, with a costing structure for all of the crime bills. It had some boxes on it and the numbers were filled in. It was fairly fulsome in what it was covering. That day, when the ministers came, they brought the supporting documents for that piece of paper. The member from Kings—Hants is correct that it was quite a show. There was a pretty good binder full of information.

My colleague said something like: “Holy, they looked like dogs that finally caught the car”. The committee did not know what to do with it, because there it was, all of the information. All of a sudden, they had the information they wanted. There it was. Then the committee said it was too much. They could not read it all. It was too much, and they complained they were only given 15 minutes to read it, which was not enough.

What did we do? We asked two very busy ministers, who were on their way to other things, to come back the next day so that we would have the time to read the documents and they could spend another hour with us and explain what was in the documents. That sounded fair.

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I recognize ministers are very busy people. I know it was hard for the clerk and I, when scheduling the first witnesses and helping to set up the witness list in the first place, to get them together at the same time to do this. So we had ministers come back the next day because the members asked them for more information. It sounded great, and so we did have them back.

In-between their first and second appearances, we had a number of witnesses. We mentioned some of them, such as Mel Cappe. We had a lot of good, interesting questions about his theory on cabinet confidentiality and what information could be shared with committees, legislatures and members of Parliament so that we can make the right decisions when voting on legislation.

The member from Kings—Hants has just suggested this was what we were trying to do. I agree it was exactly what we were trying to do. We were trying to find a way for information to get into MPs' hands and therefore into their minds when looking at legislation, whether at the committee level or here in the House, so that we can do our proper due diligence. That was our "fiduciary responsibility", I think was the term used.

Therefore, all of the committee's meetings, all of the show trial, was about answering whether the information was sufficient.

It was not sufficient when it was provided at committee, apparently. It was not sufficient when the document was tabled here in the House with a good amount of information. As I said, I was not a member of the finance committee and I do not know whether the numbers were what that committee wanted or not. However, the member from Kings—Hants has just said: "No, they weren't".

We did not get there. We had done of all of that and had all of those witnesses and all of their testimony, then something happened that I have never seen before in my life in this whole place. Two things happened.

The night before the whole committee meeting started, there was an article in the newspaper about how the committee was going to find the government in contempt. I thought that was a little off and a bit of a predetermination of where we were going.

At the end, the very that minute that testimony stopped, a document came forward on how this was going to work out, with all of the conclusions reached by the committee, but without any evidence to prove what was said. It would only be two pages long and there were going to be five recommendations by the committee. The minute we stopped hearing the evidence, we were apparently going vote on the motion.

That is what happened in that committee. It was as blatant and over-the-top abuse of power as I have ever seen.

● (1620)

I have spoken a long time and I have got a little off my chest and am honestly feeling a little better.

The good thing is that the reason we have committees in this place is to do that type of investigative work. It is not to predetermine where we are going to be. I have to say to the member for Kings—Hants and the other members from his party who filled that

committee on a temporary basis, it is not how we usually work. We would not think of ignoring the evidence and then just give a report. We take a summary of the evidence into account.

I move:

That the House do now proceed to the orders of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

● (1700)

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

(Division No. 203)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hiebert	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenny (Calgary Southeast)

Routine Proceedings

Kent	Kerr	Julian	Kania
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Kennedy	Laforest
Lake	Lauzon	Laframboise	Lamoureux
Lebel	Lemieux	Lavallée	Layton
Lobb	Lukiwski	LeBlanc	Lee
Lunn	Lunney	Lemay	Leslie
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie	Lessard	Lévesque
Mayes	McColeman	MacAulay	Malhi
McLeod	Menzies	Malo	Maloway
Merrifield	Miller	Marston	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		Masse	Mathysen
Moore (Fundy Royal)		McCallum	McGuinty
Nicholson	Norlock	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon	Ménard	Mendes
Obhrai	Oda	Minna	Mourani
Paradis	Payne	Mulcair	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Petit	Poillievre	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Preston	Raitt	Nadeau	Neville
Rajotte	Rathgeber	Oliphant	Ouellet
Reid	Richards	Pacetti	Paillé (Hochelaga)
Richardson	Rickford	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)	Paquette
Ritz	Saxton	Patry	Pearson
Scheer	Schellenberger	Plamondon	Pomerleau
Shea	Shiple	Proulx	Rae
Shory	Smith	Ratansi	Regan
Sopuck	Sorenson	Rodriguez	Rota
Stanton	Storseth	Russell	Savage
Strahl	Sweet	Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Thompson	Tilson	Siksay	Silva
Toews	Trost	Simson	St-Cyr
Tweed	Uppal	Stoffèr	Szabo
Van Kesteren	Van Loan	Thi Lac	Thibeault
Vellacott	Verner	Tonks	Trudeau
Wallace	Warawa	Valeriotte	Vincent
Warkentin	Watson	Volpe	Wilfert
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)		Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac — 150
Weston (Saint John)			
Wong	Woodworth		
Yelich	Young — 144		

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brison	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Donnelly	Dorion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Duceppe	Dufour
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
East	Eyking
Faïlle	Folco
Foot	Freeman
Gagnon	Gameau
Gaudet	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Guamieri	Guay
Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Jennings

Nil

PAIRED

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I declare the motion lost.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Arts and Culture; the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, The Environment.

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member's speech. He was reflecting from the perspective of his role as chair of the procedure and House affairs committee and said that he felt Canadians were discouraged last week when they watched the proceedings in committee.

Does he feel Canadians were discouraged when the current government was elected and took office and the Conservatives actually wrote and distributed to their members and committee chairs a 400-page manual on how to thwart the work of parliamentary committees? Was the hon. member somehow embarrassed by that?

Routine Proceedings

Does he believe Canadians are discouraged by a governing party that writes a manual on how to disrupt the work of parliamentary committees? Does he believe Canadians were discouraged when the Prime Minister shut down Parliament twice? Does he believe Canadians were discouraged that members of Parliament, like the hon. member and his colleagues in the Conservative caucus, refused to do their jobs, hold their government to account and ensure that taxpayers and Canadians knew what the cost of their legislation would be?

Mr. Joe Preston: Madam Speaker, the member for Kings—Hants mentioned a manual full of information. That is exactly what he got last week in committee and people should have seen his surprise, “Holy cow, I can't read this. I don't have enough time to read this. This might actually be what I asked for”. I shared in my dissertation, for those who were not there, that Liberals looked like dogs who finally caught the car. They did not know what to do with it when they got it.

The member brought up manuals. I will talk about being discouraged. That is what I am reading in emails from people across the country about the shenanigans and happenings in last week's committee. The manual the member for Kings—Hants mentioned is not the one I used. The one I used is *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. It is right here on the table if he would like to read it, and maybe he should.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was listening to the chair of the procedure and House affairs committee talk about binders with information that was delivered to committee. I am pleased to again table in the House the information that the House requested, which shows we were fully in support of the House's resolution.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I would call the attention of the House to the report of the Parliamentary Budget Officer who, after examining the information in those binders, said in his report to committee:

There remain significant gaps between the information requested by parliamentarians and the documentation that was provided by the [government], which will limit the ability of parliamentarians to fulfill—

• (1710)

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear anything that was a point of order. There has not really been a point of order. The minister rose to table some documents.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, due to the importance of what I think are the documents, the minister was not quite clear as to what he was tabling. Is this all of the information initially requested by the finance committee, so members will know what information is available?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, they did not even read the documents before they said they did not answer the questions they had asked. This shows what a kangaroo court that committee had become.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, order.

We are in the period of questions and comments. If members have a question for the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, he will answer it.

The hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London will answer the question and then we will move on to another.

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, when the House was presented all the information just now, I was still finishing my response to the question from the member for Kings—Hants. He asked me if I was discouraged. I did share in my speech that I was discouraged. I certainly was discouraged with the behaviour of the members last week at the meeting and have been discouraged with some of the emails I have had about their behaviour since then.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member from the Conservative Party. I heard him say how discouraged he was about the way the committee acted, about all the emails he is receiving and all that. It is odd, but I am not receiving the same kind of emails.

Given the way it was presented, I would like to pursue the matter. He was talking about the way that big stack of information was delivered. Does he remember when Professor Franks from Queen's University told us during his testimony that it would take at least until July to read everything in detail? The Standing Committee on Finance had requested these documents four months earlier. It took the Speaker of the House of Commons to force the government to present its stack of documents through the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who is not even answering members' questions today.

I would like the hon. member to say a few words about that.

Also, I noticed in committee that the Conservatives were able to illustrate every possible way a committee should not work.

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member from the NDP shared most of his time at committee with the member for Winnipeg Centre which really was part of the problem. I have received more comment on the behaviour of the member for Winnipeg Centre than anything I have ever seen in this House. As chair of a committee, I have never seen a more disruptive member than that member. I would ask his own whip, and perhaps his leader, to take him under control.

There is a meeting of volunteer firefighters and fire chiefs right here on the Hill tonight. For those who are thinking of voting against the budget, why do they not go and talk to them?

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and ask my hon. esteemed colleague a question about this. I want to ask him what his constituents think? Because back home in Wetaskiwin here is what my constituents see. They see the plaintiffs, who consist of the majority of coalition members, putting a motion before a Speaker, who is elected as one of the members of the parties, who makes a ruling that sends it to a committee where the plaintiffs actually outnumber the defendants, and they come to a conclusion that we are in contempt.

Do this member's constituents see this as the sham that it actually is, as my constituents do?

Routine Proceedings

•(1715)

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, I have to agree with my colleague's question, that yes I do. However, the real answer is it went further than that. The report was written before the committee was finished hearing witnesses. There was the report in front of us to try to find the guilt. This is like the members of a jury, before they arrive to be picked, all agreeing that it is going to be that way.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst on a point of order.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives were already of the mindset that there was no violation of the rules of the House or the rights of the MPs. They were already of the mindset to defend their government without even listening to the witnesses.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

[*English*]

The hon. member for Mississauga South is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the House is now seized with a question of the government being in contempt of Parliament and the questioner and the chairman of the committee both have stated in this place, denigrating Parliament and its processes under the rules of this place. This appears to be yet another example of contempt for the rules of Parliament.

I would like both members to withdraw their comments about characterizing Parliament as a kangaroo court.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I have a hard time with a Conservative MP saying that the Speaker referred the question of privilege to committee because the Speaker was not from his party.

The Speaker was democratically elected by the elected members of this House. The hon. member may recall that his party also voted for this Speaker. He is showing a lack of respect for the Speaker of the House of Commons.

I would like the hon. member to apologize to the Speaker of the House of Commons. What he just said in the House is shameful.

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, there is no way we call into disrepute the Speaker of this House. He is an honourable gentleman. He makes his decisions on the basis of the law.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, the member should apologize for what he said about the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I have not heard anything that would require an apology. The Chair will examine the transcript. If there is any reason to come back to the House to make any kind of request, we will do so in due course. We will move on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

The Deputy Speaker: You have 10 minutes left for your speech.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to take the whole 30 minutes allocated to the Bloc Québécois. I would have shared my time with the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry. The government used an unfair tactic and moved to proceed to the orders of the day when there were mere minutes left. We obviously could not start debate on the budget. I believe that it was an attempt to muzzle the opposition parties, in particular the Bloc and the NDP.

I would remind the members that after the Liberal member for Kings—Hants raised a question of privilege, the Speaker gave a ruling in which he found a prima facie breach of privilege. He allowed the member to move a motion, which concluded as follows:

...Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs for a final determination on the government's compliance, or lack thereof, and that the committee report back its findings and recommendations no later than March 21, 2011.

Whether the government and the Conservative members of the committee like it or not, the majority decision of the committee is very clear. I would like to read the end of that decision:

...the Committee concludes the following:

- 1) That the government has failed to produce the specific documents ordered to be produced by the Standing Committee on Finance and by the House;
- 2) That the government has not provided a reasonable excuse;
- 3) That the documents tabled in the House and in Committee do not satisfy the orders for production of documents; nor do they provide a reasonable excuse [a point on which the Chair placed particular emphasis in his decision];
- 4) That this failure impedes the House in the performance of its functions; and
- 5) That the government's failure to produce documents constitutes a contempt of Parliament.

The Bloc would be completely in favour of concurring in the report if ever there is a concurrence vote in this regard. Clearly, the government did not comply with the request of the Standing Committee on Finance and the House, under false pretences. First, the government told us that it would not submit the documents because they contained cabinet secrets. That was the response the government gave on November 24 regarding the F-35s and the tax cuts.

On December 1, the government gave the same response regarding the justice issue: it was a cabinet secret. As the debate progressed, the government knew it was in hot water. It tried to avoid the question of privilege that had to be raised.

On February 17, the government tabled documents. This is the first rather incredible thing. On November 24 and December 1, the government said that it could not table any documents because they contained cabinet secrets and then on a Liberal Party opposition day on the issue—

•(1720)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Wetaskiwin on a point of order.

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order and I apologize to my colleague for interrupting him in the middle of his dissertation.

Routine Proceedings

I want to express my regret to all members in the House. I was simply trying to express the concern that I had about how Parliament is running. If my comments were construed in any way as calling into disrepute the honourable way in which the Speaker of the House carries on his duties, I certainly did not mean to do so. If they were taken that way, I certainly do apologize to the fullest extent possible.

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates the clarification.

The hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, on February 17, in the midst of a Liberal opposition day on this issue, the government tabled a series of very unsatisfactory documents, which nevertheless contained a certain amount of information. It was not the information requested by the committee, and that proves that the government's argument of cabinet secrecy was bogus.

That was also very clear in April 2010, when the Speaker handed down his ruling on the government's refusal to provide parliamentarians with the documents about allegations of torture in Afghanistan. The Speaker was very clear. He quoted Bourinot's *Parliamentary Procedure and Practice in the Dominion of Canada*, including a paragraph found on page 281:

But it must be remembered that under all circumstances it is for the house to consider whether the reasons given for refusing the information are sufficient. The right of Parliament to obtain every possible information on public questions is undoubted, and the circumstances must be exceptional, and the reasons very cogent, when it cannot be at once laid before the houses.

Even if these documents, according to the government, could not be made public, the government should have assumed its responsibilities and proposed—to the opposition and the entire House—a mechanism for providing access to the information. That was not done. It simply said that they were cabinet confidences. Initially, it hid behind this authoritarian argument without wanting to provide the documents requested; later, it provided information that was very incomplete. This contradicts the government's argument that all the information in all these documents is a matter of cabinet confidence.

The Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has just tabled the binders that were delivered to the committee on March 16. Once again, the pressure is on. The Minister of Public Safety and the Minister of Justice are appearing before the committee. The government is trying to find a way to derail the debate and create a distraction, and so they table the documents in the House.

The Minister of Public Safety was very clear: these documents contain exactly the same information as the documents tabled in the House by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons on February 17.

I have had a chance to go over those documents. I would say that reproducing the legislation about which the Standing Committee on Finance and the House of Commons were asking for information took up about 90% of the huge binder. That is a lot of paper for almost nothing.

Furthermore, for each piece of legislation, instead of writing a paragraph, they wrote two pages that say basically the same thing,

with the exception of one or two acts where the information is contradictory. As for the rest, there is no more information, and the Minister of Public Safety confirmed this.

This means that the binder tabled on March 16 before the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs does not answer our questions any more than the documents tabled on February 17 at the request of the Standing Committee on Finance and the House of Commons.

I would remind the House that the Speaker issued his ruling on March 9. What was unacceptable on February 17 led to the Speaker's ruling to the effect that there were sufficient grounds for finding a question of privilege in relation to these documents. Thus, it is very clear that the documents tabled on March 16 do not correspond to what the Speaker had in mind when he gave his ruling.

The government disobeyed the rules of Parliament and did not comply with the order given by the Standing Committee on Finance and by the House of Commons. This amounts to contempt of Parliament. I will not conceal the fact that we were prepared to go much further at the time by withdrawing our confidence in the government because of this. We will likely have the opportunity to go ahead with this in the coming days, if not in the next few hours.

We in the opposition are not the only ones who think that the government failed to fulfill its obligations to parliamentarians. I would remind the House that the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, testified before the committee on March 16. He clearly stated that the Parliament of Canada owes a fiduciary duty to the Canadian people, and therefore a duty to administer public monies on their behalf, and that Canada's Constitution established and affirms this duty.

● (1725)

The Standing Committee on Finance simply fulfilled its obligations and fiduciary duties regarding the use of taxpayer dollars to the Quebec public by requesting information, particularly with regard to certain justice legislation, the cost of the F-35s, and the effects of the tax cuts that were announced in previous budgets and that are still found in the budget announced yesterday.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer's point of view is very clear. With regard to the justice legislation, he said that "the government has not provided an adequate response to the finance committee request.... Full compliance with the request requires...."

He then listed a series of elements that show the government did not comply with the Standing Committee on Finance's order.

With regard to the procurement of the F-35 Lightning II joint strike fighters, the Parliamentary Budget Officer once again said that "the government has not provided an adequate response to the finance committee request."

The Parliamentary Budget Officer thus clearly indicated that a mistake was made.

Private Members' Business

I would like to close by saying that the documents that we were given on February 17 and March 16 are clearly deceitful. The Conservatives want us to believe that estimates were not made because there were too many imponderables, particularly with regard to the justice legislation. However, that is not the case. Each time a minister presents a bill to cabinet, there is an appendix setting out the costs. The Conservatives are therefore hiding the truth from us. This government no longer has the confidence of the House or the public.

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings on the motion at this time.

[*English*]

Accordingly, the debate on the motion will be rescheduled for another sitting.

It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*English*]

FAIRNESS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC) moved that Bill C-620, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (parole review and victim impact statement), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it was a privilege to present Bill C-620, Fairness for Victims of Violent Offenders Act, to the House in February. It is a privilege today, although with mixed emotions, to be the first to speak on its second reading.

I would like to use my time today to reinforce the reasons why this bill would help recalibrate the balance between the rights of violent offenders and the rights of their victims, but first, and most importantly, I would like to share with the House why I worked to bring this bill forward.

Like many hon. members, I have received calls from constituents over the years expressing concern that our system, in their opinion, seemed to give more weight to the rights of those convicted of very serious and heinous crimes rather than the victims of those crimes. I heard story after story regarding the emotional trauma of victims and their feelings of being re-victimized by a system they felt favoured the guilty more.

However, nothing could have made me realize their pain and trauma more than the experience I had last May when I visited a National Parole Board hearing. At the request of a constituent, I attended the National Parole Board to listen, learn and observe the process.

The case was one of direct relevance to my constituent as well as to myself because of the local nature of it. Her sister and her sister's two children had been killed years ago by a murderer who was once

again up for parole. I do not think anything could have prepared me for what I was about to experience.

The violent offender and the family of the woman and children he killed shared the same hearing room for four hours. The raw emotion in the room was unspeakable. To this day it is hard to find the words to do justice to that experience.

Exacerbating the situation, the triple murderer still refused to take responsibility for his crime. No real remorse was shown and still, to this day he has not taken any responsibility. As a result, thankfully, his parole was denied again.

I would like to read something from a publication called *The Record*. It is a report on what the victim's family experienced. The witness at the hearing said that, "This horrible crime committed by Jon Rallo still affects me every single day. I know it will continue to do so in the future. The fact that Jon Rallo has never acknowledged his horrific deeds and has never revealed Jason's resting place only makes the burden more difficult to bear".

He did not even have graciousness to say where he dumped one of the bodies. They still do not know where Jason's body is.

When I think of it now, it strengthens my resolve to bring this bill to fruition, despite the circumstances we find ourselves in the House today.

Throughout the process of considering this bill, I consulted with victims groups, prosecutors, defence attorneys, police officers and many groups to come up with a realistic and workable bill that would be supportable for all members in the House.

The Sampson report, named after former Ontario minister of Corrections, Rob Sampson, was entitled: *A Roadmap to Strengthening Public Safety*. It included 109 recommendations and improvements to corrections and public safety when it was released in December 2007 and it was a good resource in the development of this bill.

The report cited the changing offender profile. Here are a couple of points from the report.

Nearly 60% of inmates are now serving sentences of less than three years and have histories of violence. One in six now have known gang and/or organized crime affiliations.

Also in 2007, the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime was established. Its members have been advocates for victims across the country, raising awareness and making recommendations for change.

• (1735)

Let me give one small fact, but one with a big impact. When testifying before the Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on March 3, 2011, Sue O'Sullivan, the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, in quoting a Department of Justice report said the following, "Victims pay 67% of the cost of crime". That is an alarming statistic and it illustrates very clearly another reason why fairness for victims needs to be addressed.

Private Members' Business

Let me clear up one misconception from the outset. The reforms we are talking about here, to give greater voice and choice to victims, cannot be quickly dismissed as simply following some kind of American model. Our Commonwealth colleagues like Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, have also enacted some of these very same changes.

While not everything can be accomplished in one bill, my hope is that the Fairness for Victims of Violent Offenders Act builds on the work of our government's tough on crime agenda, these reports and of the advocates that have been championing victims' rights in Canada for decades.

What specifically would the bill do? In the simplest terms it would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act in two important ways: One, it would give greater voice and choice to victims; and two, it would give the National Parole Board more discretion in how it reviews the cases of violent offenders, lengthening the time that the National parole Board has for mandatory review of sentences for offences involving violence.

What does this include? This includes ensuring the victim's right to present a victim impact statement is enshrined in law, so that the National Parole Board must consider it as part of its hearing. It is simply a matter of fairness. I have not heard of a case to date when a victim was deprived of the right by the National Parole Board to present an impact statement. Nevertheless, enshrining the right to present a victim impact statement in legislation clearly establishes its importance to all Canadians.

As I included each provision in my bill, I thought back to the Parole Board hearing I witnessed in the spring of 2010 and asked myself, would this make it fairer? Would this help ease the burden on victims and their families?

What is more, my bill also includes recognition that technology has advanced since the last time the Corrections and Conditional Release Act was reviewed. As a result, the bill amends the act to ensure that in the event a victim cannot, or chooses not to attend a parole hearing, they are allowed to use any commonly available form of audio or video format to make the statement.

This is entirely in addition to the written statement. It gives victims and families an option to not have to relive the pain at a hearing if a person so chooses. Given the proliferation of digital and video formats available today and the speed in which technology advances, this only makes common sense.

I thought back to that experience in May 2010 and asked myself, would this law make it more fair? Would it restore balance? Would it help ease the burden on victims and their families?

The bill, Fairness for Victims of Violent Offenders Act, also increases the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of parole in the case of offenders serving a sentence for an offence involving violence. It would increase the review period from "within four years" from the current "within two years". Let me repeat that for clarification. It would increase the review period to four years rather than the current two years.

There is more. In the cases of statutory release, where offenders cause death or serious violent harm to another, it would increase

double the review period to two years from the current one year. The net effect is to give more necessary latitude to the National Parole Board in dealing with cases of violent offenders.

● (1740)

At this point, I want to read another excerpt from a piece of media, which is another experience of victims but this time of Clifford Olson. This was printed in *The Province* in 2010 and it reads:

Olson, 70, who seems to take pleasure in revictimizing the families of those he killed, is automatically eligible for parole every two years until the day he dies.

Ray King, whose only son was 15 when Olson killed him, plans to be at the parole hearing but said it's difficult facing the prospect of a hearing every two years. "Of course it's hard," he said. "It's hard just hearing [Olson's] name."

King said he'd like to see the rules changed to prevent killers from having regular parole hearings. "I'd like to be able to fly, but that's not going to happen either. There's nothing that can be done until he's dead. I'd be glad if he died."

Sharon Rosenfeldt, whose 16-year-old son Daryn was murdered by Olson in April 1981, said from Montreal that she and her daughter will attend Olson's hearing. "I will be attending parole hearings until Clifford Olson dies or I die," said Rosenfeldt, who attended the last hearing with her daughter in a Montreal-area prison in July 2006. "But it's always been really unsettling to us.

"When Clifford Olson was first sentenced I thought it would be for life. Well, he's been part of our lives for coming up 30 years. It will be 30 years in April that Daryn went missing and was murdered.

"To have to relive this every two years, it's so inhumane. It really is..."

Again, going back to my experience in May, I asked myself again whether this law will make it more fair, will restore balance and will help to ease the burden of victims.

Victims should have the assurance as well that those who have harmed them so severely have actually taken seriously their responsibility to endeavour to be rehabilitated and return to society as a law-abiding and contributing citizen.

Finally and additionally, this bill would allow victims increased access to offender documents related to the upcoming parole hearing.

I just want to read one more excerpt. I know these are a little long but they are very germane to the subject at hand. This is about Constable Michael Sweet, who is no relation to me. It reads:

In the early morning hours of March 14, 1980, brothers Craig and Jamie Munro entered what was then George's Bourbon Street restaurant in downtown Toronto for the purpose of committing a robbery. Both men were high on drugs and armed with guns. At the time, Craig Munro was on mandatory supervision from a penitentiary...

The brothers gathered all the people inside into one place but one of the victims managed to successfully flee. Once out on the street he flagged down a passing police cruiser. Constable Sweet, 30, entered the restaurant and was immediately shot twice. There then began a 90 minute standoff between the Munro brothers with their hostages and police. The police later stormed the restaurant and both brothers were shot and captured.

Private Members' Business

During the standoff, Sweet was conscious and slowly bleeding to death. He begged his captors to let him go to a hospital and he told them about the three young daughters he had at home. While Sweet pleaded for his life he was laughed at and taunted. All three men were later transported to hospital.

The Munro brothers survived their injuries. Sweet did not survive.

Jamie Munro was convicted of second degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. He was granted full parole in 1992, married an Italian woman and is believed to be living in Italy under another name. Craig Munro, who was the one that shot Constable Sweet, was convicted of first degree murder. He was automatically sentenced to life imprisonment with no chance of parole for 25 years.

As Karen Fraser said at the press conference, "the crime against her husband took place in a public place". Craig Munro's trial and sentencing were held in public. However, the prison records that were available to Munro and used by the Parole Board in deciding whether or not he should be granted parole were not available to her or the public because they were protected under the Privacy Act. Craig Munro could have authorized the release of those records to the Sweet family but exercised his right not to do so.

Again, this is a matter of fairness. Again I thought back to my experience of 2010 and asked myself whether this law would make it more fair and whether it would give the victims and their families more voice to help ease their burden?

The answer to all these questions that I have asked throughout my speech is yes. I believe this bill reaffirms what the Sampson report said, which is that parole from prison is a privilege not a right. It must be earned and that includes showing remorse for the crime and seeking rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is the key. The National Parole Board must be convinced that the violent offender will not recommit. It is the least we can do to offer dignity to victims.

* * *

● (1745)

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill: Bill C-59, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accelerated parole review) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

* * *

FAIRNESS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-620, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (parole review and victim impact statement), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his presentation of Bill C-620. I think he has alerted the House to the importance of these matters. For those who may not have heard, the bill would increase the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of parole and statutory release in the case of an offender serving a sentence for an offence involving violence. It is an important matter.

However, as it is with every bill, if it were that good the government would have already done it, which must mean that the member may have found a matter that does not in fact have clear support of all stakeholders and interested parties.

I wonder if the member could inform the House on whether he is aware of any group, organization or significant individuals who have disagreed with the actions proposed by the bill.

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-39, which was introduced in the House by the government some time ago, does touch on some of the aspects of Bill C-620 but this bill would take the provisions in the government's bill a step further.

Am I aware of anybody who would be against this bill? Once the bill was made public, the only thing I have received has been support for this bill. So, I know of no one who would object to it.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for all the work that he has put into Bill C-620 so far. As he has indicated, it is a bill that would provide more voice and choice to the victims. I think we can all agree that is a worthwhile cause. It would also give the Parole Board more discretion. I would think that we would want to send the bill to committee.

The only problem, as the member knows, is that we may only be here for another couple of days. However, I want to encourage him, when the election is over and he is back in the House maybe on this side of the House, who knows, to take the opportunity to reintroduce the bill as soon as we get back. I think we would be very pleased to support it to get it to the committee stage.

Has the member done any wide-ranging consultations and—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I will stop the hon. member there.

The hon. member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I had a number of lawyers work on the legal aspects of the bill. I have talked with many groups, as I mentioned in my speech, regarding victims rights groups and I have found, as I said, unanimous support for it.

I am very grateful for the member's vote of confidence that I will be back here.

However, in all seriousness, I did mention in my speech that despite the circumstances we have here, it is necessary to make known the pain that victims go through and the minimal amount of rights they have when it is time for a person who has been convicted to come up for parole and the limited access they have to information so that they can be assured that when the person comes out that person will not reoffend and, quite possibly, re-victimize their families.

● (1750)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for allowing me to second his private member's bill.

Private Members' Business

I want to mention a case that goes back about 25 years. I know the parents whose daughter was brutally murdered in London, Ontario. It happened, as some members might remember, during a time when a series of murders were being committed. I know the parents continue to go through the horror of some of the things that he mentioned he did to her. I know the parents very well and I knew their young daughter who was an absolutely beautiful girl. I want to be able to go back to those parents and tell them what this would mean for them and how it would change how they go to these parole hearings.

Perhaps the member could just quickly comment on that.

Mr. David Sweet: Mr. Speaker, the key thing in the bill is that the National Parole Board would have up to four years from two years. It would give the Parole Board the discretion when it makes decisions regarding the bill.

It would also give the families, who find that they are re-traumatized by going to the National Parole Board but who want to ensure they are there for the loved ones they have lost, the ability to send their victim impact statement on a DVD or some other transmission so they do not need to be physically in the room and have to go through that emotional trauma again.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every one of us in this House is deeply concerned when a serious violent crime occurs. All of us are seized with the questions of how we ensure it never happens again, how we ensure there is justice for the people who suffered as a result of that crime and how we provide comfort to victims to ensure they are able to endure and get over the process of victimization.

The bill is something we should look at and debate to ensure that in the overall spectrum it makes sense. The bill is very targeted. It only deals with violent offences that are schedule 1 offences and would increase the time from two years to four years that somebody would wait while having their pardon eligibility reviewed.

However, I think we need to look at our criminal justice issues in a more fulsome way. If we are to do true service to victims, to community safety and public safety generally, then we cannot just piecemeal these things. We cannot just throw one little bit on top of one little bit with no information.

One of the things we do not have, yet again, for this bill, which I think it is important, is how much it will cost. We have 18 government bills that are before this House right now that relate to having impacts on incarceration and prisons and yet we do not know the true cost.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there remains significant gaps between the information requested from parliamentarians and the documents that were provided by the government which will limit the ability of parliamentarians to fulfill their fiduciary obligations. He went on to point out that more than 55% of the documents relating to the cost of these bills are not there. They are missing.

When we are considering legislation, whether it this bill or any bill, my constituents will ask me how much it will cost and what the trade-offs will be, which are fair questions.

In this case, the bill is clearly limited in scope but we want to ensure it is getting the best result and actually is increasing community safety.

One of the things we need to keep in mind is that if we are truly interested in stopping crime, ensuring communities are safe and reducing victimization, then we need to go after the root causes of crime and stop it before it happens.

In Canada, it may surprise some to know that we actually have a rate of violent recidivism, which is the rate at which violent offenders commit a new violent offence, of less than 1%. That means that somebody convicted of committing a violent crime will commit another violent crime less than 1% of the time. That means the vast majority of crimes that are committed are offences we never saw coming. It means that investments need to be made in things like prevention, community capacity and diversion in terms of dealing with addictions and drugs. Investing in fixing issues surrounding mental health is absolutely critical.

Of course stiff sentencing must be an important part of any package of actions taken to make communities safe. However, places that have tried incarceration and only incarceration have ended in ruin. In fact, I point to recent testimony before committee of the former head of the U.S. drug enforcement agency under President George Bush who talked about what happened in his country. He said:

...we made some mistakes, and I hope that you can learn from those mistakes.

I'm here because I signed on to a "right on crime" initiative, which is an initiative led by a group of conservatives in the United States who support a re-evaluation of our nation's incarceration policies.

In short, he was saying that states like California embarked on a path of dramatically increasing incarceration and did little else. It left the state nearly bankrupt, with no money for health or education and no money for prevention. As they stopped investing in prevention and as the crimes mounted up and the prisons got more full, their rate of violent recidivism was driven north of 20%.

• (1755)

Imagine, today in Canada we have a violent recidivism rate less than 1% and yet we are emulating a model that has driven its rate over 20%. Its overall rate of recidivism is 70%. That means for every 10 people who walk out of a jail, 7 will recommit a crime in California.

I can give the House another example. Newt Gingrich, the founder of the whole movement of incarceration for all problems, points to the example in his most recent letter, comparing the states of New York and Florida, which took two very different paths.

Private Members' Business

New York invested heavily in prevention, in community capacity, in dealing with drugs and mental health, which are at the root of so many crimes. Florida took the conservative approach. Florida ended up spending an enormous amount of money ramping up incarceration, driving its incarceration rates higher and higher at the cost of billions of dollars. For both states, the net result was a difference of 16%. Florida had 16% rise in violent crime. New York decreased 16%. The difference is New York saved literally billions of dollars and wound up with a safer system.

This is the problem. If we are speaking honestly and sincerely to victims, we cannot just talk about incarceration. We have to talk about the fact the government has cut more than 43% from the victims of crime initiative. We need to talk about the fact that the government's hand-picked victims ombudsman, Steve Sullivan, who stood up and said that the government's plan for victims was unbalanced and would not work, was fired.

The reality is the plan that is put before us today would lead to more crime, more costs, more victims, less safety and would steal money from education and health, while dumping billions of dollars into debt.

I note that some money was put into prevention. We will have to see if it was actually spent. One of the strategies on the crime prevention budget was for the government to keep the budget the same but not spend it. The government would keep the budget at about \$50 million, but would only spend \$19 million.

I have gone across the country and talked with organizations that are on the front lines of keeping our communities safe, groups like the Boys and Girls Clubs and church organizations. These organizations ensure that when somebody starts to head down a dark path, that individual is pulled back before a crime is committed, before there is a victim.

Groups like that are seeing their funding cut and slashed. It is being replaced by funding that they have to twist themselves into a pretzel to go after some weird objective the government has set nationally, but makes no sense for their local communities. They are begging for a government they can partner with, that would help them drive the changes they need to keep their communities safe, to help build community capacity. They need to ensure that when this happens, the federal government will give them money not to fit something that has been created in Ottawa, but to fit something that works for their communities.

We see community safety councils in places like Summerside, P.E.I., or in Kitchener—Waterloo, which has a fantastic crime prevention council, or in Ottawa, develop those plans. They desperately need partners if we are serious about breaking the back of this.

I also hear from police chiefs across the country. They say that the cuts being made with respect to services for the mentally ill are totally unacceptable. They say that if we are honestly interested in reducing crime, then we have to take on the problem of mental health in our country. So many prisons are replete with people who have mental health conditions because police have no where else to put them. The police chiefs say that they wait for somebody who is mentally ill to commit a crime so they can put that individual in jail

and at least get him or her out of harm's way. When these individuals are in that jail cell, they are left in segregation with no services. Then they are released on to the streets worse than they ever were before.

Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom has turned away from these policies. Australia has turned away from these policies. The United States has turned away from these policies. It is imperative, as a nation, that we get balanced and intelligent policies when it comes to crime, that when we take action to stop victimization, we do not just talk but we actually do and what we do is based on evidence and fact and not just on drama.

● (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you and my colleagues that we will support Bill C-620 in principle, so that it can be studied in committee. It is highly unlikely that the Standing Committee on Public Safety will study this bill, but we will pretend it is business as usual. We want to study this bill in committee, although we do have some reservations about some of the proposed clauses. However, we are open to studying these clauses and hearing from some expert witnesses to determine how relevant they are.

This bill contains four components, which I will discuss. The first has to do with violent crimes. This bill would allow a direct or indirect victim to make an oral, written or recorded statement at a parole hearing and would require the board to take this statement into account. We believe that that would strengthen the fundamental principle of ensuring that victims are represented. This step can not only help the victim heal, but can also help the board conduct a detailed and fair analysis of the situation.

Before discussing the second component of this bill, I would like to say that I had experience with this law when I was a parole officer. I was often faced with the famous provision that is presented in Bill C-620.

Now for the second component. Under the current law, parole is automatic after two-thirds of a sentence has been served. However, in certain cases, the National Parole Board may decide to deny parole after two-thirds of the sentence, based on a recommendation from a multidisciplinary team. This is known as the detention provision. At present, the board can issue an order denying the statutory release of an offender if it believes the offender cannot be integrated into the community and will, if released before sentence expiry, commit an offence causing death or serious harm to another person, commit a sexual offence involving a child, or commit a drug offence.

This order is reviewed every year, and the board is required to meet with the inmate almost every year. A detention order is an exceptional measure. In my entire career, the only place I had to implement a detention order was at the Regional Mental Health Centre, where inmates who are not serving a life sentence, but a determinate sentence, pose an obvious risk because of their multiple mental health or deviance problems. I saw all kinds of cases.

Some individuals unfortunately cannot be released because of the severity of their problems and because an analysis of the risk and of their conduct in detention and outside shows that they would likely commit a very serious offence, putting in danger the lives of children or causing serious harm to people.

Keeping someone in detention is a measure that is carefully considered and applied to the most dangerous offenders.

● (1805)

Quite often, they are inmates who will not have worked very much on their risk factors, for all sorts of reasons and not necessarily because they do not want to, but quite simply because they are too consumed by their criminality.

A good example of this is pedophiles who have traits of sadism. Yes, that exists. I have seen it. This type of pedophile is extremely dangerous and unfortunately cannot be rehabilitated. They nonetheless get fixed sentences whether we like it or not. It would not be an issue if the person were serving a life sentence. Nonetheless, when it comes to fixed sentences, this needs to be managed.

Holding a detention review hearing for these people after just one year is rather optimistic. When the assessment is made, the risk of danger to the public is so high that it is unlikely to decrease after a year. Therefore, going from one year to two seems reasonable to me. That allows the offender to work on or keep working on his risk factors and it also gives the board some time to see whether the offender has made any improvements.

I think that when people are kept in prison it is generally because they cannot be rehabilitated. The current legislation requires sometimes very dangerous offenders to be released after two-thirds of their sentence. When the risk of danger to the public is assessed, it is not possible to say whether that man or woman will reoffend within the first 24 hours, 48 hours or seven days. We know there is a risk of recidivism, but with the information available, we are unable to say whether the offender will reoffend as soon as he is released or a few days after his release. In that case, we cannot detain the offender.

If risk can be assessed in this way, then the offender can be detained. The ridiculous thing about the current legislation is that parole after two-thirds of the sentence is automatic when it should be conditional, as the Bloc Québécois has been calling for and as is the case for full parole after one-third of the sentence.

Detention is a procedure that helps keep automatic parole in check when the board establishes, through recommendations from a multidisciplinary team, that the offender would commit a very dangerous offence very soon after being released.

In fact, this provision of the bill would not even be needed if, under the current law, statutory release were conditional, not

automatic, after two-thirds of the sentence. Given the current law, I think that it is reasonable to go from one to two years.

The third component of this law would allow the board to pass relevant information about the offender on to victims. The Bloc is not opposed to this measure, which, I believe, could be crucial to the victim's safety. For example, the victim should know when the offender is released from prison and if they could bump into one another at the convenience store. This needs to be examined closely because it would be inappropriate to share certain information. I think it is important that this be studied in committee to determine, in collaboration with experts, what information could and could not be passed on.

Our party feels that the fourth component is rather disturbing. We are neither for nor against it. We simply feel it needs to be studied. I am talking about the provision that would increase the wait time from two to four years between hearings when parole is denied. This is not a question of statutory release, but of other types of parole, be it complete freedom or day parole.

● (1810)

We agree with the provisions on violent crime, but this particular provision really needs to be studied further.

[English]

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in support of Bill C-620, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (parole review and victim impact statement).

I want to congratulate my hon. colleague from Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale for his initiative and hard work in drafting a piece of legislation that is well-founded, important, and sound.

Essentially, the New Democratic Party's position will be to support this bill at second reading. We look forward to examining it in more detail in committee. New Democrats support expanding the rights of victims. We will examine this bill to ensure that the proposals are, in fact, crafted in such a way that the goal can be achieved. Reading the bill at face value as it is currently written is well on its way to achieving that goal.

This bill would do three things. First, it would increase the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of parole in the case of offenders serving sentences for offences involving violence. This would increase to four years the length of time that the National Parole Board must provide a further review of parole from the current two years.

Second, it would increase the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of statutory release for offenders who cause death or serious harm to others. This bill would increase the review to two years from the current one year.

Private Members' Business

Third, this bill would create a right for victims to present victim impact statements at National Parole Board hearings and would amend the act to ensure that in the event a victim cannot or chooses not to attend a parole hearing, the victim may use any commonly available form of audio or video format to make a statement, in addition to a written statement. It would also allow victims increased access to offender documents related to an upcoming parole hearing.

In short, the latter provision in particular would give victims a greater role in the criminal justice system. It would allow them to know what progress their offender have made. To be informed of exactly what is going on with that offender is a long overdue and important provision.

The fact that this bill recognizes that victims want to play a role in the parole process, want information about what is going on with their offender, and want to participate and have their voices heard if they so choose, is thoughtful and sensitive. The fact that this bill would provide for victims to send victim impact statements to parole hearings if they are uncomfortable being in the presence of their offender or because it is economically prohibitive for them to attend is sensitive, and a wise and thoughtful improvement to the law.

I want to talk a bit about the importance in our justice system of making sure that the voices of victims are heard. Steve Sullivan, the former victims ombudsman, testified in the public safety committee in which I participated. We heard some very important information from Mr. Sullivan about what victims really want. They want information, they want to participate, and they want to know that their voices are heard in the process. It is crucial to the healing of victims and for justice that the impacts on victims are actually part of the process in the beginning, the middle, and the end.

Hearing the voices of victims is a crucial part of preventing recidivism. Offenders must know the impacts of their actions and the harm they cause. In order for offenders to have a better chance of not reoffending, having to accept responsibility for their actions is an important part of offenders healing and not reoffending.

We all know that restorative justice provisions give closure to victims knowing that the offenders have heard them and, when it is successful, that offenders take responsibility for the harm they have caused. It can actually work to heal the damage caused in many circumstances.

●(1815)

I also want to talk about what else we heard Mr. Sullivan say because he spoke on behalf of victims who have given him a lot of input. He told us as parliamentarians that victims also want better programs in prison, not because they are trying to coddle offenders but because it is important for them to know that while in prison, the offender is getting the kind of programming that will make him or her less likely to reoffend. Victims are afraid. Once victimized, they are afraid it will happen to them again. So victims have a stake in the criminal justice system in a way that many people do not.

According to Mr. Sullivan, victims want to know that the offender in prison has received programming. They want to know that the offender is receiving rehabilitation measures. They want to know that others will not be victimized by the same offender, and that they themselves will not be victimized again. Victims want to know about

an offender's progress in prison and about the offender's attitude in prison. They want to know whether or not offenders have accepted responsibility for their behaviour.

Victims care that offenders get treatment for addictions and mental illness. Up to now the government has refused to acknowledge that aspect of what victims want. I want to encourage the government to pay attention to victims' expressions in that regard and start putting resources into those areas because that is what victims want in this country.

I want to give the House a couple of quotes from Mr. Sullivan. He said:

By focusing solely on sending people to prison longer, we're not serving the majority of victims of crime out there. We have to broaden our perspective of meeting victims' needs and sentencing might be part of that, but it's a very small part for most victims.

Mr. Sullivan was saying that a government that pursues a narrow policy of simply elongating sentences is not actually listening to victims and providing the comprehensive services that victims need. Victims need healing services. They need counselling services. They want information. They want input. They want their voices to be heard and they want to know that the government puts resources into making offenders accountable for their actions and helping offenders actually recover and not reoffend.

Mr. Sullivan said:

I'm sure the committee has had debates about the value of the government's bills and their approach. I'm not here to speak about that...That's a debate you'll have in Parliament.

He also said:

It should not be considered as a way to meet the needs of victims. I spent the entire day today with victims groups and with victim service providers yesterday, and that didn't come up at all as a way to meet the real needs. Every day we hear from victims, asking how we get those issues solved. That's just not part of the equation in most cases.

I want to talk about a couple of constituents in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway, whom I met with recently, Norm Au and Iliaz Ali. These two Canadians live near the Nanaimo sky train station. They are community block watch participants and are routinely victims of crime. Near the Nanaimo sky train station is a neighbourhood that is victimized regularly by drug dealing, prostitution, vandalism, and theft.

These brave constituents come out of their neighbourhoods, watch their neighbourhoods, and try to protect and support each other. They phone the police when they see crimes being committed. What these people need and have asked for is better community policing at sky train stations. They want to see more community policing generally and better signage. They want to know that when they call the police and are observing a crime in progress, there will be an immediate response.

These are the kind of provisions that victims in this country really want to see.

Once those people have committed a crime and they have gone to jail, it is after the horse has been let out of the barn. These people want crime prevention and community policing. That is what the government needs to be doing.

Private Members' Business

The New Democrats are calling on the government for more community policing, more crime prevention resources, and more programs to deal with mental illness and addictions in our communities, which we all know are some of the major root causes of criminal behaviour. We will not make progress in our efforts to reduce crime in this country if we do not start addressing mental illness and addictions.

Even the previous minister of public safety acknowledged there are people in prison who ought not to be there because it is not appropriate as they are sick individuals. Yes, they have committed crimes and should pay for those crimes.

• (1820)

However, we are fooling ourselves if we think that simply locking people up for longer will do anything to reduce crime in this country.

I applaud the hon. member for his bill. The New Democrats will support it.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have come to learn in this place that we always need to beware of a member of Parliament who says, “I support this bill in principle, but—”.

I just want to make a couple of quick comments to my colleague, the member for Ajax—Pickering, who tried to somehow liken this bill to having something to do with California or Florida or Newt Gingrich. This has nothing to do with that whatsoever.

This bill has to do with fairness for victims. That is what this bill is all about. I take some offence that my colleague from across the way could suggest that this has something to do with U.S.-style justice in any way. This is really about fairness for victims of violent offenders. It does not get any simpler than that.

Let me just talk about the four things that this bill proposes to do to amend the CCRA.

First, it would amend section 123 to increase the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of parole in the case of offenders serving a sentence for an offence involving violence. This would increase “within four years” from the current “within two years”.

Second, it would amend section 131 to increase the period within which the National Parole Board must provide a further review of statutory release for offenders who cause death or serious harm to another. For example, for an offence involving violence, it would increase “within two years” from the current “within one year”.

Third, it would amend section 140 to ensure the victim's right to present a victim impact statement is enshrined in law, so the National Parole Board must consider it as part of its hearings. It would also amend section 140 to ensure that in the event victims cannot or chooses not to attend a parole hearing, to allow the victims to use any commonly available form of audio or video format to make their statement. As a result, the act would be modernized to account for the proliferation of digital and video formats available today. Having a choice will help ease the parole process on victims and their families.

Fourth, it would amend section 142 to allow victims increased access to offender documents related to an upcoming parole hearing.

Just to be very clear, that is what this bill proposes to do.

I am pleased to rise today to talk to this bill put forward by the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, whom I am proud to call not just a colleague but a friend. The hon. member has always done a great job representing his constituents and he should be commended now for bringing forward a private member's bill that gives a voice to victims of crime.

The short title for Bill C-620 is fairness for victims of violent offenders act. I believe he has struck the right balance in doing just that. In reading over this bill, I am impressed with the positive steps it proposes ensuring that victims of crime have their interests taken into consideration during the process of parole hearings.

What a concept. Let us think about that, that we would actually take into consideration victims of crime. I think this is a very good idea.

This is not to say that the possibility of parole will be infringed upon for those who the system deems to have been rehabilitated. Indeed, one of the cornerstones of our justice system is the belief that criminals can and should be rehabilitated, so that they can re-enter society as productive citizens.

However, to force victims of a violent crime to relive the dramatic effects of the act by requiring them to face the perpetrator of that crime time and time again during parole proceedings is not, I think, what our justice system is about. Our system should not seek to put victims through a process that at the end of the day only causes them further pain and suffering.

For this reason, I applaud Bill C-620 as put forward since it seeks to provide different avenues for victims to participate in the parole process that are less difficult for them on an emotional level. It also seeks to give the National Parole Board greater latitude through lengthening the time in which a mandatory parole review must occur. Of course, this bill is given ever greater credibility since it derives from a sincere desire to have the greater share of the burden shifted from the victim to the perpetrator.

Indeed, as the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale noted in his remarks, the office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime has provided the disturbing statistic that under our current system, victims pay 67% of the costs of a crime. Simply put, this is not acceptable.

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I do not see how justice is being properly served through our current system that places an inordinate amount of pressure upon the victims of violent crime. Changes need to be made to take into account the traumatic circumstances that the current system demands that victims relive, time and time again.

• (1825)

That is why I feel that one of the most rational aspects of the bill before the House is the part that provides victims the opportunity to supply their remarks in any commonly available media format. This avenue should, without a doubt, be made available to victims should they choose not to attend a parole hearing of the individual already responsible for so much of their physical and mental anguish. This would be in addition to the written statement that the victim, under the bill, would be able to provide and be able to have the National Parole Board legally obliged to consider during the course of the hearing. Most importantly, this option gives victims and their families the choice of avoiding having to relive their experiences by not having to attend the hearing in person.

This in and of itself speaks volumes to the bill's intent of reducing the trauma that victims of violent crimes are forced to go through with each parole hearing. Indeed, the bill goes beyond simply providing new venues for victims and putting new regulations in place for the parole board, but ensures that victims of crime are accorded the dignity they deserve.

I see the bill as an attempt to protect the families who have had their children taken from them by violent and malicious killers. The bill is for the survivors of those violent crimes, for those haunted by memories of assault and those having to live with the knowledge of their families' tormentors remaining unrepentant of their cowardly acts.

In speaking to the bill I tried to imagine what it must have been like for those individuals to have their family members brutally murdered by an unapologetic murderer like David Shearing, to have to face the person who caused so much pain and suffering to their loved ones, to have to relive that experience every two years, with the threat of that person being released into society once again a very serious possibility. That is not fair to victims. That is not what I envision when I hear the talk about balance in our justice system.

The particular individual I just mentioned, David Shearing, was found guilty of the murder of a British Columbia couple who was camping with their daughter and their son-in-law as well as the children in 1982. Shearing shot everyone, save for the two pre-teen girls, whom he kept alive for nearly a week to sexually assault the older daughter before killing them both and burning the bodies of the whole family in an attempt to cover his tracks.

I can barely fathom the pain the family of these victims had to go through during the process that followed, the police reports, the trial hearings—

The Deputy Speaker: I regret to interrupt the member, but the time provided for private members' business has expired.

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ROYAL ASSENT

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a communication has been received as follows:

Rideau Hall

Ottawa

March 23, 2011

Mr. Speaker:

I have the honour to inform you that the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, signified royal assent by written declaration to the bill listed in the schedule to this letter on the 23rd day of March, 2011 at 5:57 p.m.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Wallace,

Secretary to the Governor General and Herald Chancellor

The schedule indicates the bill assented to was Bill C-59, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accelerated parole review) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

ARTS AND CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the announcement you just made regarding Bill C-59 is a great response to the question that the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked today about the Bloc's achievements. That bill is one of the Bloc's achievements. The Bloc Québécois inspired and brought forward the bill to abolish parole after one-sixth of the sentence is served.

During this adjournment debate, I would like to discuss the question I asked on November 25 regarding arts and culture. Several of the people who promote our artists abroad noted that abolishing the programs for artists touring abroad had adversely affected the competitiveness of our artists and the dissemination of Quebec and, obviously, Canadian culture. It was a very bad idea, both from the cultural and economic points of view, for the Minister of Canadian Heritage to decide to abolish the programs for cultural tours.

Adjournment Proceedings

At that time, the minister told me that the real issue was when would the Bloc vote in favour of their budget, which provided unprecedented funds to assist our artists on the international scene. I must say that the minister misled the House because a deputy minister from the Department of Canadian Heritage has officially submitted a document to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, revealing that in 2010-2011 there was a 7% or \$27 million cut to the budget for arts and culture. It is therefore completely false to say that the government's budget gives unprecedented funds to help artists on the international scene. It is even a bit ridiculous.

Nevertheless, the Minister of Canadian Heritage always comes back to the same thing: the Bloc voted against the budget. This is untrue. The Bloc Québécois votes in favour of motions when they are good for Quebec and votes against them when they are not. The Bloc Québécois voted in favour of the 2006 and 2007 budgets when fewer cuts were being made by the Conservative government.

We are raising the issue of the International Exchange for the Performing Arts, CINARS, again this week. The request this organization made to the Department of Canadian Heritage last April for \$77,500 in funding for an important arts and culture activity that it holds year after year was refused. In the past, CINARS has always received funding for its activities, which consist of a forum and a training seminar, which began in 1993 and 1999.

The eligibility criteria for the program have not changed over the past few years. Nothing has changed. It is the same program, the same applicant and the same activity. The organization even asked for approximately the same amount of funding—\$77,500. Yet, all of a sudden, a new element appeared: a “no”.

Was it the office of the Minister of Canadian Heritage or was it the Minister himself who said “no” and vetoed this request for funding that had no reason to be denied, much as the Minister of International Cooperation did before him?

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is clearly confused, so perhaps I can clear up her confusion. She is often confused on the heritage file but I will do my best to clear it up in the four minutes I have been given.

The government has in fact increased funding to the Department of Canadian Heritage by 18% across the board since it became government. Canada is the only country in the G7 that actually increased funding to arts and culture through the recession. Every other country cut it, except this Conservative government: we increased it.

Where did we increase it? We increased it for the Canada media fund, which I am sure the member is well apprised of, and for the Canada Council and things like cultural spaces. We put money behind all of those things. The member knows this well.

She also knows that she voted against those increases. When Canada and the entire world was combatting the deep recession, rather than voting to support artists, the Bloc voted against the budget. Its members stood side by side and voted against the budget. However, we should not be surprised.

A special legislative committee right now is studying the copyright bill. Witnesses have come in. Folks came from the feature film industry, some of them from the city of Montreal, I believe. They indicated that almost \$1 billion, or \$971 million, is evaporating and 12,000 jobs.

The member claims to be proud of feature films like *Barney's Version*, made in Montreal. There may not be another *Barney's Version* if we do not fix the Copyright Act. However, that member and her party have stood wilfully in the way of updating Canada's copyright law and securing those jobs and the investment in the entertainment software industry, which is huge in Montreal and Quebec. That member stood against updating that act. It is not as if she just votes against increased funding for the arts, but she also votes against the private sector investment that would come into the arts. She is allowing things to be stolen because we cannot update the Copyright Act.

Canada has five of the top ten piracy sites in the world operating within its borders. We want to put an end to that on this side of the House, because we believe that creators deserve to be paid for the work they do. That member does not and neither does her party: they are not supporting it.

It really troubles me when I hear people stand up and say they support the arts, they support creators, they support artists, that they want to help them. Their deeds show exactly the opposite. That member has had a lot of opportunities to stand up and support artists and she has turned a blind eye every single time. Shame on her.

[Translation]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Mr. Speaker, I am not at all ashamed and I find that statement completely ridiculous. Furthermore, if there is anyone here who does not understand, it certainly is not me. What I do understand, however, is that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage thinks that by making these false statements, he will make them come true. He said that the Department of Canadian Heritage has been given an unprecedented budget. That may be true, but he needs to prove that to us.

However, the Department of Canadian Heritage is about more than just arts and culture. Status of women, amateur sport and the pensions of former lieutenant governors all come out of the Canadian Heritage budget. As for the budget for arts and culture, the deputy minister of Canadian Heritage himself tabled that before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage at my request. He had to make a chart. The numbers never lie. In 2009-10, Canadian Heritage had \$424,889,014 for arts and culture alone, and in 2010-11, it had \$397,783,000. As we can see—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, of course the member picks and chooses between the numbers.

We have increased funding for arts and culture by 18%. We have also found some administrative savings, things that Canadians will be proud of.

I encourage the member to stand up in Montreal and go to the entertainment software industry, go to the film industry and to the radio stations that are advertising that she is attacking local radio with her stance on ephemeral rights in the copyright bill.

I encourage you to go to them and preach your position to them, because you are contrary to Montreal, you are contrary to Quebec and contrary to artists.

The Deputy Speaker: I will just remind the hon. parliamentary secretary to address his comments through the chair and not directly at other members.

The hon. member for Vancouver Quadra.

● (1840)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about the environment.

One of the most difficult and disappointing parts of being a member of Parliament is to see what the current Conservative government has done in presenting a piecemeal, ad hoc, visionless approach, which has taken us backwards on climate change.

Compare that to where Canada was five years ago under a Liberal government. We were poised to have a comprehensive regulatory approach. We were poised to have a price on carbon. Businesses were on board. Funding was in place for programs to help citizens reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. That has all been blown away by the Conservative government's approach.

Clearly, putting a price on carbon allows businesses to plan. It is efficient and the most effective way to go. However, the government has just tabled a budget where almost half of the funding for the clean air agenda is about regulations.

Supposedly the government wants to cut red tape, but instead it has added red tape and wrapped it around the business community. It is as though the government is replacing the windshield wipers and waxing the car when the transmission and the engine are shot and the trunk is full of cement blocks. That is the Conservative government on climate change.

The Liberal Party has a vision in which Canada would accept its responsibility to reduce carbon pollution that is in line with other developed countries with a 1990 baseline. We would create a cap and trade system that would be verifiable and binding with hard caps leading to absolute reductions. Then the market could do the work and bring greenhouse gases down in the most efficient and effective way.

A Liberal government would make the most significant investments in clean energy and energy efficiency in our nation's history.

We would become leaders and could export those technologies to other parts of the world.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government has rested its plan on obstructing and trying to undermine the actions that other countries have taken, while rubbing the wax on its car and trying to show it off as action on climate change. It has been disappointing and undermines the efforts that companies want to make.

Today is the 22nd anniversary of an environmental event, which is the running aground of the *Exxon Valdez* in Alaska 22 years ago today.

I want to mention another piecemeal, ad hoc, visionless, backward approach, and that is the government's approach on the oceans. The government has disabled and discarded the long-term moratorium defending our oceans from supertankers.

On the contrary, a Liberal government would take a position of global leadership in protecting our shared ocean heritage and vital coastal communities and their jobs so these kinds of ecological disasters would never harm our shores.

The government is in contempt of Parliament, it has contempt for Canadians and it has contempt for the environment. No wonder parliamentarians can no longer express confidence in the government.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the comments of my colleague across the way. She said that she was disappointed and frustrated being in the House. However, she did say that the Liberal Party, of which she is a member, had a vision. What is that vision? Is it from 1993 to 2006, those many years when the Liberal government had the opportunity to get things done? Did it get things done? No, it did not.

Year after year, the commissioner of the environment would give damning reports, stating that Liberals made great announcements, but before the confetti hit the ground, they forgot those promises. They got absolutely nothing done. Greenhouse gas emissions continued to rise. The Liberals made a commitment under Kyoto, which covered 27% of global greenhouse gas emissions and they accomplished nothing.

Canada now has a Conservative government that has a well-deserved reputation for getting things done. Since Copenhagen, we are now part of an international agreement that covers 85% of global greenhouse gas emissions. What a difference. Also, emissions are being reduced.

The member across talked about a carbon tax. In 2008, Canadians said absolutely no to the Liberals idea of a carbon tax. It is not good for the Canadian economy. Once again, we hear the coalition members calling for a carbon tax. The answer from Canadians is clearly no.

Adjournment Proceedings

What else was she disappointed with? In 2003, she was the minister of B.C.'s water protection. In 2003 there was a Liberal Government and David Anderson was the minister. He believed that it was okay to dump raw sewage into Victoria harbour. At the same time, that member was the B.C. minister responsible for water protection. What did she do? She ignored staff concerns and let the region drop the plans for a treatment plant. She argued that turbulent, deep, cold water off Beacon Hill Park functioned adequately as a natural sewage treatment system.

This government stands against dumping raw sewage into our oceans. We believe we need to protect our water, our land, our economy and Canadians. Therefore, it is not surprising that the member has a different philosophy and she finds herself frustrated because her philosophy is to do nothing. She was part of a regime that did nothing. She is frustrated with a government that is getting things done

We are providing a cleaner environment. Under this government, emission levels are dropping. We are getting it done on every front, even with the home renovations, which is a very important part of the new budget. Do the Liberals support that and many other good things? No, they do not. Therefore, it is not surprising the member would support a contempt motion because she does not appreciate the good work this government is doing.

● (1845)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I always love the reminder of the Victoria waste management project, which I was proud to increase the testing and the science of those waters. That led to the commitment very shortly after to build a sewage treatment plant. That is one of my successes as an environment minister. I thank the member for bringing that up once again.

Also, the member talked about the Conservative government's pride in signing the Copenhagen accord. I do not believe the member opposite was there. However, I was. Canada was rejected from being among the dozens of countries that worked on this for a few days at the conference. It was approximately a five-page agreement. Canada was not allowed to participate in drafting it because of its woeful reputation for obstructing efforts on climate change. It is not legally binding and the members of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change did not ratify this agreement.

That is what the member is claiming pride in.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, what the member neglects to share is this government sent a delegation of Canadians to Copenhagen and Cancun, and Liberals were part of that delegation. Were they constructive in working for the interests of Canada and global greenhouse gas emission reductions? No. They were out protesting. When they were not protesting, they were leaving these very important conventions early. It was this government that worked hard, with our international partners, to draft the new Copenhagen accord.

We are getting it done. Emission levels are already going down and we are committed to continue. We will be focusing on the major emitters, the transportation sector and helping homes become more efficient. We are getting it done.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:49 p.m.)

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