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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 25, 2006

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 25, 2006

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the clean air act will reduce greenhouse gases and pollution in Canada. I want to thank the Minister of the Environment for her courage to put forth a comprehensive and practical solution.

This is the first time all industry will have mandatory targets, some beginning as early as next spring.

This plan will do more towards addressing our Kyoto targets than the 13 years of Liberal inaction.

We all have a responsibility, every level of government, every sector of the economy and every individual Canadian.

The Central Okanagan Regional District, led by the municipal governments of Kelowna and Lake Country, have already taken proactive measures to address environmental quality. I applaud their efforts in promoting sustainable environmental programs, alternative energy and motivating our communities to go green.

The clean air act will reduce pollution and greenhouse gases, regulate all industry, set realistic and achievable targets, and reward Canadians for smart choices.

Once again a Conservative government delivers real action on the environment.

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government continues to show contempt for reality. It is trying to rewrite history by undermining the best economic record Canada has ever seen.

Thanks to Liberal governments, Canada's economy, which was on the verge of collapse 13 years ago, is now the healthiest in the G-7. We are the only country in that group in surplus. Eight straight Liberal surpluses left the current government the best set of books any incoming administration has ever seen. And what has this government done with it? It has cut billions in funding to Canada's most vulnerable with the help of the NDP, and increased income taxes on those who earn the least.

This government's contempt for the least advantaged Canadians is no surprise, considering the purse strings are held by the Mike Harris admiration society. Ontarians remember what they did in this province at a time when federal transfers were at record levels.

Canadians are horrified at this government's trying to destroy all they have worked so hard to achieve.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

OLDER WORKERS

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week, after the federal government had been sleeping on the softwood lumber issue for almost five years, the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development announced a semblance of a program for older workers.

Right at the outset of the softwood lumber crisis, 650 workers from the Port-Alfred plant in my riding, most of whom are aged 50 and over, were laid off. The plant was closed on a temporary basis in 2003, but that closure became permanent in 2005. Despite retraining measures, dozens of former workers were not able to find work and some of are now living on welfare.

We in the Bloc Québécois believe that, after contributing to society and the economy for 30, 35 or 40 years, older workers deserve both moral and income support. Therefore, I am asking the minister to act with humanity and provide a true income support program for, among others, these 100 citizens from my riding who were abandoned by the federal government.

Statements by Members

[English]

REFUGEES

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon refugees who are seeking shelter in Canada will be out in the cold on Parliament Hill. They are mostly women and children who are struggling to survive. They are vulnerable. They are hungry. Most are very poor. Many of the women are trying to escape domestic violence or the sex trade.

The previous Liberal government and now the Conservative government is exploiting and punishing them further by applying a modern-day head tax with the refugee landing fee of \$550 per refugee and \$150 per child.

I have tabled a motion in this House to drop these fees, this head tax, this blood money on the heads of the most vulnerable. If the government does not act, then it is saying to the world and the 10,000 Canadians who signed a petition that children should be made to suffer and women should indeed be treated like dogs. We must end this cruel practice now.

* * *

WEST ST. PAUL FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the firefighters of the West St. Paul Fire Department in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul. Recently the department celebrated its 50th anniversary, which I had the privilege of attending.

In the early 1950s, 25 members of West St. Paul, mostly World War II veterans, began their firefighting training with the city of Winnipeg. After the completion of their training and the construction of a fire hall, the West St. Paul Fire Department was created in 1956. Over the last 50 years, the fire department has grown from one fire truck to a modern rural fire department with 24 members and five response vehicles.

At the anniversary celebration, three firefighters were acknowledged for their 25 years of service to the West St. Paul Fire Department. They are Jim Turney, Bob Wright and Tom Addis, Jr.

I offer my sincere congratulations to Fire Chief Ryan Yackel and all of the firefighters on a job well done.

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GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Stephen Owen (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has shown contempt.

Yesterday it was claimed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the unelected Minister of Public Works that the Liberal government had racked up deficits. Has the hon. member been asleep for the last decade?

The Liberal government's economic record is the best Canada has ever known. Eight straight Liberal surpluses paid down billions of dollars on the national debt, which was spinning out of control at the end of Canada's last experiment in Conservative government. In fact, the last Conservative surplus, other than the one the Conservatives inherited from our government, was in 1912.

Conservative tax policies have already been exposed as anti-competitive, anti-democratic and anti everything that sound economic policy preaches. They want to turn surplus to deficit with tax breaks for the rich, just like they did in Ontario, and the Mike Harris triumvirate across the way is here to help them do the job.

The Liberal economic record speaks for itself, as does the contempt the Conservative government shows for Canadians.

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CANADA AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce that the Region of Peel has become the first government in Canada to earn the National Quality Institute's prestigious Canada Awards for Excellence Gold Trophy.

The Canada Awards for Excellence is an annual awards program that recognizes Canadian organizations which, through a commitment to innovation, productivity, a healthy workplace and ethics, have demonstrated sustainable measures of continuous improvement.

On Thursday, October 26, a presentation of the award will be made to the Region of Peel at its headquarters located in Brampton, Ontario. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate the Region of Peel Chairman Emil Kolb, Caledon Mayor Marolyn Morrison, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion and Brampton Mayor Susan Fennell, and their councillors, on this tremendous achievement and for the excellent example it has set for all governments.

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●(1410)

[Translation]

FIRST NATIONS SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORUM

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, October 25, is a historic day for Quebec's first nations and the Quebec nation.

I am proud to inform this House of the initiative taken by the aboriginal people of Quebec. Indeed, today and the next two days, first nations are holding their first socio-economic forum in Mashteuatsh, close to Roberval, in Quebec.

This major event provides an opportunity to make commitments and take concrete measures that will help aboriginal nations thrive.

It has already been 10 years since the royal commission on aboriginal peoples tabled its report, and too little has been done since. Ensuring that these nations will thrive is a major challenge.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and myself are proud to support the initiative and the political courage of Quebec's first nations. We hope that the federal government will take concrete action, and I mean concrete, for the well-being of Quebec's aboriginal peoples.

*Statements by Members**[English]***MY CANADA**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention that a group named MY Canada is meeting with members of Parliament and senators this week here in Ottawa.

MY Canada stands for Motivated Young People for a Strong Canada, and that is exactly what these young people are. This past summer they held an event on Parliament Hill that attracted over 12,000 participants. They have been working all across Canada to motivate young people to vote and get involved in federal politics in a variety of ways.

I had the privilege of meeting with this fine group of young Canadians earlier this week. They want our members of Parliament to know that there are thousands of young people from coast to coast who hold fast to traditional values which have been held by former generations. They are here to support us as elected officials and to share their views with us on the many issues that are affecting young people today.

I encourage all members to get acquainted with this fine group of young people by meeting with them. Canada needs more fine young men and women like the people in MY Canada.

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*[Translation]***THE ECONOMY**

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 13 years ago today, the Liberal Party inherited the fiscal mess left by the Conservatives. We have spent 13 years cleaning it up.

Thanks to the Liberals, this Conservative government inherited an excellent fiscal record.

The current Minister of Finance has destroyed Ontario's economy, whereas with us the provinces were receiving record transfer payments. He has managed to take a large provincial surplus and turn it into a deficit.

One can only wonder what this minority Conservative government will do to the eight consecutive surplus budgets produced by the Liberals.

* * *

*[English]***HARBOURS**

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the commercial fishery in my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's is one of the busiest and most productive in all of Canada. In recognition of that, Canada's new government announced that we will provide funding for major improvement projects at three fishing harbours located on Cape Sable Island.

Three of the island's most important harbours will benefit from large major capital projects to improve safety and services as well as increase capacity and the harbours' ability to serve today's larger vessels.

I am proud to see that Clark's Harbour, Newellton and West Head will be the sites of major construction and harbour development work over the next several years.

This investment combined with other small craft harbour projects totalling \$16 million for Nova Scotia clearly demonstrate how Canada's new government and the Minister of Fisheries are committed to supporting the Nova Scotia fishing industry.

This is a significant federal investment to provide our fishers with the first rate harbours and facilities they need for continued success.

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VETERANS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on November 11 millions of Canadians will be wearing the symbol of Remembrance Day, the red poppy. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian families will be visiting cenotaphs and memorials from coast to coast to coast. It truly is a wonderful day to express our thanks to those who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our peace, freedom and democracy.

But what happens to these veterans on November 12? That is the question the NDP is asking the government. We have some simple solutions which would effectively enhance the lives of veterans and their families.

Remove the gold digger clause which disallows veterans giving their second spouses their pension benefits on their death. End the discriminatory practice of the clawback of their pensions at age 65, and especially the pension clawbacks on the disability payments. As well, extend the veterans independence program to all widows of all veterans, regardless of when the veterans died.

If we did all of those things to help our veterans, November 11 would have a greater meaning for their lives throughout the entire year.

* * *

● (1415)

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canada's economy is one of the healthiest in the world, thanks to years of sound Liberal policies.

Thirteen years ago today when the election was held, Canada was an economic basket case. Unemployment was at a near record high, inflation was spinning out of control and the federal Conservative government had racked up a \$50 billion deficit. On the international scene, Canada was considered to be an honorary member of the third world.

In 2005 the Liberal government recorded its eighth consecutive budget surplus, paying down \$63 billion in debt. We put the Canadian economy back on its feet while the current Minister of Finance ran the Ontario economy into the ground.

Oral Questions

The revisionism and contempt shown by the Minister of Finance is unacceptable. By trying to slam the best economic record in Canadian history, the Conservative government is ignoring the reality that all Canadians know: Liberal governments mean world-beating economic policies.

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[Translation]

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on October 17, Mr. Graham Fraser officially succeeded Dyane Adam as the sixth Commissioner of Official Languages. A former English language journalist who speaks French fluently and a staunch advocate of linguistic duality in Canada, Graham Fraser lived in Quebec for more than 10 years. Mr. Fraser has acknowledged on many occasions the vital input of Quebec legislation to the survival of the French fact in North America.

A number of challenges are facing the new commissioner, including those associated with the judicial nature of the Official Languages Act and the impact of the elimination of the court challenges program on representing the interests of linguistic minorities.

Mr. Fraser's appointment has been very well received by my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois and myself, and we wish him the best in his new position.

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THE ECONOMY

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Liberal Party came to power 13 years ago today, Canada was facing economic disaster. The previous Conservative government had racked up nearly \$50 billion in debt per year, inflation was out of control, and the unemployment rate had reached record highs.

We got right to work and paid off \$63 billion of the debt, which saved us \$3 billion a year in interest.

Both the unemployment rate and the inflation rate are now low. In 2005, the Liberal government recorded its eighth budget surplus. Thanks to our excellent economic record, Canada has become a world leader.

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MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days, the federal Liberals and the leader of the Bloc Québécois—whose members are the eternal opposition in Ottawa—have cast aspersions on the hard work done by the excellent Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and they have pressured him to run for office. The minister has done remarkable work, considering that Justice Gomery found Public Works and Government Services Canada to be at the heart of a complex kickback system that gave friends of federal Liberals all kinds of perks and allowed them to make illegal contributions to the LPC as part of the sponsorship program.

Both the Bloc Québécois and the federal Liberals are bringing new meaning to the word “absurd”.

Why did they not ask the same of Liberal senators who held ministerial positions in cabinet?

Why was it acceptable for Liberal Senator James Bernard Boudreau to be Minister of State for the ACOA in 2000? Liberal Senator Joyce Fairbairn was a minister for 1,639 days. Liberal Senator Jack Austin was in cabinet for 658 days.

When it comes to transparency, accountability and good public governance, the Liberals—

The Speaker: We will now move on to oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

• (1420)

[Translation]

MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that last intervention, we have today a Conservative Minister of Public Works and Government Services who does not care about our electors. Contrary to any parliamentary precedent, he refuses to run in his own city at the first opportunity. Now, and this takes the cake, he is silencing his officials, our officials. He is muzzling those who run the programs by preventing them from answering any questions from members of this House.

Since Michael Fortier refuses to run for office himself, how can he prevent his officials from answering questions from those who did and who were elected by the Canadian public?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Senator Fortier promised to represent the people of Montreal within cabinet for the duration of this Parliament. He is doing good work. He will run in the next election.

As far as the ministers are concerned, they took their responsibilities and answered questions in parliamentary committees.

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[English]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today members of Parliament are trying to get to the bottom of how the cuts for literacy, court challenges, women and minorities will affect Canadians. They are attempting to determine the true rationale for those actions, which Canadians see as a meanspirited attack on their volunteer and meritorious activities. That is the role of members of Parliament. It is the function of democracy.

Conservative ministers are muzzling public servants and showing a deep-seated disrespect for Parliament and for Canadians. Why are members of Parliament not allowed to hear from the public servants they need to hear from in order to do their jobs?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We strongly believe in accountability. That is why my deputy minister, my assistant deputy minister and I all appeared before the government operations committee last week.

My colleagues have appeared before numerous committees. I believe the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development will be appearing before two committees this week and I understand the Minister of Public Works and Government Services will be appearing before committee, all of this with their officials.

In the previous Parliament, we could not find a Liberal minister who would ever agree to go before a committee. Now in this government we are only too happy to be accountable before committees.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, members of the foreign affairs and defence committees can testify that I was there as regularly as they asked me, as was every other minister in our government.

On the contrary, the Prime Minister has muzzled his ministers, he has muzzled his caucus, the media suffers his wrath, and now he is muzzling public servants. Why, in spite of all his political rhetoric, is the Prime Minister showing such contempt for the democratic process so essential to the integrity of the House? Why such fear of candour?

Will the Prime Minister now order his ministers to allow committees of the House to hear from any public servants they need to hear from so they can do the jobs that at least they were elected to do?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is utterly bizarre that the Leader of the Opposition is complaining that ministers are willing to come to committee and answer questions from members of Parliament.

I think the reason for these kinds of ridiculous questions is that the Leader of the Opposition would like to cover up what his friends over in the Senate are doing. They are trying to change the accountability act to create a separate Senate ethics officer. They want to delay the coming into force of provisions on political donations for a year. They want to increase the amount of money that can be given to political parties. They want to grandfather political staff that should not have been appointed in the first place, contrary to what Gomery recommended. They are being completely unaccountable and irresponsible.

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[*Translation*]

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is becoming increasingly evident that this Conservative government has no regard for Montreal. Yesterday, neither the Prime Minister nor the parliamentary secretary could give a single example of something that Michael Fortier has done for Montreal. However, I can give you two examples of failures: the lack of an aerospace policy and job losses at Bombardier.

All the work has been done. All the stakeholders agree. When will the minister responsible for Montreal announce our aerospace policy?

• (1425)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of empathy for the workers who have lost their jobs.

That being said, we have nothing to learn from the Liberals. Four days before the last election was called, they announced a so-called plan to help the aerospace industry, but the plan was nothing but a political ploy to buy votes and to fool Canadians.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this plan was prepared by an individual who today is one of them.

In the past 10 months, we have seen the government delay hundreds of millions of dollars in research and development investments for the aerospace industry. It even cut \$42 million from an assistance program for the industry. The Conservatives are abandoning workers and a sector that is crucial to the economic development of Montreal.

What justification can the minister responsible for Montreal provide for such negligence? When will he finally give a positive response to all these projects currently on his desk?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal government spent 13 years squandering public funds and filling its own election coffers. For 13 years it did nothing for the Montreal aerospace industry.

The time has now come to take action. This government will ensure that there are \$13 billion in economic benefits in Canada for the aerospace industry.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, over the course of the next three days, the Quebec first nations socio-economic forum will be held in Mashteuiatsh. A few federal ministers have confirmed their attendance, including the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. However, the Canadian government represents one of only two countries that voted against the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples when the human rights commission met in June.

Can the Prime Minister really be comfortable sending his Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to co-chair this forum when his government is about to vote against the declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples once again, this time before the United Nations General Assembly?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to send the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to represent the Canadian government, along with his Quebec counterpart and several members of this House.

Our government has some concerns about the declaration mentioned by the Bloc Québécois leader, because several elements of it do not respect the Canadian Constitution. As the Bloc leader knows, this government always respects the Canadian Constitution.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, every party in this House has studied this issue carefully. Three of the four parties agree. Canada has supported this declaration for some time.

This does not concern the Canadian Constitution, since the declaration in no way threatens our Constitution. The Prime Minister should clearly say that what he does not respect is the first nations peoples of Quebec and Canada. That is what his actions show.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, no previous government has signed that agreement. Our government had reservations about certain sections of the agreement. We are working to improve that agreement.

A government must read something like that carefully to determine its position based on the facts. We cannot deal in fiction.

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about concrete issues if that is what the Prime Minister wants.

At the Mashteuiatsh forum, aboriginal peoples intend to raise several concerns that they have regarding the future and that relate to health, social and economic issues. In fact, many issues will be discussed at the forum.

Since the federal government intends to be fully represented at the forum, can it assure us that it is not going to Mashteuiatsh empty-handed and that it will make concrete proposals regarding all of the issues?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned yesterday, I am proud to co-chair along with my Quebec counterpart the socio-economic forum that will take place in Mashteuiatsh, Quebec.

I am quite confident that my colleagues and myself can make a significant contribution to the discussions on how to ensure the well-being of aboriginal peoples in Quebec.

Our government is taking concrete action to improve the quality of life for everyone.

• (1430)

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Friday morning, in Mashteuiatsh, there will be a very important workshop on housing, which is one of most serious problems facing aboriginal peoples. According to the information that we have, the Minister of Indian Affairs will already have left the conference.

Can the minister assure us that, given the importance of this issue, he will make sure to be present in Mashteuiatsh for that workshop?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have every intention of going to Mashteuiatsh. I will be there for most of the next several days, along with a number of my colleagues from the province of Quebec.

Contrary to what was taking place under the former government, this government is committed to housing. In the first budget of the Conservative government, a total of \$600 million was put forward

for housing, \$300 million with respect to northern housing, \$300 million with respect to off reserve housing.

One of the priority items I have worked on, together with the Assembly of First Nations, relates to the provision of on reserve housing. We are making significant progress.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to free speech, it turns out that the Prime Minister seems to have a double standard: free speech for people he agrees with and gag orders for people that he does not agree with.

The best example is the Wheat Board. So far the government has changed the rules half way through on the election, imposed a gag order and arbitrarily struck thousands of farmers off the voters list.

Will the Prime Minister stop bullying Canadian farmers and commit to the House that there will be a free and fair vote on the Canadian Wheat Board?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming Wheat Board elections, which I think is what the member is referring to, the recommendation I made to the Canadian Wheat Board was exactly consistent with what the Wheat Board's own election panel recommended one year ago in November. It said that actual producers should vote for the directors, not just someone who had a permit book.

We continue to listen to Canadian farmers. They have the right to vote in this upcoming directors election, and we are giving them that right.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is taking away the rights of farmers who leave their fields fallow, who run other crops, who hold their wheat for the next year to get a better price, who have bad rain, who have bad drought. That is what it is doing to the farmers across the country. Killing the Wheat Board will produce serious financial loss for everyday grain producers.

Thank goodness, Gary Doer's government is standing up and is going to hold a referendum. Thank goodness the Government of Saskatchewan is going to take the federal government to court, if need be, to get it to do the right thing.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will there be a free and fair vote for farmers on the Wheat Board, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this party and this government will never be afraid of the voices of western farmers. That is why we represent virtually every rural seat in western Canada.

Oral Questions

I know the leader of the NDP and ourselves disagree on marketing choice for western Canadian farmers. However, I think what we hopefully do agree on is, whether people are for or against the Wheat Board or want the Wheat Board the same or changed, that they have a right to know what the Wheat Board is doing.

We put the Wheat Board under access to information in the accountability act. The unelected Liberal Senate took it out. That is a disgrace. The Wheat Board should be subject to access to information.

* * *

DECORUM

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs minister is well aware of the offensive remark that has placed him in difficulty for the past six days.

Last Thursday, in reference to a comment about a dog, he pointed toward the seat of another hon. member and said, "You already have her".

This being the minister's first opportunity to do so, will he simply withdraw that remark and offer the House an apology?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously I was travelling abroad, with other members of the House of Commons, on international obligations.

I made no such gesture. I made no derogatory or discriminatory remarks toward any member of the House.

•(1435)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that the offending remark was made is undeniable, and it cannot be claimed that just because *Hansard* did not catch it, it never happened.

Members of the House witnessed it. Audio tapes recorded it. The news media have repeatedly confirmed it. Every significant women's organization in the country has condemned it.

The minister might want to look at an editorial in today's *Montreal Gazette* to assess the damage that he is doing. Would it not be wise to stop the denials, acknowledge this mistake, apologize and avoid doing more harm to himself and his government?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we looked into this matter and you ruled on it last week. I think all members of the House should respect your ruling. In addition, now the minister has addressed the issue, and that should end it.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a long list of women's groups agree that the Minister of Foreign Affairs must apologize for the disparaging remark he made in the House last Thursday. His sexist remark, which today he is denying having made, goes beyond decorum. It speaks to a fundamental lack of respect for women.

The minister and the Prime Minister both refuse to apologize. Why are they endorsing such disrespect to Canadian women and to members of Parliament in the House?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decorum in the House is the responsibility of all members.

With respect to the issue the member has raised, you looked into this matter last week, Mr. Speaker. You ruled on it. All members of the House should respect your ruling. Now the minister himself has addressed the matter, and that should end it.

[Translation]

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that women are not a priority for this Conservative minority government. It has abolished programs for women, but it denies having done that. The minister made sexist comments but he is now denying it, in the House.

When will the Conservatives stop denying the reality, and when will the Minister of Foreign Affairs assume his responsibilities, including responsibility for his contemptuous behaviour towards women and this House?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to women. In fact, we ask every member in the House to stand with the government and, on behalf of women, work with our justice minister, who will make our streets safer, work with the immigration minister, who will deal with the victims of trafficking, work with the aboriginal affairs minister, who will bring matrimonial property rights to aboriginal women and work with our finance minister, who will reduce taxes for all women.

In fact, this is real action. This is standing up for women.

* * *

[Translation]

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, between January 2005 and May 2006, Quebec lost 26,800 manufacturing jobs. The crisis hits not only companies involved in textile, clothing, bicycles and shoes, but also leading edge companies such as Norsk Hydro and Bombardier.

Can the Minister of Industry tell us what his strategy is to stop this massive loss of all these industrial jobs that are disappearing before our very eyes?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking of Norsk Hydro, I just want to point out to this House that the Mauricie region is fully eligible for the six new tools that we have implemented to help the economic development of the regions. I particularly want to mention to the employees that the opportunities fund set up three or four weeks ago is quite interesting, as is the marketing fund and the community economic diversification initiative.

We will consider any serious case. While the Bloc shouts and does nothing, we have implemented the tools to help the regions.

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Norsk Hydro example is a terrible one, but more than that, the Minister and the Conservative government are defending laissez-faire economics whereby the market regulates itself. But some players practice what is called social dumping. That is why the WTO allows safeguards to be implemented, as Europe and the United States have done in the clothing and textile industry.

Why does Canada refuse to follow their example when jobs are being lost and market rules are being flouted? The entire manufacturing sector is affected.

• (1440)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe strongly in creating a fiscal environment that is favourable to all companies in Canada and that is what we did in our last budget. We made over \$20 billion in tax cuts that apply to companies and to Canadians. This will leave more money in the pockets of the companies, more money for modernization and more money for competing with the best companies in the world. That is what we did and that is what the Bloc Québécois will never be able to do, since it is eternally in opposition.

* * *

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the closure of the Norsk Hydro plant in Bécancour is affecting hundreds of workers in my riding and depriving them of high level salaries.

Although there is no obvious way to help the company's workers, the mayor of Bécancour, the Government of Quebec, the labour federations and other stakeholders are looking at solutions that would involve the company's skilled workers.

My question is very simple: does the government plan to play a tangible role in re-opening the plant, and will it partner with these dynamic people who want what is best for the company?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my colleague again that my priority as Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec was to put in place new tools, easily accessible tools, that entrepreneurs would have no great difficulty using.

In the past month, we have put in place six new tools to help regions in difficulty and regions with declining populations.

Two programs come to mind in this case: the capital fund for business succession, which provides access to fairly substantial funding, because Desjardins Venture Capital is partnering with us in this sort of project, and CEDI-Vitality. There are other measures as well.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that China can produce magnesium very cheaply, because it does not respect the environment, has no health and safety measures and does not respect workers' fundamental rights. In short, China practises what is commonly known as social dumping.

Does the government plan to adopt new measures to prevent other companies from suffering the same fate as Norsk Hydro?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our role is not to start up businesses, but to put in place tools to help entrepreneurs or people who want to start up or expand businesses.

That is why, in recent months, since I became minister, I have tried to introduce new tools. That is what we have done. There are six in all, and regions with declining populations have full access to these tools, which are designed to support employees and entrepreneurs in this sort of situation.

* * *

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to salvage her clean air disaster, the Minister of the Environment has been misquoting the Canadian Lung Association. What the lung association really said was that it:

—has serious concerns that the proposed approach under the Clean Air Act will not reduce emissions of greenhouse gases quickly enough to lessen the health effects of climate change.

Misleading the House like this shows the minister's utter disrespect for Parliament.

Why did the Minister of the Environment misrepresent the real position of the Lung Association?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member likes to pull things out of the Lung Association's press release. It has said, in fact, that it is in favour of the clean air act to regulate indoor air because it is one of the largest health risks associated with lung cancer for non-smokers. It is concerned about some of the health impacts of climate change. We are working with it and many other organizations to address these issues.

Oral Questions

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not just the Lung Association that the minister is misrepresenting. Yesterday she claimed that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities supported the clean air act. Again, that is not accurate. Not once in the FCM press release is there any mention of the clean air act. In fact, the FCM said, after the minister tabled her flawed act, “We don’t need to wait for new legislation to begin working in partnership”.

The House cannot accept this kind of continual misrepresentation on the part of the minister. Will she apologize for repeatedly misleading the House?

• (1445)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat exactly what I said, which was the opposition should listen to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities that said:

Recent announcements signal that the present federal government is prepared to take a leadership role and develop an environmental plan capable of delivering tangible results.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minority Conservative government is showing blatant contempt toward farmers.

Earlier this month the Prime Minister, whose disdain for the Canadian Wheat Board is legendary, slapped the Wheat Board with a gag order, preventing it from advocating for its single desk selling. When he was president of the National Citizens Coalition, the Prime Minister said, “gag laws are unconstitutional and unenforceable”.

Is the Prime Minister not doing today what he found so distasteful not that long ago?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course there is no such thing. The directors of the Wheat Board are speaking out, as they should and as they are allowed to. Farmers across the country are talking to me and to others about what they think the future of the Wheat Board should look like.

However, that is not the real question. The big question today is why the unelected Senate voted to remove the right of farmers to access information and to access the Canadian Wheat Board. I do not know which is worse, the fact that the Liberals do not think farmers should know what is going on or the fact that farmers lost their right to know by an unelected Senate.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know it is hard to believe but the government is showing even more contempt for farmers. Western producers have been demanding a plebiscite. The Canadian Wheat Board clearly states that a vote should be held. Both Manitoba and Saskatchewan have indicated that they would hold a vote if the federal government fails to fulfill its responsibilities.

When will the government do the democratic and lawful thing and put the question to a vote by farmers?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is presupposing that he knows what is in the task force report, which should be delivered shortly. When that task force report is tabled with me I will make it public. It will aid in the discussion and in the debate that is already taking place on the Prairies. However, again, that is not the issue.

The issue is this. Why do the Liberals not want western Canadian farmers to know what is going on at the Wheat Board? Why did the unelected Senate take the right of farmers to know away? What is wrong? What are they afraid of?

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my constituents in St. Catharines are distressed with a justice system put in place by the former Liberal government that does not appear to give our government the tools to keep Canada from becoming a dumping ground for dangerous offenders and people who commit crimes in other countries.

Could the Minister of Public Safety give this House an update on what is being done to rectify this situation and protect all Canadians?

[Translation]

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not want to become a dumping ground for pedophiles from the United States.

[English]

We do not want to become a haven for pedophiles or others who commit serious crimes in the United States and then come to Canada. We have been using every legal instrument possible to detain and declare as inadmissible the individual whom my colleague is concerned about.

What I have been finding is that over the last decade and a half, the Liberals created, through quite an array of protective measures, a system that makes it easier for criminals to come in here and hard to get them out. Today they could agree with raising the age of protection from 14—

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the minister refused to even reveal her funding plans for SCPI for the fiscal years 2007 through 2009. The President of the Treasury Board had the audacity to claim “this government has no intention of cutting SCPI”. However, the minister’s published priority and planning report states that the government is leaving only \$2.2 million for the program.

If the minister does not consider \$131 million lost from one year to the next a cut, what is a cut?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one disadvantage that the hon. member has is that she does not understand government numbers because she will never be in government.

Let me explain. The numbers posted on the website reflect the allocations that have already been made. Because we are still looking at ways to improve the homelessness program, the decisions have not been made. We do not want to be premature in that. Once we have made the decisions and we have allocated the funds, they will be there.

• (1450)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, actually I was a cabinet minister. The minister still fails to explain why 99% of the budget has been slashed for programs that provide services for emergency shelters, traditional housing and homelessness prevention.

Why is the government claiming that there is not a cut when we all know that there has been? This is an all out assault on affordable housing and homeless people in this country.

Will the government commit to affordable housing and fully fund the national housing initiative by replacing all of the \$131 million?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have indicated many times our concern for the homeless, which is why we extended the national housing initiative as one of our first moves, why we made \$37 million available to it that had not been spent by the previous government and why we will continue to support the homeless. However, we will not do it in the way of the government that bankrupted Ontario.

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[*Translation*]

MINISTERIAL EXPENDITURES

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the expenditures of the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec are raising more and more questions.

Given that everything has to go through his office and that he is the one making all the decisions, we have questions about some of these expenditures.

Between September 5 and 8, the minister toured six cities in Quebec to make the same announcement. The only changes made in the announcement were the dates and places. For the same period, CED approved a bill from Bearskin Airlines in Thunder Bay in the amount of \$41,822.

Could the minister tell this House what the total cost of his six-city tour to make the same announcement in Quebec was?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I abide by the laws of this Parliament. My expenditures have been duly submitted in a timely manner, as required. I am not the one processing them, though.

That said, the expenditures will be made public very shortly. The member will see that I cost much less than my predecessor.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we need to realize is that he took a plane from Thunder Bay to Jonquière and toured eastern Quebec, but that is not all. In addition, the colour of the displays and communication equipment was not to his liking. He had \$29,963 spent just to change the colour to Conservative blue, and all this for a one time use. Are there more bills he would like to provide us with today?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when you have new partners joining you to offer new tools designed to help businesses in regions experiencing difficulty, it is totally appropriate and even normal, from a marketing point of view, to have ParaPost display boards mentioning their names.

What the member said is wrong. These displays will be used over and over. Anytime funding is granted to a business under one of these programs, for instance, they will be used.

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[*English*]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I asked a direct question concerning why two advisors to the Prime Minister broke the rules and failed to disclose their expenses. I refer to a secret trip to Washington by the chief of staff, Brodie, and the senior adviser, Burney, to sellout Canada's softwood industry.

The minister's response was to hide from the question.

Now that the President of the Treasury Board has his marching orders from the PMO, will he finally answer? Why were the required proactive disclosures not filed? Who paid for this stealth trip? Why were the Treasury Board rules broken? What exactly is the Prime Minister trying to hide?

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand they did not claim any expenses, which is a rather foreign concept to members of the Liberal Party.

Let us look at the Liberal Party's hidden agenda on accountability. It wants to increase the role of big money in politics. It wants to reduce access to information available to Canadians. It wants to continue the political patronage of our public service. Most galling of all is that it wants to water down the role of our new Ethics Commissioner. It actually wants to eliminate retroactive access to information.

Maybe the member opposite could stand in his place and explain the secret hidden agenda of—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Ajax—Pickering.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a trip and it is required that a proactive disclosure be filed. It has not been filed.

Oral Questions

The minister's baffle-gab makes me think he is trying to make Rick Mercer's audio challenge two weeks in a row.

The President of the Treasury Board is again ducking the question. Maybe he does not understand accountability so I will ask his boss.

Would the Prime Minister tell us who paid for this stealth trip to the White House for his chief of staff? Why did they fail to provide the required proactive disclosures? Why is the minister refusing to answer questions? When will we finally get some answers?

• (1455)

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, paying one's own freight is obviously a concept that is unfamiliar to the Liberal Party. I have answered the question about as directly as I can.

What I want to know is why the Liberal Party of Canada here in the House of Commons is hiding behind the unelected Liberal Senate to do its dirty work to limit access to information for the first time in Canadian history. What do the Liberals have to hide at the Canadian Wheat Board? The member should stand in his place and tell that to Canadians and to hard-working farmers in western Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Health justified his decision to authorize the use of breast implants by stating that more than 65,000 pages of documents had been studied before licences had been issued.

How can he be so naive when we know that nearly all these documents were provided by Mentor and Inamed, the two companies that sell implants?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I mentioned yesterday that there are more than 2,500 scientific articles on this topic. A number of scientific experts have given their opinion, and I support this science based decision.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister even added that all the researchers trust the newly approved breast implants.

How can he be satisfied with so little, when the Health Canada officials who met with me were not even able to name me single independent researcher? All the researchers they named were associated with the two companies that produce the breast implants.

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this issue was discussed by experts. Obviously scientific experts do not all share the same opinion.

However, I want to reassure the House: the use of breast implants is subject to strict conditions, and these conditions must be met. This is a Health Canada decision, and I support it.

[English]

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the World Intellectual Property Organization released its annual report containing a bleak measure of Canada's international competitiveness.

Patents show our strength at turning our research and development into commercial success and indicate where the new jobs will come from.

Right now Japan, the United States, China, Russia, India, Sweden and Brazil all have better records in terms of patents filed. Canada ranks 30th in the world.

Will the government introduce a competitiveness strategy in its economic update and will it include a measure to improve Canada's record of performance on patents?

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce in this House that, in a few weeks, the government will fulfill another promise: to consult scientists about a new science and technology platform. Following these consultations, we will have a new strategy that will become a reality in the next budget.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since the Bloc does not know whether it supports the mission in Afghanistan or not, can the Minister of International Cooperation tell the House what she accomplished during her recent tour to Afghanistan?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I would like to remind the House that Afghanistan receives more Canadian international aid than any other country. It was therefore essential for me to go there in person to work with development specialists, meet with Afghan government officials and, of course, support our mission in Afghanistan.

During my tour, I also launched new projects for humanitarian aid, women and girls and infrastructure, especially in Kandahar. These new projects add up to more than \$40 million. We are putting our words into action.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is ignoring a crisis in the manufacturing sector.

Oral Questions

Despite thousands of jobs being lost in Ontario and Quebec, the current Minister of International Trade is pursuing a Korea trade deal that will see more lost jobs in Windsor, Oshawa, St. Catharines, Dorval and Montreal, with specific impacts on the auto sector.

I would like to know from the minister, while he was a Liberal, he flip-flopped and did not table an auto policy like he said he would. Did he leave it behind in his desk? Did he lose it on the floor? Or, is it true that the current Minister of Industry killed that, just like he killed his aerospace file?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we continue to have discussions on trade issues with Korea and with a number of other countries.

The government recognizes that it has been five years since the Government of Canada entered into a bilateral free trade agreement. It is time we started to get our trade act together, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister started the softwood sellout file as a Liberal and he finished it as a Conservative. My fear is that he is going to hang the auto industry out the same way.

Why is it we are watching mills close, textile factories close, auto parts companies close, and other types of manufacturing in this country disappear? Where is the plan from the Minister of Industry? Did he kill the plan, or is he going to table one? For a change, we want action, not just words.

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, it is the mark of this government to act, so yes, we will act. I am going to have consultations with the automobile sector this week. Tomorrow I am going to be in Toronto and we are going to have consultations. We are going to listen and we will act.

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CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is mid-term election time in the United States and a republic television attack ad has outraged many Canadians. The ad says in part, "Let Canada take care of North Korea, they're not busy". Is this what Canadians should be expecting as the outcome of cozying up to Mr. Bush by the Prime Minister and his Conservatives?

I have a question for the Prime Minister. Will he call his mentor, President Bush, and demand this insulting ad be pulled from the airwaves immediately, and stand up for Canada, but for real this time?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the country has greatly benefited by improved relations with the United States as well other countries when it came to important and contentious trade irritants and other issues.

I would ask the hon. member to perhaps cast his mind back to some of the attack ads that were run in the last election campaign by

his party, directed at people here in his own country, before he starts making these aspersions.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in our country, resulting in the loss of over 75,000 lives per year. With the previous government, there was never a pan-Canadian strategy to study and address this extremely important issue. Can the Minister of Health update the House on our government's plan on cardiovascular disease?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that during the past weekend I have announced, on behalf of Canada's new government, that we will invest \$7.4 million in the next two years, and an ongoing amount of \$5.2 million thereafter, to develop a program for cardiovascular issues and to coordinate prevention and treatment.

After 13 years of neglect under a Liberal government with no heart, Canada's caring Conservative new government is delivering on a commitment made to Canadians and their hearts.

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FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for years we in the NDP have asked the previous Liberal government to do something about trust agreements on the east coast when it comes to the buying up of lobster licences by corporations. It did absolutely nothing. Now for the last nine months we have been asking the current fisheries minister to do the exact same thing with the same result, absolutely nothing.

Lobster licences are being bought up by the corporate sector in direct contravention of DFO's own operator principles. When is the minister going to stand up in the House, put a stop to the corporatization of the lobster licences, and give back the independence to the fishermen on the east coast?

● (1505)

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that ensuring that the inshore fishers in Atlantic Canada are independent is one of our top priorities. I say to him that doing things does not cause a problem whatsoever. It is undoing things that really cause the problem, but to quote Mike Duffy, with apologies to him, I say to the hon. member, just trust me.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Francesco Frangialli, Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Mark Wartman, Minister of Agriculture and Food for Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to address an issue that was brought up during question period by the member for Don Valley West.

I want to say that we greatly appreciate the work we do with the Canadian Lung Association. This is a very serious health issue. He raised in a very political way that I was misrepresenting the work that we are doing. I want to read the quote from the Canadian Lung Association directly. It states:

Improving air quality is critical to protecting the health of Canadians...The Lung Association is pleased to see indoor air quality regulated under the act.

That is the quote that I have been using.

We greatly appreciate the support that the Canadian Lung Association has given us in our efforts to regulate indoor air, which is the second leading cause of lung cancer to Canadians who are non-smokers.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the quotation that the minister has just read into the record, I believe she is obliged to file the entire document from which she was quoting and the House would be grateful to see the entire context of that remark.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to table the quotes I am using if that is what the member would like.

The Speaker: The minister, as the hon. member for Wascana has pointed out, must table the document she was quoting from. If the document is a sheet of paper with one quote on it, I guess that is what we are going to see. The hon. member can table what she was quoting from and that is what the rules of the House require. Perhaps she will indicate what it is she is tabling.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to table my notes from question period that I used that the member was referring to, and I was using again today. It is a direct quote from the press release of the Canadian Lung Association.

Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to table the entire document from the Canadian Lung Association.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Don Valley West have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if the document that is going to be tabled is in both official languages because we can only accept it if it is in both official languages.

The Speaker: If it is being tabled with unanimous consent, it will be put on the table.

Is it agreed that this document be tabled?

Privilege

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Don Valley West may have trouble tabling it in the House at the moment given that there is no unanimous consent, but he can do other things with the document.

* * *

● (1510)

PRIVILEGE

DECORUM

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. Today, in response to questions during question period, the Minister of Foreign Affairs made an absolute and unqualified assertion of certain things pertaining to events in this House last Thursday. However, there is compelling evidence on the public record that the minister's assertions are plainly untrue.

Members of this House witnessed the minister's comments and are prepared to provide legal documentation to that effect. An audio tape records those remarks. The media has broadly reported the remarks in question.

That the incident in fact happened appears, Mr. Speaker, on the face of the record, to be undeniable. In that event, the minister has today presented an assertion to this House that is false and apparently deliberately so.

Such doubt about the minister's veracity cannot be allowed to persist. The matter cries out for greater clarity than that which exists today, for the minister may be irreparably compromised.

The privileges of members of this House are thus being infringed: first, by the lingering untruth; and, second, by the inability of the minister, apparently, to be believed. This matter needs an airing before the procedure committee of this House.

Mr. Speaker, if you find, on the basis of the evidence that is now in the public domain, that a prima facie case of privilege does in fact exist here, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, very clearly that is not a question of privilege. It seems to me, just taking the member at his own words, that he wants an airing of this thing. This thing has been airing for about the last four or five days.

Mr. Speaker, you heard representations on it, you looked into it, and you have ruled on it. I ask hon. members in this House to please respect your ruling. I do not think there is any question about that. In addition, quite apart from that, the minister himself has already addressed the issue.

The members can keep asking this question for the rest of the 39th Parliament, but it seems to me they might want to get on and start helping us get through the crime package that we have put before Parliament which they campaigned on and were supposed to be in favour of.

Routine Proceedings

Let us get on with it, let us push the clean air act forward, and let us talk to the characters down in the Senate on some of the things that they are doing. This is a much better way to spend the time of this House than to come up with something that clearly is not a question of privilege.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member for Newmarket—Aurora first raised the issue as a point of order and requested an apology to the House, I subsequently rose to indicate that, in the event that there was a disagreement in who heard what or whether there was evidence, the matter be referred to procedure and House affairs which has the tools to be able to ascertain that matter.

Mr. Speaker, at the time you ruled that it would have been necessary for us to rise on a question of privilege.

Indeed, we have risen on a question of privilege. It goes to the heart of the presumption of honesty of all hon. members of Parliament. We have legal sworn affidavits of members of Parliament of what they heard. Procedure and House affairs will be able to make the determination as to what was said, when and by whom. The integrity of this place, the presumption of honesty, and the veracity of its members are at stake.

•(1515)

The Speaker: I first of all want to make perfectly clear what has happened in this case.

On Thursday last, the hon. member for Bourassa rose after question period and alleged that certain statements had been made. There was no explicit contradiction of that. The member did not rise on a question of privilege or point of order. He rose to demand an apology from the minister. One was not forthcoming at that time.

The next day, the member for Newmarket—Aurora rose on a point of order and asked for an apology. She said that she felt she was entitled to one because she felt that the rules of the House had been breached.

The ruling I made at that time was only to say that I had no information before me, aside from the statements from the hon. member for Bourassa and, I believe, the hon. member for Ottawa South that they had heard these comments in the House, and that I had checked the record and could find nothing on the record which indicated that to me.

I had not listened at that point to the tapes. I had merely looked at *Hansard* and I had heard from staff that they had listened to the tapes and could not pick out these words.

I have subsequently listened to a tape and I cannot tell that the words have been said from the tape I heard, which was the official transcript, the video-play of the House proceedings during the time that the alleged offence took place. So we are left with an inability to prove it on the record of the House.

The hon. member for Mississauga South says there are affidavits. I have seen no such thing.

The dispute is clearly there. The members on one side are saying one thing. The minister is saying another. There is a dispute. I will examine the matter again with a view to it being a question of privilege.

I must say that hearing it as a question of privilege is new. This is the first we have heard that it is alleged to be a question of privilege and I must say I have some reservations on that score, but I will look at the matter.

I will look at the arguments that the hon. member for Wascana and the hon. member for Mississauga South have advanced on this point. I will look at the statements that have been made by the government House leader in this regard. If I find there is a question of privilege, I will be back to the House in due course.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES PROVOST MARSHAL

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the pleasure to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2005-06 Annual Report of the Canadian Forces Provost Marshal.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32 I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2004-05 annual report of the Nisga'a Final Agreement.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

*Routine Proceedings***INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, six reports of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-parliamentary Group respecting its participation at: first, the Southern Governors' Association 2006 Annual Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, July 15 to 17, 2006; second, the Western Governors' Association 2006 Annual Meeting, Sedona, Arizona, June 11 to 13, 2006; third, the Pacific Northwest Economic Region 2006 Annual Summit, Edmonton, Alberta, July 16 to 20, 2006; fourth, the Southern Legislative Conference of the Council of State Governments 60th Annual Meeting, Louisiana, Kentucky, July 29 to August 2, 2006; fifth, the National Conference of State Legislatures, Strong States Strong Nation, Nashville, Tennessee, August 14 to 18, 2006; and sixth, the National Conference of State Legislatures Annual Meeting and Exhibition 2005, Strong States Strong Nation, Seattle, Washington, August 16 to 20, 2005.

* * *

● (1520)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding its order of reference of Tuesday, September 19, 2006, in relation to Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

[Translation]

The committee considered Bill C-16 and reported the bill without amendment.

* * *

[English]

OLD AGE SECURITY ACT

Ms. Colleen Beaumier (Brampton West, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-362, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (residency requirement).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce Bill C-362, An Act to amend the Old Age Security Act (residency requirement). This enactment would amend the Old Age Security Act to reduce the current 10 year residency requirement for seniors to a period of three years for them to be entitled to a monthly pension. This bill would ensure that seniors who come to Canada under our family reunification policies, regardless of their country of origin, would be treated as equals.

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

* * *

HOLIDAYS ACT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-363, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to finally be able to introduce a bill whose adoption I have been advocating since April of this year. My act to amend the Holidays Act (Remembrance Day) would honour those who have sacrificed their lives for Canada by making Remembrance Day a legal holiday. I look forward to this bill's quick passage to honour those who have died serving our country.

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

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-364, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (amounts not included in earnings).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. member for Vancouver Island North for having seconded the motion.

The purpose of this bill is to ensure that pension benefits, vacation pay and severance payments are not included in earnings under the Employment Insurance Act and therefore will not reduce benefits under the act.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-365, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (benefit period increase).

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a very good bill. It aims to increase the benefit period for claimants 45 years of age or over who are laid off permanently after 10 years or more in the labour force.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-366, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (pregnancy benefit).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is another good bill. It prevents a claimant's entitlement to benefit for pregnancy or caring for a newborn or adoptee being reduced on account of the claimant receiving or having received a benefit for illness or injury.

The bill also prevents a claimant losing illness or injury benefit because the illness or injury has arisen during a pregnancy or caring period.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

• (1525)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-367, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that I have introduced this bill. I hope that the House will vote in favour of the bill so that we can remove the two-week waiting period for payment of employment benefits.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-368, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (change of title to Unemployment Insurance Act) and another Act in consequence.

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is a very good bill. It seeks to restore the former title of the bill, that is the Unemployment Insurance Act. In addition, the “Employment Insurance Account” is replaced by the “Unemployment Insurance Account”, so that henceforth these monies are given to the unemployed to whom they belong.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-369, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (no interest payable by claimants on benefit repayments or penalties).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is another good bill. It provides that claimants may not be charged interest or any other penalty for the late payment of benefit repayments or of penalties assessed for violations of the Act because employment insurance belongs to them.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-370, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (length of benefit period).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill increases the duration of benefits, first by providing that a week in which at least 15 hours were worked counts as a week of insurable employment, and second by providing that every 30 hours of the total hours worked counts as a week of insurable employment.

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

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-371, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (percentage of insurable earnings payable to claimant).

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, this is one of the best bills we could have. The bill seeks to increase the percentage of insurable earnings from 55% to 66%. Any insurance pays two thirds of salaries. At 55%, the plan is not fair to workers who pay into it.

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

• (1530)

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Epp: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order that has to do with the sound system. We are getting both the French and the English. For us unilingual Canadians, it is rather difficult to understand the bills that the member is introducing.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, if it would help, I could start again.

The Speaker: I am sure that would be very helpful, but the hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park will be able to read it all in *Hansard* tomorrow. It was an introduction of eight private members' bills, all of which I am sure he will find fascinating. I would not be surprised if he gets up on a point of order and asks to have them grouped for debate.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Earlier in question period, we dealt with a question of privilege pertaining to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the course of my remarks in dealing with that matter, I indicated there was legal documentation from various members of Parliament that recorded a certain flow of events with respect to what happened in the House last Thursday.

I have in my hand eight sworn affidavits from members of Parliament, who are prepared to put their version of events on the record in this legal form. I wonder, for the information of the House, if there would be unanimous consent to have these filed in the House so this information could be available to all members of Parliament.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent that these documents be tabled?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today from many of my constituents in Edmonton—St. Albert.

The first petition calls upon the government to take all measures necessary to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years.

As members know, our government has already acted on that petition.

Routine Proceedings

FALUN GONG

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, again from people in and around St. Albert, asks the Canadian government to make a public statement regarding the communist regime committing crimes against humanity by the persecution of Falun Gong, to release these Falun Gong practitioners immediately and to take active measures to help stop the mass killing and organ harvesting of Falun Gong practitioners.

IMMIGRATION

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present three petitions signed by members of my community and Canadians across Canada.

The first petition is on Canada's immigration policies. The petitioners call upon the government to increase the number of refugees allowed into Canada and to make it easier for refugees to come to Canada.

FALUN GONG

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with regard to the Falun Gong. The petitioners call upon the government to do more to address the situation facing Falun Gong practitioners in China.

AGE OF CONSENT

Hon. Brenda Chamberlain (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls upon the government to raise the age of consent in Canada from 14 to 16 years of age.

[*Translation*]

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the names of 123 people who have signed a petition about the anti-scab bill, defended by my colleague from Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert and introduced by the member for Gatineau.

This legislation is needed to level the playing field for employers and employees by prohibiting the use of scabs, in order to maintain civilized negotiations.

A vote will be held this evening, and I invite all the members of this House to show compassion to the people who have lost their jobs or are on strike by voting in favour of this historic bill.

[*English*]

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to submit two petitions on behalf of auto workers who oppose the government's move toward a trade deal with Korea, which will cost thousands of auto jobs across the country. The petitioners note that independent studies conclude they are at risk with this trade agreement.

This petition is part of 47,000 signatures that have been tabled. They invite all members to table petitions in support of ending these negotiations which will cost so many Canadian jobs.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition signed by

approximately 288 of my constituents and another 234 from across Canada in support of Remembrance Day as a national holiday.

• (1535)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition, signed by the residents of my riding, calling upon the Prime Minister to make energy conservation and the environment a priority and to re-enact the currently suspended programs. We know that EnerGuide has lost about 100,000 homes that could have been energy efficient at this time because of it.

[*Translation*]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions signed by fellow citizens from my region and dealing with marriage and same sex couples.

[*English*]

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition pursuant to Standing Order 36, with signatures of about 150 people from all over Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the government to cancel the negotiations for the trade agreement with Korea because of its negative impact on the auto sector in particular and manufacturing generally. They also call upon the government to develop a sound automotive trade policy.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour of presenting a petition on behalf of a number of citizens in my riding of Palliser, from the communities of Caronport and Moose Jaw.

The petitioners wish to call to the attention of Parliament that the protection of our children from sexual predators must be a top priority of the federal government, that the Canadian Police Association, a number of provincial governments and a parliamentary report all favour raising the age of consent and that it is the duty of Parliament, through the enactment and enforcement of the Criminal Code, to protect the most vulnerable members of our society from harm.

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have also received a collection of signatures from the "Ribbon of Signatures" campaign in Regina and from the congregation at Christ the King Church, the Salvation Army and Waterston Centre in support of raising the age of consent.

Routine Proceedings

I did not receive unanimous consent of the House to formally present these ribbons, but all these individuals pray that the government will take all measures to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age.

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present several petitions, including one that was given to me by the hon. member for Drummond. That petition, which was signed by 349 people, calls for the immediate renewal of the national homelessness initiative and the SCPI and RHF programs, and asks that they be made permanent and their funding increased.

These services provide post-shelter community support to young people, namely a stay in one of their inns. These rehabilitation and experimentation activities must absolutely continue.

I thank the hon. member for Gatineau, because the second petition comes from the organization Adojeune, in his riding. Adojeune is asking for the same thing, namely that the SCPI program be continued, otherwise it will be forced to stop providing urgent shelter to young people aged 14 to 17. This could create a huge hole in the services for teenagers who are homeless and at risk in that region.

Finally, I have petitions from Montreal. I thank the hon. members for Papineau, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Laurier—Sainte-Marie, La Pointe-de-l'Île, Ahuntsic and Hochelaga. These petitions are also asking that the SCPI program be continued.

One of these petitions includes a very important message. It says that homelessness is a cause of death among our youth and that we cannot afford to lose even one young person. This is very important, considering that another petition tells us that the number of homeless people without a roof over their heads and without human dignity is increasing drastically.

The organizations that help the homeless must do with precarious budgets, while continuous action and recurring budgets are needed to effectively meet supportive care and rehabilitation needs for these people.

[*English*]

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a petition signed by approximately 80 residents of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, including a number from my riding of Burnaby—Douglas.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to take all measures necessary to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age.

•(1540)

CHILD CARE

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition also from approximately 80 residents of the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, including a number of folks from Burnaby—Douglas.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to achieve multi-year funding to ensure that publicly operated child care programs are sustainable in the long term, to protect child care by enshrining it in legislation with a national child care act to be a cornerstone of Canada like the national Health Act and to help end child poverty by using the \$1,200 allowance to enhance the child tax benefit without taxes and clawbacks.

AGE OF CONSENT

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling two petitions today.

The first petition is signed by 50 people, many of whom live in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. The petitioners call upon Parliament to take all measures necessary to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age.

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also very pleased today to table a petition signed by members of the CAW who are opposed to the Canadian negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea.

Instead of worsening the one-way flood of automotive products into our markets, the petitioners urge Parliament to develop a new automotive policy that would require Korea and other offshore markets to purchase equivalent volumes of finished vehicles and auto parts from North America as a condition of their continued access to our market.

As the Speaker will be aware, this is part of a larger campaign that has gathered over 47,000 signatures to date.

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to assist colleagues and the Canadian Auto Workers in bringing forward their message of deep concern over negotiations with Korea on a trade agreement.

I have about 150 names that I am pleased to table on their behalf today.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a petition to the Government of Canada for a new automotive trade policy that would cancel negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea and develop a new trade policy that would require Korea and other offshore markets to purchase equivalent volumes of finished vehicles and auto parts from North America.

This petition has 159 signatures from Canadians.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I rise to table a petition of great importance to auto workers, steelworkers and manufacturers, in general, in the Hamilton area.

The petitioners call upon the government to cancel negotiations of a free trade agreement with Korea and to develop a new automotive trade policy.

TRANSPORT

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from the residents of Langley, regarding road-rail traffic issues in Langley.

The petitioners ask that the Government of Canada develop a long-range, 50 year transportation plan for the Lower Mainland, assist Langley in determining whether alternate and safe routes for bulk and container traffic that travels through Langley is warranted, provide adequate funding for road-rail separation projects, potential alternate routes and assist Langley to secure efficient, workable and affordable transportation systems that include light rail at surface levels, with growth capacity as required.

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to present a petition, with about 100 signatures, to the Government of Canada for a new automotive trade policy.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to cancel negotiations for a free trade agreement with Korea, which would worsen the one-way flood of automotive products into our market, and develop a new automotive trade policy that would require Korea and other offshore markets to purchase equivalent volumes of finished vehicles and auto parts from North America as a condition of its continued access to our market and save jobs in our country.

IMMIGRATION

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to present a petition, also signed by more than 100 people within my constituency.

The petitioners fear that Canada is at risk of losing our heritage of welcome, a long tradition. They call upon Parliament to enact a welcome to strangers in need and significantly increase the number of refugees that Canada accepts annually, lift barriers that prevent refugees from reaching Canada, provide international leadership, which is called for in this day and age, and finally fix our refugee system.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Privilege

PRIVILEGE

REPORT OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE REVIEW OF THE ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today concerning a question of privilege that came to your attention last week. I wanted to discuss this in the House. In fact, we have had some discussions at the committee.

The breach was, in fact, unintentional and it was inadvertent, but it was a good lesson. I think it would be good if all members of the House would take the opportunity to ensure they know all the rules in terms of these potential breaches of rules in the House.

On that basis, I apologize to the committee and to the House, unconditionally. I believe the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh would probably like to address the issue as well.

• (1545)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a result of some discussion we have had at committee, and as a result of the quite admirable conduct on the part of the chair of that subcommittee, the member for Leeds—Grenville, I am pleased to stand today and indicate to the House and to you that I am withdrawing that motion based on a claim of privilege.

As the member for Leeds—Grenville pointed out, it would be appropriate for all members of the House to look at the rules with regard to confidentiality, both at the time of reports being filed with the House and at other times where information and discussion goes on in camera. In regard to that point, we have an understanding in all parties that the whips and the House leaders will attempt to send information around to all members of the House.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I commend the member for Leeds—Grenville for the way he has handled this matter. It is quite admirable.

The Speaker: I would like to add my expression of thanks to both the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville and the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh for the way they have raised this issue and dealt with it. It saved me having to make a ruling on it, which I am very pleased about.

I am also very pleased that they worked so cooperatively with the committee to ensure that all hon. members who were affected by the alleged problem have obviously seen it resolved to their satisfaction as well. I congratulate both hon. members on a job well done.

I can say that I think it shows wonderfully the advantages of working cooperatively in the House and in the committees of this House, something that is appreciated by many hon. members but we do not always hear about. I am delighted it has happened in this case and I will consider the matter closed.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[English]***BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2006, NO. 2**

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that Bill C-28, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak to Bill C-28, which is the fall budget implementation bill. The measures in the bill are positive. They continue with the legislation with respect to implementing budget 2006 which I had the honour to present in the House on May 2.

Broad based tax relief is provided by this budget bill. It is wide-ranging tax relief for Canadians. There are a number of budget items in the bill, including the exemption for small brewers and vintners; the Canada employment credit; the deduction for tradespeople's tool expenses; and the capital gain extension for fishers to \$500,000 lifetime which is very important for fishers, particularly in Atlantic Canada and on the west coast. The bill also includes the textbook tax credit which will help students; the exemption for scholarship and bursary income; the children's fitness tax credit; and the tax credit for public transit, which has important environmental benefits. The bill also includes the changes with respect to corporate dividends; doubling the pension income credit from \$1,000 to \$2,000; the small business increase from \$300,000 to \$400,000 effective January 1, 2007, assuming the bill passes; and the apprenticeship job creation tax credit. The bill also includes a number of other initiatives that are steps forward in terms of equitable treatment for Canadians in many walks of life.

The original budget implementation bill, which has been passed, served as a launching pad for the development in the coming months of a strong results-focused agenda for a more competitive, productive Canada. Budget 2006 represents the first part of our government's commitment to put government spending back on a sustainable track over time, to restore fiscal balance and to improve Canada's competitiveness.

Budget 2006 lays the groundwork for future budgets, while providing real benefits for all Canadians today.

When the new government was elected in January of this year, it was expected that we would be more accountable as we said we would be and that we would treat Canadians' hard-earned tax dollars with respect.

Canada's new government has kept its word. We said we would introduce legislation to improve accountability and we did. We said we would crack down on crime and we did.

We also said we would cut the GST and we did by a full percentage point effective July 1 this year. We said we would reduce personal income taxes and we did that too. We also cut corporate income taxes for small, medium and large businesses, something other governments, including our predecessor government had promised to do but failed to deliver.

We are leaving more tax dollars in the pockets of Canadians to be used to make the decisions that are right for them and their families.

We have ensured that Canada will be a country of opportunity by investing in families and communities, education, security and infrastructure.

We have done this in a way that is fiscally responsible by paying down the debt, including the third largest debt payment in the history of Canada a few weeks ago of \$13.2 billion. This will free up about \$660 million of money that otherwise would have been paid in interest. Taxpayers' money that would have been used for interest payments now will be available for other spending priorities or for tax reductions from year to year and year after year.

We have been containing government expenditures. The President of the Treasury Board led the initiative and made the announcement of \$1 billion in expense reductions for this year and for next year. This is part of what will be an ongoing program of expense management control dearly needed by the Government of Canada on an ongoing basis.

We have our goal of delivering the greatest value for taxpayers' dollars, including program review of course. We want to make sure that programs that are ongoing continue to fulfill the mandate for which they were created, and if not, then not to continue those programs.

● (1550)

This bill contains measures that will improve the quality of life for Canadians. It introduces the Canada employment credit. This is an issue with respect to which members hear often, that people who are self-employed have certain advantages in terms of deductions. The Canada employment credit will extend that to take into account the reality that many people who work and who are not self-employed have expenses that might relate to uniforms, safety gear or home computers, the kinds of things that are necessary for their particular work. For some Canadians, particularly lower income Canadians, these additional costs sometimes impose a barrier to joining the workforce.

The Canada employment credit is a new employment expense tax credit for employees' work expenses. This credit has been administered as of July 1. On a full year basis it provides tax relief on employment income of up to \$500 in 2006. Since it came into effect mid-year, working Canadians could receive a credit of up to \$250 for 2006, that is for the half year. The annual amount of employment income eligible for the credit will double to \$1,000 effective January 1, 2007.

Budget 2006 significantly increased the amount of income that employed Canadians can earn without paying federal income tax, together with increases to the basic personal amount. By 2007 that amount will be almost \$10,000.

Government Orders

The Canada employment credit will make work more attractive, particularly for lower income workers. It also will put employees on a more equal footing, as I said, with the self-employed in terms of the tax recognition they receive for the expenses they incur to earn income. This measure is expected to reduce the taxes paid by working Canadians by \$890 million in 2006-07 and by more than \$1.8 billion in 2007-08, a significant part of the \$20 billion in tax reductions contained in budget 2006.

With respect to businesses in Canada, including the job creation engine of small business in our nation, Canada's new government recognizes that working Canadians are part of the foundation of Canada's economic growth. Another crucial component of that is the business community. We have taken steps to help ensure that Canadian companies can compete with the world's best.

The budget implementation bill passed before the House rose last summer proposed a plan that would reduce the general corporate income tax rate from 21% to 19% by January 1, 2010. That bill also eliminated the corporate surtax for all corporations in 2008 and totally eliminated the federal capital tax as of January 1, 2006, which is two years ahead of schedule.

Bill C-28 builds on those measures by proposing a reduction of the current 12% small business tax rate to 11.5% for 2008 and to 11% for 2009. It is important to note that this bill also proposes an increase to \$400,000 from \$300,000 of the amount of income that a small business can have taxed at the small business tax rate effective January 1, 2007.

Bill C-28 improves equity in the tax system by providing capital gains tax relief to fishers, which I briefly mentioned previously, including an extension of the \$500,000 lifetime capital gains exemption and an intergenerational rollover for fishing businesses. I certainly heard a great deal about this subject from hon. members in the preparation of the budget, including, of course, my colleague the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. This initiative will provide this important industry with the same tax treatment of capital gains as is extended to farmers in Canada.

In addition to accelerating the elimination of the federal capital tax in last summer's budget bill, Bill C-28 proposes to modify the minimum tax on financial institutions to reflect the growth of that sector since the tax was introduced. Bill C-28 proposes that effective July 1, 2006 a single tax rate of 1.25% apply on taxable capital employed in Canada over \$1 billion rather than the two tier system that is currently in place for financial institutions with taxable capital in excess of \$300 million.

•(1555)

Bill C-28 also proposes to eliminate the double taxation of dividends from large corporations at the federal level.

There is an important provision in the bill with respect to pension income. Canada's new government is fully aware of and grateful for the contributions made by our seniors in Canada. A deduction for the first \$1,000 in eligible pension income was introduced in 1975. The deduction was converted to a non-refundable credit in the 1987 tax reform.

However, the maximum amount of pension income that could be claimed under this measure has been left unchanged since 1975, at

that level of \$1,000, which of course is worth much less in 2006 dollars. In the May budget, our government proposed to provide greater tax assistance to those who have saved for their retirement.

Budget 2006 proposes to double to \$2,000 the maximum amount of eligible pension income that can be claimed under the pension income credit. This is effective for 2006 and subsequent taxation years. This measure will benefit nearly three million taxpayers receiving eligible pension income and will remove approximately 85,000 pensioners from the federal tax rolls completely.

I would like to say a few words about the textbook tax credit, which is important to our students in Canada.

We of course want to encourage education and training efforts by students. This bill, Bill C-28, proposes a new non-refundable tax credit to provide better tax recognition for the costs of textbooks for students. This will be put in place effective for 2006 and subsequent taxation years.

The textbook tax credit amount will be \$65 for each month of full time post-secondary study and \$20 for each month of part time post-secondary study. For example, a full time student enrolled for eight months would qualify for a textbook tax credit on an amount of \$520 in that year, which would be a tax reduction of about \$80. This benefit, we estimate, will extend to almost two million post-secondary students in Canada.

There is also the exemption with respect to post-secondary education scholarships and bursaries. In our platform in the last election, as I recall, we had a provision that we would exempt bursaries and scholarships up to \$10,000.

In fact, in the budget, we announced that the exemption would be complete and that we would not have a monetary limit of \$10,000, on the basis that we want to encourage students to work hard and do well. When they work hard and do well and get scholarships and bursaries, it seems counterproductive for the government to then tax them for reaching for the top and for working hard and doing well in their studies.

Budget 2006 proposes to fully exempt these sources of income from tax, effective for this year, 2006, and subsequent taxation years. This has a significant consequence, particularly when we start looking at the need we have in Canada for more graduate students in the sciences, in engineering and in the life sciences, and at our desire to encourage graduate study.

Let us take the example of a full time student, perhaps at the University of Saskatchewan, completing a Ph.D., who received a \$15,000 scholarship and also earned an additional \$10,000 in 2007 by working as a teaching assistant, which would not be unusual for a graduate student. As a result of the full exemption on scholarship and bursary income and the introduction of the new textbook tax credit, that student would save \$675 in federal income tax.

Government Orders

This measure will help foster academic excellence by providing tax relief to more than 100,000 post-secondary students in Canada.

There is also a tax credit with respect to apprenticeships to encourage apprenticeship job creation. The lack of skilled trades in Canada, as we well know, is becoming an impediment to economic growth. This is particularly true in some regions of our country. Meanwhile, many young Canadians find themselves stuck in low-paying jobs and either are not encouraged to consider the trades or are unable to do so because of financial barriers.

● (1600)

To encourage employers to hire new apprentices to learn a trade, the budget proposed a new apprenticeship job creation tax credit. As a result of this initiative, which is contained in Bill C-28, and which is effective as of May 2, 2006, the budget date, eligible employers will receive a tax credit equal to 10% of the wages paid to qualifying apprentices in the first two years of the contract, to a maximum credit of \$2,000 per apprentice per year.

To encourage people to enter the skilled trades, there is also a deduction for tool expenses for tradespeople. Many members have heard from constituents over the years about how expensive it is for people starting off in the trades to pay for tools, particularly in some of the situations that involve very expensive tools, such as auto mechanics. Bill C-28 proposes a new deduction of up to \$500 to tradespeople for the cost of tools in excess of \$1,000, tools that they must acquire in order to proceed with their apprenticeship.

The tools deduction and the Canada employment credit together will provide tax relief to about 700,000 employed tradespeople in Canada.

Here is how it would work. For example, a tradesperson earning \$60,000, with \$1,500 in tool expenses in 2007, will be able to claim the new Canada employment credit on \$1,000 and deduct \$500 under the new tools deduction. The two measures will reduce federal income taxes by \$265.

Also, apprentice vehicle mechanics will continue to be eligible to deduct their extraordinary tool expenses.

Another important credit in the bill relates to the use of public transit by commuters and the environmental benefits of more commuters using public transit and leaving their cars at home or at commuter stations. It is important to encourage Canadians to use public transit. Increasing public transit use not only will ease traffic congestion in our urban areas, it will also improve the environment.

Bill C-28 proposes the tax credit on the purchase cost of monthly public transit passes or passes for a duration of longer than a month. This measure, effective July 1, 2006, will provide benefits to approximately two million Canadians who make a sustained commitment to use this environmentally friendly mode of transportation.

For example, an individual who purchases passes costing \$80 per month throughout the year will receive a benefit of up to about \$150 in federal tax relief for the year. All transit users, including commuters, students and seniors, will qualify for this tax credit. What it amounts to is about two months of free public transit per

year for commuters who have monthly passes or passes that are for longer than one month.

Another important tax credit is particularly relevant in Canada today given our concerns with obesity in children, about which much has been said and written in recent years and months. Studies show that regular physical activity has many positive effects on children, including healthier growth and development and improved physical fitness.

There is no doubt that all of us have seen some escalation in the costs of organized activities, making it difficult for many Canadian families to afford these activities for their children.

To promote physical fitness among children, Bill C-28 proposes to introduce the children's fitness tax credit, effective January 1, 2007 and designed to provide a tax credit based on up to \$500 of eligible fees for programs of physical activity for each child under the age of 16.

As one would expect, the words "physical activity" can be interpreted more or less broadly and in different ways. Indeed, they are being interpreted in different ways. As I set out in the budget, I asked a panel of experts to consider the views of Canadians on this subject and on the design of the tax credit.

The three experts on the panel have done their work. I thank them for that. I expect to receive their report tomorrow. They have done this work as good Canadians. Despite their expertise and the remuneration to which they would be entitled in their normal occupations, they have done it for \$1 each. The grand cost to the people of Canada will be \$3 for this expert report that will provide advice on a working definition of the criteria for the tax credit.

● (1605)

I look forward to having an opportunity to share that report with hon. members and to have what I am sure will be a fulsome discussion about the design of that tax credit for young people.

In conclusion, the government's first budget is about focusing on priorities. This bill completes that budget implementation process.

This is about taking action to make a real difference in the lives of Canadians. It is about creating real results for Canadians. And it is about doing all of this in a way that is fiscally responsible, by making sure that we have balanced budgets, by making sure that we have expenditure control on an ongoing basis, and by making sure that we watch the hard-earned Canadian tax dollars the Government of Canada receives.

I encourage all hon. members to give the bill the swift passage that I would submit it deserves.

Government Orders

Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. minister's report, but of course we have to remember that in terms of the surplus he worked with, it was a result of 13 good years of Liberal management. In fact, I have been told, and I will have to check the record, that the last time a Conservative minister of finance—and the Conservatives have been the leaders of the government in this country for a period of time—came to this chamber and reported that there was not a deficit was in the year 1912.

So we are looking at the year 2006 and another milestone in the history of the record of the Conservative Party. It takes a long time. I hope the minister has good luck with future budgets, because we hope that next year again that there will be another surplus or at least a balanced budget. We also have to remember that this quarterly report indicates that we are working very well as a government. In fact, the surplus looks to be coming along again.

I have one brief comment to make to the minister. In terms of November 11, it is certainly a time when we honour our veterans, and with it there is a program that has helped out veterans and their widows in this country. Many of those widows today are more than 80 years of age.

Prime Minister Harper, when he was Leader of the Opposition, promised—

• (1610)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member has been here a long time and he knows not to refer to the Prime Minister by name.

Hon. Charles Hubbard: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

When he was the Leader of the Opposition, the Prime Minister indicated to the widows of this country, to Mrs. Joyce Carter, that he would bring forward a program to enable the widows to receive the VIP after they became eligible as a result of their economic situation.

I would ask the minister if his cabinet, his government, is going to honour that commitment so that the widows of those veterans who contributed so greatly to our country will now receive the VIP, to which they are certainly entitled.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member and I thank him for his comments, particularly about Liberals balancing budgets. They sure did. I had the unusual privilege of being a Minister of Finance in the second largest government in this country, in Ontario, and we had to try to operate a health care system with the federal government balancing its books by cutting back health transfers to the provinces.

We lived through that and the deterioration of the health care system, which was done by the previous government and which it created simply by saying, "We are going to balance our books. Here is how we are going to do it. We are going to cut our health transfers willy-nilly, across the board, to every province in this country".

It was a cynical act, but that is how the Liberals thought they should balance the books in Canada. It is not how we see balancing the books.

In fact, we are engaged now in what I hope will be quite fruitful and constructive discussions with our colleagues in the provinces and territories. We are not talking about cutting health care. In fact,

we will maintain health care funding. We are committed to that, with a 6% escalator built into the base.

We are also talking about substantial transfer payments with respect to infrastructure and post-secondary education. It is just the kind of progressive legislation and progressive approach that ought to have been taken on by the previous government, but no, what the Liberals did instead was just cut health care transfers willy-nilly and tell the provinces and the people of the provinces that they had to figure it out.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister's zeal and I would like to know if that zeal is matched by any sort of analysis that went into the budget.

In particular, he mentioned the transit passes. Just recently, I was on the Toronto transit system and when I looked up, lo and behold there was an ad from the Canadian government with a lot of words. I leaned over to the transit rider beside me who had a monthly pass and tried to find out if she understood it. She had absolutely no understanding of this issue at all.

The government claims to use prudence and sound advice, but on the transit pass issue, we have managers of the major transit systems in this country saying that if we want to invest in transit, we should get more riders into the system. We do not do it the way the government has shown. Managers in Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Ottawa have all said that if we really want to affect the number of people using the transit system, we should go after infrastructure.

The government also claims that this is a measure to fight the climate change issue. Whereas, we know that this is one of the most expensive forms of reducing carbon available to the government. It is one of the most expensive ways to reduce the pollution that is emitted.

I am seeking some sort of clarity on the analysis that the minister and his department used in applying these measures: first, to increase ridership when the people in charge of the system say it is not the way to do it; and second, to help the environment out when it is the most expensive ways to reduce CO₂, that we know of.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, if people were to leave their cars at the commuter stations, subway stations, bus stations, and did not drive their cars, they would actually produce fewer emissions. We know that. Studies show that if we incent that kind of behaviour, then more people will leave their cars at the stations or at their homes and take public transit. That is good for the environment.

I take the GO Train often when I am in the greater Toronto area, so do many people in my riding of Whitby—Oshawa and all throughout the greater Toronto area. We know about the traffic congestion there. I say to the member, come to the greater Toronto area and see the benefit of a transit pass. The affordability factor gives people two months free public transit per year for those who commute, that is, for those who take the monthly passes or passes that are longer.

Government Orders

I know there is some discussion now about cards that will be used between the various transit systems and some of our regional transit networks, not only in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and other places. That is something we will have to work on to ensure that we integrate this benefit, so that people who are commuting on a regular basis get the tax credit.

• (1615)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the minister's speech. I had a chance a few years ago to play an exhibition hockey game between the House of Commons and Queen's Park. He was a very good hockey player and probably still is. He is a very good skater.

I will ask the minister a question which is so straightforward that I do not think he would be able to skate around it. With respect to the 1% GST cut, it is really not delivering the goods to average Canadians as declared by the government.

If a well-to-do family on one side is able to buy a \$100,000 luxury boat and on the other side a modest income family can afford a couple of hundred dollars for an inflatable boat, which of the two families will save more on the GST?

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member omits the basic point of our tax system in Canada. We have a progress tax system, so that a wealthier family will pay a great deal more income tax and that is the fundamental basis of our tax system in Canada.

I thank the hon. member for his comments about hockey. I think the score was, I am trying to remember, was it eight to one? I know we won in those days, but the quality of the hockey team here now will have improved because of the members who come from Ontario. I am kidding. That was in the old Maple Leaf Gardens, as I recall, near the end of the life of the old Maple Leaf Gardens, and some of us felt that way near the end of that game.

Talking about the progressive tax system, some economists will say that the reduction of consumption taxes is not the best way to go. I certainly would not do it in isolation, nor did we do it in isolation in the budget. We reduced taxes of all kinds that the Government of Canada takes from Canadians, including excise taxes, small business taxes, consumption taxes, large business taxes and capital taxes. It is a fulsome program of tax reduction.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to ask a direct question of the Minister of Finance pertaining to a file of great importance for my region.

Under the former government there was a wind power incentive program. Now that the Department of Finance is reviewing just about every government expenditure that can be reviewed, there is a \$105 million project.

There is some concern about this project, which aims to build 54 wind turbines that will supply three megawatts of power. This was supposed to occur in Murdochville, right in the heart of Gaspésie. It is one of the projects related to generating green energy, wind energy.

I imagine that the minister is aware of renewable energy and this whole concept. I therefore beg him to give us an answer concerning the fact that, within the current context of program review, there is a great deal of uncertainty about various projects. This is one that seems to have been put on hold and that would be a shame. I think it is important and worthwhile for the minister to lift the veil on this matter.

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, it is not a specific program that I have at my fingertips. I do know that under the clean air act which my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, introduced recently we are looking at sources of renewable energy including wind power. That will have to be a part of the design as we go forward which I am sure would include the type of initiatives that my colleague refers to in the Gaspé.

• (1620)

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to participate in the debate on Bill C-28, especially for me today as this is my anniversary and the anniversary of quite a few other members of the official opposition who were elected to this place back on October 25, 1993. I would like to commend members on both sides of the House who were elected 13 years ago. Lucky 13 I would say.

This anniversary brings me back to the fact that I was a member of the finance committee in my first Parliament from 1993 to 1997. It was the time period when the then prime minister mandated us as a finance committee to assist the government and the House of Commons to find ways to deal with the terrible deficit that we inherited from the previous Conservative administration. It was not just the efforts of members of Parliament, particularly government members, but members on all sides who helped us turn the government books around in a short two year period. This was also done with the assistance of Canadians from coast to coast.

I would like to point out that the finance minister mentioned, in a response to a question by the member for Miramichi, that during the time as the finance minister in Ontario, he had complained about the fact that the federal government was not achieving its goals. His predecessor, minister Eves in the Mike Harris government, actually lauded the then prime minister and finance minister for their efforts in bringing the books of this country under control. The IMF had basically given a stern warning to Canada about the deficit we had inherited from the previous Conservative administration.

That is why we want to be careful as we go forward. This country does not want to get back into a deficit position. Canadians do not want that. In fact, one of the biggest mandates from Canadians in 1993 was for us to deal with the mess that the books were in. The debt was climbing precipitously.

At that time we had to deal with the financial picture of the country. At the same time, while we were making an effort to get to a surplus position, we could not forget the vulnerable. We had to ensure that we continued to make investments in the social safety net of this country, in economic development, and in incentives for small business. We had to be ever-mindful of the most vulnerable among us and start paying down the debt.

Government Orders

Significantly, the ratio of debt to GDP in this country over the last 13 years up until late January dropped from around 70% to around 40%. We made fantastic progress.

This brings me to the present financial paradigm in which we find ourselves as a nation. My colleague from Miramichi also mentioned that the last time a Conservative government reported a surplus was in 1912. I would like to add to his comment by saying that the finance minister at that time inherited a surplus from the previous Laurier government. We have yet to see any Conservative government actually produce a surplus on its own feet. I like to be a positive person along with my colleague from Miramichi, so let us hope that the government can keep us on track as a nation and keep us in a surplus position.

At the same time, it is with grave concern that I remind members of this House, my constituents of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksasing in northern Ontario, and all Canadians, that the \$13 billion surplus that the Conservative government inherited, which was reported as part of the budget package last spring, should not have in its entirety been used to pay down the debt.

● (1625)

Over the previous 10 or 11 years, we have put a significant portion of each year's surplus toward the debt. Imagine parents saying to their kids, "We are not going to feed you because we are going to put every spare nickel we have on the mortgage". No, parents continue to pay down their house mortgage while continuing to feed and clothe their families. There is a balance between the ongoing requirements of a family as there is for a government. There is a requirement that governments be mindful of maintaining programs that in particular the most vulnerable need from their federal government.

I think that was a serious error in judgment on the part of the government. No doubt the finance minister, with whom I have no grief personally, had tremendous pressure from the reform elements in his party. It is the reform element that has this belief of every person for themselves. It is an ideological approach to government that really forgets that we are responsible for others. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, and that is the place and the role of government. While managing the state for everybody, ensure that we do not leave people behind. Even the best governments and best countries always have those who cannot keep up, and it is our responsibility to do the best we can to help them keep up.

If I could rewind the tape back to last spring and to some weeks ago when we heard about the cuts, I would hope that a replay of that would see the government maybe use half, even a bit more if it felt it were affordable but no less than half, as we were doing, toward debt reduction and the rest toward investments in the social safety net and economic development. Why instead did we see cuts of \$1 billion, and I think \$2 billion over two years?

It did not strike me as much as it did on a recent visit to the communities of Chapleau and Wawa in my riding a few days ago. I knew that the cuts were going to have an impact on Canadians, but imagine in two communities, three different groups and individuals came forward to tell me about the impact of the cuts on their groups or on them individually. In 13 years, I do not recall ever having that experience. In the space of six hours, between Chapleau, office

hours, travelling to Wawa and office hours there, three different groups and individuals came forward to say that this really hurts, not them personally, and I will explain in a moment, but the groups that they work with which serve others.

One was a group in Chapleau that is involved with the francophone women's association, headquartered in Ottawa. It is an Ontario-wide organization that helps francophone women's groups with their advocacy efforts on behalf of francophone women. I have, in my large northern Ontario riding of 110,000 square kilometres, a large and vibrant francophone community.

I was really touched by the delegation's impassioned plea that some way be found to reverse the impact of cuts to women's programs that ultimately impacted their ability to help each other in Chapleau. I know this is also the case in Kapuskasing, and I could go around the riding and find other women's groups, francophone or not, equally impacted.

Imagine in the same tour, to continue, in Wawa, a delegation of small lodge owners came to see me. They were really concerned about the cut to the GST rebate for visitors. To the uninformed, to the uninitiated, it might seem that this is simply a matter of giving money to tourists who go back after their holidays to the U.S. or to Europe, let us say mostly the U.S. in the case of tourist operators in the northern Ontario, and lodge owners for fishing, hunting, camping and outdoor recreation.

● (1630)

The reality is that tourism is an export industry. I know my colleague, the member for Miramichi, has a large tourist industry in his part of New Brunswick. Tourism is an export industry. When tourists buy something at a store, keep their receipt, at least up until now, cross the border to go back to the U.S. if they are American, they are exporting that item and, as for all exports, the GST is removed. Why are we in fact picking on those who export to the U.S. or elsewhere as tourists?

There was a particular concern to these operators. Since the inception of the GST, which is known as a value added tax in Europe, visitors to Canada could claim the GST on their rooms while they are in Canada.

The lodge business in northern Ontario or the Toronto convention bureau or the Montreal convention bureau or the Vancouver convention bureau know that convention organizers depend on those percentage points of advantage they have to compete against other large cities for international convention business. So, now we have lost a few percentage points in competition with European convention destinations.

Government Orders

This happened to be a delegation made up of all women lodge operators. I was very impressed by the arguments they made and the concern they had for how would they make up, I think it was an average of 3% difference, in the net income to their businesses that they would have to cover because their customers could not get that 3% back at the border. They have lost the ability to promote that aspect in their tour of the trade tourism shows throughout mostly the northern U.S. I would ask the government to reconsider the GST rebate for visitors, as it should reconsider the support of women's programs.

Let me continue to the third example of an entrepreneur in my riding in Wawa. I will keep the confidentiality of his name. He has tremendous expertise in the tree nursery sector, not just knowledge but technology capacity as well. He has worked diligently to make business agreements in several Central American countries. When we talk about the importance of tree planting, reforestation is part of a larger strategy to deal with climate change. He has the potential in an important niche when it comes to greenhouse gas or climate change abatement technologies.

Up until recently, Canada's government believed in the Kyoto protocol and believed that climate change was a reality. Imperfections aside, and I will not say that our government was perfect in its pursuit of finding better ways to deal with climate change, at least we were looking forward, we acknowledged, and we knew better efforts had to be made to deal with climate change. We did not turn our backs on the importance of climate change and the Kyoto protocol. This entrepreneur has now lost some advantage in his ability to export his expertise and technology in terms of reforestation to parts of the world that indeed need this kind of help.

In a period of six hours there were three groups or individuals impacted by these cuts. I know that cuts are separate from the budget, but the foundation of the cuts is in the budget of last spring.

• (1635)

There is a notion that there is a plethora, a whole bunch of tax credits contained in the minister's budget which on the face of it look interesting, but when people find out that a \$500 tax credit for the physical fitness tax credit is worth about \$70 or \$80 to the average family, then it really is not what it appears to be. It would have been clearer for Canadians had the government acknowledged that these tax credits which are \$500 in this box on tax returns really meant about \$75 or \$80 at the end.

I think sports programs are very important. I look forward to the minister tabling his report from his expert panel. Not every family has a child that is capable, either physically or by inclination, to be involved on a hockey team, a basketball team or whatever. Some children are musically inclined and some are artistic. Some children in wheelchairs cannot play hockey. They have other pursuits that they would no doubt be interested in.

I really hope that the minister, who is a bit of an athlete himself, will be persuaded that the view of that tax credit, as modest as it is, should include a large array of artistic, cultural and physical pursuits for children and families. I want to make that very important point.

In my question earlier on to the Minister of Finance I asked about the difference between a wealthy family buying a \$100,000 luxury

motorboat or sailboat versus a modest family buying a \$200 inflatable raft and which of the two families would receive the bigger GST benefit? The minister did not answer the question. He actually did not even skate around it. He did not even carry the puck across the red line in response to my question.

I will answer the question for the minister. If a person were buying a \$100,000 boat, the saving would be about \$1,000; I think a 1% cut would be \$1,000. With that \$1,000 cut the family could buy five inflatable boats that the modest income family could only get for \$200. The \$200 inflatable boat will realize a savings of \$20 or is it \$2? No, I think it is \$20.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Insignificant.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Actually, it is \$2. It is insignificant. Thanks for the arithmetic help from my colleagues.

The point is that the GST saving for the well-to-do family is \$1,000. In my example the saving for the low income family is \$2. Tell me what the fairness is there? It is not there.

I am not sure there was one reputable economist that argued in favour of a GST cut. The better thing going forward and the better thing last spring would have been to continue the personal income tax cut that we brought in during the previous year. Then, if the government felt it had resources, it go further with personal income tax cuts.

There is a great debate over whether cuts in consumption taxes are better than cuts in personal income tax. I would argue the latter, that cuts to personal income taxes are a lot more effective, a lot more fair, and on a sliding scale they impact everyone the same proportionally.

We go from a big picture in 1993 where the imperative at the time was to get the books of the country in order. The previous government did that. It took two years and with the help of Canadians it was done. The country had a series of surpluses that have never been matched before in Canadian history.

We now have a government that is very ideological. Canada is a democracy and there is nothing wrong with being ideological. However, if the government is going to be ideological, it had better put a little bit of water in its wine once in a while and consider that there are things that happen between the ideologies that really can help or hurt people.

• (1640)

I would ask the government to reconsider its overall program. Next spring, if it does come up with a surplus, I hope it will deal with the wait times because we are regressing on wait times and there is little, if any, mention by the government of the wait times initiative that it mentioned in the election.

Government Orders

I hope next spring the government will be a little wiser with any surplus that it might accrue.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's comments and I would like to address his comment on the GST visitors' rebate. I would remind the member that our new government has promised to be fiscally prudent with Canadian taxpayer money and Canadians elected this government to be good fiscal managers, which is exactly what we are doing.

The fact is that on the GST visitors' rebate, more than 97% of the 35 million foreign visitors to Canada do not collect the rebate. That is almost 34 million out of 35 million tourists who come to Canada every year do not use this rebate.

This was said by the Premier of Nova Scotia, Rodney MacDonald:

I don't think that visitors make their decision based on that rebate. They come to Nova Scotia for the scenery, the people, the experience of what Nova Scotia's all about.

This was said by the Nova Scotia tourism minister:

Somebody coming from New York, are they coming to Halifax or are they going to stop their plan because they are not going to be getting a rebate on their GST? I don't think so.

Don Drummond, chief economist at the TD Bank Financial Group, said:

—evidence mounts that certain programs aren't very effective....A good example is the rebate program for tourists who pay the GST. Despite considerable expenditures to make tourists aware they can claim the rebate, fewer than 3 per cent do so. The government's decision to scrap the program will save \$78-million.

This last comment was said by a small businessman:

I don't think anyone won't come here because of it. It's just a pleasant surprise and they usually spend the money here.

We have a premier, a tourism minister, a chief economist at the TD Bank Financial Group and a business owner all saying that scrapping the GST visitors' rebate will not harm tourism and it is a fiscally responsible move. How do you comment on that?

The Deputy Speaker: Order. How does he comment on that.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: How does he comment?

The Deputy Speaker: Now he can comment.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Mr. Speaker, that is like one of these softball homerun questions because he has received a letter from the Canadian Hotel Association which, no doubt, has members in Nova Scotia. It therefore does not surprise me that the Conservative premier of a province would do his best to support his cousins in Ottawa through thick and thin. This is a case where he is defending the indefensible.

The fact remains that for those who take advantage of the GST visitor rebate, and that program, unless the member knows something I do not know is a program that is also available to visitors to Europe who have the value added tax, that the people in my riding, the tourist lodge owners, the people who run conventions in Toronto, Halifax, Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg or elsewhere, it is to their advantage to promote their convention city or their lodge to visitors, either American, European or from elsewhere.

I think the government was fooled into thinking that because the uptake might not have been as much as was expected because if someone buys something for \$5 to take out of the country, they do not bother on a \$5—

An hon. member: There was \$78 million.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: That is right, \$78 million was refunded so some activity certainly took place but how much of that \$78 million was the rooms for conventions, lodge owners, hotels, et cetera?

The member really is inviting the question about the government's ability to analyze data for its value because the real truth is that these conventions, hotels and lodge owners need that ability for their visitors to have a rebate.

• (1645)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard a contradiction when the member spoke about the GST. He said that people could not apply for it and take it out of the country. After that he talked about how measly the amount is and how poorer people will not benefit from the GST decrease. I find that remark contradictory.

He talked about families not being advantaged by this decrease in GST. I take issue with that because I know a lot of poorer people who were quite pleased that we lowered the GST. I am thinking more of children. My nieces and nephews, who are 7, 8, 9 and 10 years old, know it is nice when there is not much tax on items they buy.

The reason a lot of people go to Alberta to shop is that they like no tax, but some people will shop even if there is a decrease in a tax.

I find it contradictory that he first says that the decrease is hardly anything unless a person is really rich and now he says that it is so important to give the rebate. I think he cited 3%. We are giving 2¢ off of each dollar in the upcoming GST policy. I want to know what he thinks about that.

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Mr. Speaker, with great respect, I think the member has mixed things up.

First, let me deal with the GST visitors' rebate. I think the government plans to save \$78 million but for those sectors, such as convention centres, tourist lodges and hotels, the \$78 million, which helps them attract customers, were extremely important. It is like taking \$10 away from a poor person or \$10 away from a rich person. The \$10 is important to the poor person.

Those sectors I talked about need visitors. Tourism is not at a high peak right now and they have other challenges. We have fuel prices, exchange rates and the security issues in the United States which are preventing people from visiting Canada. We also have the issue of future passports. When I say that program is not large compared to the \$1 billion, that is fairly self-evident, but to those people in that sector it is very important.

Government Orders

Let me talk about young people and the 1% GST. I do not even know if there would be a reduction on a 25¢ piece of candy. Would stores charge 24.2¢ for a piece of candy? I do not think so. Statistics Canada said in its report that the GST cut was essentially absorbed. I do not recall many people, if any, who told me that the GST refund was a really great thing. I think it was invisible.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Prince George is a fine city. I live in Skeena and visit Prince George as often as I can.

The question I have for the member is twofold and the first part concerns the United States. Within the U.S. congressional district there is a separate accounting office which was established to prevent what we have seen the Canadian government do, which is to collect more revenues than it was expecting in order to play with the numbers. I am sure his government, when it was in office, perfected the ability to stretch and extrapolate. At the end of every budget cycle, lo and behold, his government would run out to the truck, throw a bunch of cash in it and drive around the country dumping it as quickly as it could.

Would he support having an arm's length accounting office in this country and, at long last, removing the politics over the numbers and just allow the debate to exist over where the priorities need to be?

I also could not help but hear the finance minister talk about the \$80 a year benefit to university students. Would the member comment on how his party was able to, year in and year out for 11 years in a row, have students leaving university with an average increase of \$1,000 a year in debt. Students in Canada under his government's regime were having an extra \$1,000 of debt tacked on every year. The government is purporting to change that trend but it is in fact just supporting it.

• (1650)

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Mr. Speaker, it was our government that reinstated the position of comptroller general. However, I am not certain if the current government has actually funded such an office or whether it has proceeded. It was the previous Mulroney government, prior to 1993, that had cancelled the position of comptroller general and we reinstated it. I think that addresses the member's concern about having an independent oversight, outside of the Auditor General, on how surpluses and spending can be managed. I think that was a very good move on the part of the previous government.

As to the textbook credit, if the NDP—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry but the time has expired.

[*Translation*]

Resumption of debate. The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to this part of the Conservatives' last budget. As you know, my party, the Bloc Québécois, supported the budget. It did so, not because the members of the Bloc liked the Conservatives—after 10 months, we like them less than we liked them at the time—but because at that time there were some sensible things in the budget. At least that is what we thought.

The fiscal imbalance file in particular is a fundamental file for Quebec, a file for which the Bloc Québécois has worked with all the vigour and rigour for which it has been known for years. We were even the first ones to talk about the concept of fiscal imbalance in the House of Commons several years ago. It was even before the Séguin Commission began its work in Quebec with a mandate from then Premier Bernard Landry to find some solutions to the fiscal imbalance, which leads to the underfunding of basic service programs for citizens by Quebec and the Canadian provinces.

Appended to the budget was a document, a very well prepared one, I might add. It said that the government was making a commitment to fix the fiscal imbalance, that this fall—the fall is advancing and the winter is fast approaching now—the Prime Minister would call a conference with the premiers of Quebec and the provinces to deal with the fiscal imbalance. Dealing with the fiscal imbalance does not mean fixing part of it. It means that Canada would transfer \$12 billion in tax resources to the governments of Quebec and the provinces. It means, for Quebec alone, a transfer of \$3.9 billion, including equalization.

We were stunned when, a few weeks ago, the Prime Minister began to minimize the amounts that were supposed to be transferred to the Government of Quebec and the provinces. He also dropped the idea of holding a first ministers conference, saying that it would take a consensus of the provinces for him to act. Since when, when a government wants to correct something within its jurisdiction, that is, federal tax resources, does it wait for a consensus of the provinces before acting? That is one way to pass the buck.

The fiscal imbalance was the most important issue when the budget was passed. Now, though, we do not know what has happened to the government's promise. We do not know whether the Prime Minister will keep his word. If he does not, he was misleading us. At the time of the last election in Quebec, the Conservative Party accidentally won a few seats because it had made a solemn promise to fix the fiscal imbalance. We are dealing now with some bills to implement parts of the budget. Still there is no mention of the fiscal imbalance. The government seems to be wriggling away and it looks as if it will not keep its promise in the next budget.

That was the grand gesture that prompted the Bloc Québécois to support the government, give it a chance, and speak about a budget of transition until the next one. We believed it at the time in light of the promise the government had made to deal with the fiscal imbalance. We will see what happens. We will still give the government a chance, but we remind it that it is on its final laps and does not have much time to race to the finish and keep its promise. There will not be any second chances, like the one we gave it in the last budget.

The fiscal imbalance is only one of the issues. There are many others about which we have expressed our dissatisfaction day after day for 10 months, including the environment, Quebec's representation at UNESCO, and so forth. The government should not fool around with us too much in this way because when the time comes to make decisions, we will be very rigorous and determined, as we have always been for 13 years. If the government has to be defeated over the next budget, we will do so.

Government Orders

I would like, though, to say a few words about some particular provisions in the budget that were somewhat overshadowed by the fiscal imbalance. There were some things we were very proud about. Let me tell the House why. It was 13 years ago today that we elected the first contingent of Bloc members. At the time, there were 54 of us. We formed the official opposition of Her Loyal Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. From that time until today, the Bloc Québécois has always defended the interests of Quebec and the interests of the people, our fellow citizens.

• (1655)

My Bloc colleagues get up every morning wondering how they can contribute to the advancement of their fellow citizens, work and fight for the common good, and improve the lives of the most disadvantaged in society, and how they can block a government.

This government and the previous one seem to be clones of each other. We keep asking ourselves how to do battle with a government with no compassion, which does not offer any hope in terms of improving the lives of the most disadvantaged in society or ensuring that middle income families can benefit from a favourable tax environment that adds to their well-being.

That is what we in the Bloc Québécois have always done. That is what all my colleagues have been doing in every riding, one election after another.

I am proud to have been associated for the past 13 years with a team as outstanding as that of the Bloc Québécois, one that has been standing up for more than just the interests of Quebec. Whenever the interests of the rest of Canada coincided with those of Quebec, we gladly defended them. Since 1993, we have made friends all over Canada, and particularly among the workers. Why? Because our only motivation is the common good. And when the common good of Quebec meets that of Canada, we do not hesitate to work relentlessly and even to travel across Canada to meet with workers who have lost their jobs or seniors who are being mistreated.

The Liberals mistreated older persons by ignoring their needs, by abolishing, in 1997, the POWA program and by refusing to replace it with another program. The Conservatives are doing the same after promising to implement a program to help workers 55 and older who are victims of mass layoffs. They should receive support until their retirement because a number of them cannot be retrained to work in another sector of the economy either because there is no other company around when the only company in the region has closed and there is nowhere for them to relocate to or because after 30 or 35 years, these workers who thought they had a secure job until their retirement get the short end of the stick and have to liquidate any wealth they have accumulated over the years before they can get their pension. This obviously means loss of dignity, necessary liquidating of assets and possibly going on welfare.

Let us come back to specific measures in the budget. I said I am proud to have been associated with the Bloc Québécois team for the past 13 years. The Bloc team did not just oppose government measures; it proposed alternatives for the common good. I was going over the budget and I thought these issues were discussed a few years ago, issues such as the tax credit for public transportation. My colleague from Jonquière presented this in the Standing Committee on Finance. The Liberals and the Conservatives were skeptical. Only

the NDP joined us in defending the tax credit for public transportation. My colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher introduced a new bill and defended it with a view to having a tax credit for public transportation. We debated these issues and we came up with these measures. When our adversaries ask what the purpose of the Bloc Québécois is, it is because they have nothing to say. They recognize our value, our rigour and our originality. We present things to improve the lot of our fellow citizens. Now they know the purpose of the Bloc Québécois. We are described as originals who have the strength and conviction to defend the measures we strongly believe in.

For years we have been saying that a tax credit for public transportation could contribute in a small way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This could encourage people to take public transportation instead of driving their cars with just one or two occupants. Public transportation causes much less pollution. We have been fighting for this for years.

I was looking at the tax deduction for toolkits. My colleague from Beauport, who is also the Bloc Québécois whip, introduced that measure nine years ago. He recognized the need, especially among young tradespeople, for tax deductions for toolkits, which can cost thousands of dollars.

• (1700)

We were allowing lawyers and other professionals to write off their professional expenses, but we were not letting young plumbers, mechanics, and so on, do so. This measure has now been adopted, but how long did the Bloc Québécois have to fight for it? The idea made its way through the system, and we never gave up. We pushed until the government included such measures in its budget. Perhaps it did so for electoral reasons, but that does not matter because the point is that it is going through.

Since 1996, the Bloc Québécois has fought tooth and nail for microbreweries in Quebec and the rest of Canada—at least, for those that are still around. Government inertia delayed the adoption of such a measure—a measure revisited by the Conservatives—and hundreds of microbreweries across Canada and around Quebec went bankrupt, including in isolated regions where they had developed niche markets. There are still some microbreweries around in Canada and Quebec. Thank goodness such a measure exists because their competitors are being offered even more generous fiscal treatment than what the government has put forward in its budget.

Government Orders

This kind of tax measure would enable the microbreweries in Quebec and the rest of Canada to meet the American and European competition. I do not know if you know, Mr. Speaker, but foreign microbreweries are competing with ours. Their licences are bought by the major Canadian breweries. In this way, thanks to a licence from an American or European microbrewery, the major Canadian brewers can become Canadian and Quebec microbreweries.

This tax measure is an additional way of ensuring that the uniqueness of a product is preserved. In Quebec, the Unibroue microbrewery was one of the victims of the lack of tax measures to facilitate competition with foreign microbrewers. Unibroue made some incredible beer before Sleeman bought it, withdrew and, as an example, reduced the wide array of high quality “strong beer one lees” varieties similar to some imported European beers whose traditional production goes back several centuries.

Unibroue had been successful, without any government assistance, by fighting. I remember the president of Unibroue coming here several times. At the time, he was the president of the microbrewers of Quebec and Canada. We fought alongside him, made a common front, not to gain an unrealistic advantage but so that microbrewers in Quebec and the rest of Canada could have the same advantages as American and European microbrewers.

I can recall—there are always memories—that the major Canadian brewers did something totally disgusting. They went through the back door to push the finance and national revenue departments, saying that this kind of measure should not be brought forward. Meanwhile, they were telling the microbrewers that they agreed with them on the need for such a measure and for a reduction of the tax rate on microbreweries producing less than 75 million litres. At the same time, the major brewers were meeting with public servants and telling them that this measure should not pass and things were fine. It was unbelievable, until the microbrewers decided to take things into their own hands and not rely on the major brewers who were body checking them as hard as they could.

So that, too, was some of the long-term work of the Bloc Québécois. When I hear the hon. member for Beauce, who is responsible for economic development, say, “You will never be in power”, I think it is the height of stupidity.

What then is the purpose of a Parliament? Is it just to have a government and not an opposition? That would be a dictatorship. If those are the democratic feelings of the member for Beauce, he is not in the right place. A good government requires a good parliament, that is a government and an opposition to put it in its place, to enhance legislation, to present ideas from the representatives of the majority of the population. We should not forget that, although they are arrogant, the Conservatives are in the minority. Those of us in the opposition represent the majority of the population of Quebec and of Canada, and that has been the case in the last two Parliaments. We speak on behalf of the citizens. The member for Beauce speaks for himself. In his mind, the power is his and federal money is his money. That is not the case.

• (1705)

Federal money is the money of the people; it belongs to our citizens. We are here to ensure that it is spent as wisely as possible. That money does not belong to the Prime Minister, nor to the

member for Beauce, nor to the Minister of Finance—it belongs to the citizens. We stand up for citizens when they ask us to represent them and to obtain action on public transit and microbreweries, because they create a great deal of employment in the regions. We also stand up for plumbers and mechanics asking for a tax credit. We are their voice.

All the opposition parties represent the majority. The arrogance of the Conservatives will only last a while.

I find that we have been very patient these last 10 months, and we will be patient for a few more. However, we have heard enough about the Bloc Québécois being good for nothing. The Bloc is here to do its job, and its job is to represent the citizens that have voted for us, by a majority, since 1993, election after election, giving us a strong majority in Quebec. If this meant nothing, if we were good for nothing, Quebecers would not have elected us.

My colleague should be more careful about what he says, because this is very serious. He is saying that a large majority of Quebecers—his own fellow citizens—have been wrong every time since 1993, that they are not smart enough to make decisions, decisions involving power. But what power? Does he mean the power of his citizens?

He was not even able to defend the businesses in his riding. He talked about how proud he is to be in government and to have decision-making powers. But to decide for whom? Decide for what? He could not even be bothered to defend the softwood producers or manufacturers of bicycles, clothing and textiles in his riding. And God knows, in Beauce, those are important industries, particularly the carpet industry.

We are saying we support these measures. Of course, we support them. It would be difficult to do the opposite of what we have been doing for years. We are pleased that the other parties have taken up our ideas. We hope they take them up even more. We hope they take up our idea of loan guarantees for the forest industry.

That is what Parliament is for. It is for the fermentation of ideas. It is not intended to have a few people who pretend to be something they're not—I will refrain from using a popular Quebec expression, because it would be unparliamentary—and who speak only for themselves whenever they speak. The purpose of Parliament is to ensure that the best ideas emerge, so that we have the best possible government. A minority government is usually a better government because it has greater opposition, which represents the majority of citizens. That opposition pushes the government, and pushes it as hard as it can, to ensure that the government makes the best possible decisions based on the ideas, convictions and values of the majority represented in this Parliament by the opposition parties.

I would like to talk about business taxation for the next few minutes.

Since 1994, we have consistently been ardent advocates of reducing the tax burden for businesses and individuals. It is not a question of foolishly cutting taxes to pay businesses, rather to ensure that these businesses reinvest, especially in the high-tech sector, particularly in state-of-the-art production equipment, in order to tackle globalization and emerging competitors such as China, Brazil, India and Pakistan.

For roughly nine years now, companies have received tax cuts year after year. Nevertheless, I have always lamented to the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce of Canada—from Quebec City, Toronto, Montreal and everywhere in between—that, despite these nine consecutive tax cuts, companies have not made any structural investments to cope with the competitiveness of the emerging countries.

For years we have coasted on the value of the Canadian dollar to export, and export more, and never looked past the end of our noses.

I hope that, after everything we have seen in the past few years, we will ensure that further tax cuts in the budget will be used by business leaders for taking charge and making investments because the competitiveness—the productivity—of a company is not just about the employees. Make no mistake. It is a matter, above all, of equipment, of constant investment in high technology to compete with the best in the world. And that has not been done.

● (1710)

Businesses have not shouldered their responsibilities.

In my opinion, there needs to be a threefold strategy: require entrepreneurs to invest in new technology and modern equipment; support victims of rationalization—I am talking about older workers and POWA, among other things; and fight unfair competition.

Often the competition from our trading partners is unfair. However, Canada does nothing to fight this unfair competition the way other, European countries are fighting it so feverishly.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently the Auditor General completed her work on the financial report of the Government of Canada for the year ended March 31, 2006 and a surplus of \$13.2 billion was reported. The learned member has spent a lot of time on the finance committee and he would know that because that fiscal period has ended, the moneys automatically must be applied against the debt. Notwithstanding the paydown of that amount of debt, it does result in an ongoing savings on an annual basis of some \$600 million. That represents the true savings to Canadians by paying down debt.

I raise that because the latest report is that there appears to be a surplus of some \$4 billion for the partial current fiscal year reported on now.

The member will know that the existence of a surplus does not necessarily mean the surplus will exist by the end of the fiscal year, and that again, the only amount that could be available for ongoing expenditures by additional programs would be the savings on interest.

I am wondering if the member is asking that the amount of the reported surplus in excess of the surplus reported for the prior year in

Government Orders

the same period should be invested in further program spending. Would that not represent responsible government?

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my Liberal colleague for his question.

For several months we have known that the surplus would be close to \$13 billion. Furthermore the Bloc Québécois, since 1997 or 1998, or since the first federal government surplus, came very close, even a year ahead, to the surplus forecasts year after year. We succeeded in making surplus forecasts with a margin of error of 2% or 3%. It was predictable.

I would like to take up a point that my colleague made earlier. He said that, at the end of the year, the unexpected surplus must be applied against the debt.

The Liberal Minister of Finance predicted the surplus. He knew that there would be a surplus. We were able to do it with the help of a calculator. So with his array of public servants he was able to do the same thing as us.

It is inaccurate to say that at the year-end any unexpected surplus has to be applied automatically against the debt. Within a few months of the fiscal year-end, it is possible to know that there will be a large surplus. It is possible to know, before year-end that this surplus will be of a certain order of magnitude.

There is something I blame the Liberals, the former Minister of Finance and also the former prime minister, for not doing. A few months before the fiscal year-end, we could have created a trust, as has already been done in Quebec—I think it was Ms. Marois who was Minister of Finance at the time—and made a legislative commitment that any unexpected surpluses would be deposited to this trust for allocation to some fundamental missions such as transfers for health, post-secondary education and so on.

Already, before the year-end, we could have planned a use for these funds and put them in a trust. We could have done so. We could have been more balanced than the imbalance presented since 1997-98. The current Minister of Finance presented the whole thing with great pride, the big cheque in the background, saying that \$13 billion was being paid towards the debt when everything was falling apart all over the place. We need only think of softwood lumber, the textile and clothing sector, and older workers. There would have been a way to be a little more balanced than what has been managed so far.

● (1715)

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot on his fiery speech, on a subject he has been championing in the House of Commons since the Bloc Québécois first arrived here.

Government Orders

I have a question for the member. For a number of years now, we have been fighting the fiscal imbalance, which, in Quebec, affects health care, education and services to the most vulnerable members of our society. We have a problem with employment insurance. Workers in Quebec and elsewhere in Canada pay into the employment insurance fund, then the federal government turns around and uses \$50 billion of that fund's surplus while denying employment insurance to people who need it. For several years now, we have been asking for a program to help our older workers. So far, the government has only come up with very timid measures. Quebec adopted progressive measures to comply with the Kyoto protocol, but the federal government decided to cut its contribution by \$238 million.

My question for the member is this: Can he explain why sovereignty is the only way to help Quebec—and perhaps even the rest of Canada—reach its full potential?

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Before I answer, I would just like to say that there are budget measures we can be proud of, because we in the Bloc Québécois have worked for years to get a government to include them in its budget.

I hope that this time we will be successful. The Bloc Québécois, and only the Bloc Québécois, has made 10 attempts. Year after year, we introduced the bill, and year after year, we were beaten by the Liberals, even those from Quebec. The Conservatives did not want anything to do with this measure, but we had the support of the NDP. But I think we are going to win the vote on our anti-scab bill. I hope so, and I pray every night that we will. We have been fighting for this for years. I think that when an initiative comes from the heart, if we do not give up, in the end, we will be rewarded.

My colleague is quite right. Quebec sovereignty would enable us to repatriate all our taxes and all the taxes we pay to this Parliament. The other political parties do not give any consideration to Quebec's real values and real interests or to the Quebec government's game plan for lessening the impact of international competition and resource depletion. All the resources put toward a single nation, the nation of Quebec—it is obvious.

• (1720)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague about the great alliance we have seen between the Conservatives and the Bloc. I would just like to know whether the alliance between the two parties is finally over? Will the marriage continue?

For I do not know how many years, we have seen the Bloc Québécois accomplish absolutely nothing in this country for Quebecers as far as the fiscal imbalance is concerned. There were good negotiations with the current government to correct that. But now is the marriage over or it will continue?

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member NDP member that they too supported the budget. This is somewhat strange, speaking of marriages.

Speaking of failed marriages and odd couples, I remind the hon. member that a little less than a year and a half ago, the NDP joined the corrupt Liberals. In the midst of the sponsorship scandal, they supported the Liberals and they supported their budgets, which

included measures that were never fully implemented after the Conservatives won the last election.

The bill that they supported—I believe it was Bill C-48—was incredibly vague. The Liberal government did not even have to fulfill its promise. The NDP supported the corrupt government of the former Prime Minister on measures that did not include any commitment. They made a big deal about it during the last election campaign. And now, how many of them are here? Talk about credibility.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would just pick up on the last point the hon. member made. I would bring to his attention that every time the government stands up and brags about money it is putting into anything that is socially progressive, that is money that came from Bill C-48, the NDP budget.

What I want to know is why the Bloc did not take the opportunity to see if we could make further amendments that would advance the very issues the member says are the key priorities for the Bloc, rather than just playing this game that as long as they are okay, they will not worry about everything else.

If we work together, we have more votes than they do. Why did the Bloc not take the opportunity to do what the NDP did, and that is amend a bad budget and bring in good things that benefit the people of Quebec and Canada?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is asking me why. I will tell him that it is because we do not sell our services to the highest bidder. That is why.

When that budget was adopted, we were in the midst of the biggest scandal ever seen in federalism, the sponsorship scandal. We had just learned more about the fact that all federalist parties in this House, namely the Liberals, the Conservatives and the New Democrats, had participated in the plot to steal the 1995 referendum. They closed their eyes on cost overruns and they denied democracy by trampling on all the rules that Quebec had set, so that in the end the Yes and No sides were neck and neck.

Everyone got on the buses—New Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives—to come to Montreal and participate in the love-in. They all participated in that denial of democracy. That is why we would not have made a pact with the devil. If the New Democrats want to do it, fine, but we have stronger convictions, more heart and we know better.

[*English*]

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, may I ask for unanimous consent to split my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Does the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina have the unanimous consent of the House to split her time?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, the success of a nation is judged by how we treat our children. The success of a budget is really dependent on whether we invest in children.

The hon. members opposite talked about scandals. Let me tell them that it is scandalous when we have a country as rich as Canada and we have 1.2 million children living in poverty at a time when we have a surplus of almost \$20 billion. We have children living in Canada who are going to bed hungry. That is a true scandal.

It is scandalous that we have parties here that are willing to support the budget. I understand why the Conservative government would support its own budget, but I do not understand why any other party in the House would support this kind of scandalous behaviour in a budget that treats our children in such a way.

It is a deliberate choice when we have a surplus but we do not invest in child care. It is a deliberate choice when we do not invest in affordable housing. It is a deliberate choice when we do not put more money into the child tax benefit so families will get more money and parents will not have to worry about having to pay the rent or feed their kids.

Today is child care appreciation day. The people who take care of our children earn very low incomes. They spend all day making sure that our kids are raised in a way that is healthy and productive. While we appreciate them, these workers are underpaid because we do not invest in child care.

This is a time when the government actually subsidizes the oil and gas industry to the tune of \$1.5 billion. How could the government make such a choice? It is scandalous. Those dollars, whether it is \$1.5 billion or the \$20 billion surplus, really should be used to train young people so they can learn a skill, so that they will have employment, so that they could retrofit homes. By retrofitting homes and making them green, Canadians would save on their energy bills. By making them green, Canadians would have renovated houses and we would actually get less greenhouse gas pollution.

Because we have money, we can also increase the guaranteed income supplement so that the poorest seniors can live in dignity. The guaranteed income supplement, which supplements pensions and old age security, had not been increased for at least 12 years until last year, when there was a very small increase.

Unfortunately, a lot of seniors are isolated in their homes. They do not have the money to buy a transit pass to visit their friends or go to the library. I know that some of them do not even have enough money to pay the electricity bill because it is so expensive. These seniors live in our midst when Canada is awash with money, yet we subsidize and have more corporate tax cuts.

A few minutes ago I stood outside Parliament Hill, joining many refugees who are suffering in this country. Many poor and cold young children and their families were outside. These refugees have escaped persecution and seek refuge here. Many of these women have faced persecution and, in many cases, domestic violence.

They are all refugees. They have a heavy burden. They are poor. They have no resources. They are seeking the opportunity for a better life in Canada, yet they face the ultimate indignity. They are punished and penalized with refugee fees. That is a terrible burden. I

believe the Liberals introduced these fees with the excuse that they were trying to balance the budget. It was a lame excuse for a terrible burden which amounts to a modern-day head tax.

● (1725)

Now the Conservatives are blindly continuing that with these fees. These fees are causing great suffering. They are causing despair because some families just cannot afford to pay them. The fees are driving some of the families underground. They are driving them to hunger. They are keeping people from making a contribution and building better lives. Really, these fees are a head tax, a tax on the most vulnerable and on those who cannot afford to pay them.

The government has a pattern of giving the most to those who need the least. It also has a habit of giving the least to those who need the most. We have seen it as—

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 5:30 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 19, 2006, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion.

Call in the members.

● (1800)

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

(*Division No. 48*)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	D'Amours
Davies	DeBellefeuille

Routine Proceedings

Demers	Deschamps	Gourde	Grewal
Dewar	Dhaliwal	Guergis	Harper
Dhalla	Dosanjh	Harris	Hawn
Duceppe	Easter	Hearn	Hiebert
Faille	Folco	Hill	Hinton
Gagnon	Gaudet	Jaffer	Jean
Gauthier	Godfrey	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Godin	Goodale	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Graham	Guarnieri	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Guay	Guimond	Lauzon	Lemieux
Holland	Hubbard	Lukiwski	Lunn
Ignatieff	Jennings	Lunney	MacKenzie
Julian	Kadis	Manning	Mark
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis	Mayes	Menzies
Keeper	Khan	Merrifield	Miller
Kotto	Laforest	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Laframboise	Lapierre	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Lavallée	Layton	Nicholson	Norlock
LeBlanc	Lee	O'Connor	Obhrai
Lemay	Lessard	Oda	Paradis
Lévesque	Loubier	Petit	Poilievre
Lussier	MacAulay	Preston	Rajotte
Malhi	Malo	Reid	Richardson
Maloney	Marleau	Ritz	Scheer
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Schellenberger	Shipley
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Skelton	Smith
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse	Solberg	Sorenson
Mathysen	McDonough	Stanton	Storseth
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Strahl	Sweet
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)	Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Merasty	Toews	Trost
Minna	Mourani	Turner	Tweed
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau	Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Nash	Neville	Vellacott	Verner
Ouellet	Owen	Warawa	Warkentin
Paquette	Patry	Watson	Williams
Perron	Peterson	Yelich— 113	
Picard	Plamondon		
Priddy	Proulx		
Ratansi	Redman		
Regan	Robillard		
Rodriguez	Rota		
Roy	Russell		
Savage	Savoie		
Scarpaleggia	Scott		
Sgro	Siksay		
Silva	Simard		
Simms	St-Cyr		
St-Hilaire	St. Amand		
St. Denis	Stoffer		
Stronach	Szabo		
Telegdi	Temelkovski		
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)			
Thibault (West Nova)			
Tonks	Valley		
Vincent	Volpe		
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis		
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed— 160		

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Albrecht
Allen	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Devolin	Doyle
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear

PAIRED

Members

Freeman	Lalonde
MacKay (Central Nova)	Prentice— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion to concur in the 17th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, standing in the name of the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the amendment presently before the House, with Conservative members present voting in favour.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will be voting against the amendment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, members of the Bloc Québécois will be voting against this motion.

Routine Proceedings

● (1805)

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote against this motion.

[English]

Mr. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, I will cast my vote in favour of the amendment.

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 49)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Albrecht
Allen	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Devolin	Doyle
Dykstra	Emerson
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Harper
Harris	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKenzie
Manning	Mark
Mayes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Paradis
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shiplay
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Turner	Tweed
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Williams
Yelich — 113	

NAYS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	D'Amours
Davies	DeBellefeuille
Demers	Deschamps
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Duceppe	Easter
Faille	Folco
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond
Holland	Hubbard
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keeper	Khan
Kotto	Laforest
Laframboise	Lapierre
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McDonough	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McTeague
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merasty	Minna
Mourani	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Nash
Neville	Ouellet
Owen	Paquette
Patry	Perron
Peterson	Picard
Plamondon	Priddy
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard	Simms
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stoffer	Stronach
Szabo	Telegdi
Temelkovski	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Valley	Tonks
Volpe	Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis	Wappel
	Wrzesnewszky

Private Members' Business

Zed— 159

PAIRED

Members

Freeman
MacKay (Central Nova)

Lalonde
Prentice— 4

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it, you would find consent to pass the motion presently before the House unanimously.

Also, I would note that perhaps the vote on the last motion and this one should be amended because the member for LaSalle—Émard has left the chamber.

The Speaker: Since there is no vote on this one, if it is agreed that this pass unanimously, we will not need to bother having a list of names.

Is it agreed that the motion carry unanimously?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: The hon. chief government whip is suggesting we alter the record of the last vote by deleting the name of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard from the list. Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: No.

The Speaker: It might be prudent, if he was not here, that he be removed from the list. The voting totals will be changed, but the result is unaltered.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-257, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-257 under private members' business.

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 50)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Angus
Atamanenko
Bagnell
Barbot
Bélangier
Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett
Bigras
Blaikie
Bonin
Boshcoff
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Byrne
Cardin
Chamberlain
Charlton
Christopherson
Comartin
Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
D'Amours
Davies
Demers
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Dosanjh
Dykstra
Faille
Gagnon
Gaudet
Godfrey
Goodale
Graham
Guarnieri
Guimond
Hubbard
Jennings
Kadis
Karygiannis
Khan
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lemieux
Lévesque
Lussier
Malhi
Maloney
Mark
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Mayes
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Merasty
Mourani
Nadeau
Neville
Ouellet
Paquette
Perron
Picard
Priddy
Ratansi
Robillard
Rota
Russell
Savoie
Scott
Silva
St-Cyr
St. Amand
Stanton
Stronach

André
Asselin
Bachand
Bains
Beaumier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bellavance
Bevington
Black
Blais
Bonsant
Bouchard
Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrier
Chan
Chow
Coderre
Cotler
Crowder
Cummins
Davidson
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Dewar
Dhalla
Duceppe
Easter
Folco
Galipeau
Gauthier
Godin
Goodyear
Grewal
Guay
Harris
Ignatieff
Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Keeper
Kotto
Laforest
Lapierre
Layton
Lemay
Lessard
Loubier
MacAulay
Malo
Manning
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
McDonough
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nash
Norlock
Owen
Patry
Petit
Plamondon
Proulx
Regan
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Siksay
Simms
St-Hilaire
St. Denis
Stoffer
Telegdi

Private Members' Business

Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Valley
Vincent
Wappel
Watson
Zed— 167

Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Van Kesteren
Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskij

● (1820)
[English]

RURAL MAIL DELIVERY

The House resumed from October 23 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 170 under the name of the hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham under private member's business.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I know this is a bit unusual with a private member's motion, but with the indulgence of the hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham, I think that with his consent and the unanimous consent of the members present this evening, if you were to seek it, you would find that there is unanimous consent for Motion No. 170.

The Speaker: I assume the hon. chief government whip seeks unanimous consent to carry the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Joe Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I was late for the previous vote and I would like to have my vote cast as the government House leader stated, in favour of this motion.

The Speaker: Since it passed unanimously, I am not sure there will be a list of names. I am glad the hon. member has pointed out his presence to the House.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I was in the House and the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North was not here for the first two votes and I agree with him.

* * *

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

The House resumed from October 24 consideration of the motion that Bill C-300, An Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (direct sale of grain), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-300 under private members' business.

The question is on the motion.

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 51)

YEAS

Members

Abbott
Allen
Anders
Baird
Benoit

Albrecht
Ambrose
Anderson
Batters
Bernier

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Allen
Anders
Baird
Benoit
Bezan
Boucher
Brown (Barrie)
Calkins
Carrie
Casson
Clement
Day
Emerson
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Goldring
Guergis
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Jaffier
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lake
Lee
Lunn
MacKenzie
McTeague
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Paradis
Preston
Redman
Richardson
Scheer
Shiplay
Skelton
Solberg
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Turner
Van Loan
Verner
Warkentin
Yelich— 101

Albrecht
Ambrose
Anderson
Batters
Bernier
Blackburn
Breitkreuz
Bruinooge
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casey
Chong
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Doyle
Epp
Finley
Flaherty
Gallant
Gourde
Harper
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lauzon
Lukiwski
Lunney
McGuinty
Menzies
Miller
O'Connor
Oda
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Ritz
Schellenberger
Simard
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Trost
Tweed
Vellacott
Warawa
Williams

PAIRED

Members

Freeman
MacKay (Central Nova)

Lalonde
Prentice— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Private Members' Business

Bezan
 Boucher
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Bruinooge
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Carrie
 Casson
 Clement
 Davidson
 Devolin
 Dykstra
 Epp
 Finley
 Flaherty
 Galipeau
 Goldring
 Gourde
 Guergis
 Harris
 Hearn
 Hill
 Jaffer
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 Manning
 Menzies
 Miller
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Norlock
 Obhrai
 Paradis
 Poilievre
 Rajotte
 Richardson
 Scheer
 Shipley
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Tilson
 Trost
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Yelich — 111

Blackburn
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Barrie)
 Calkins
 Cannon (Pontiac)
 Casey
 Chong
 Cummins
 Day
 Doyle
 Emerson
 Fast
 Fitzpatrick
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hinton
 Jean
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lemieux
 Lunn
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 Merrifield
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Oda
 Petit
 Preston
 Reid
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Skelton
 Solberg
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Thompson (Wild Rose)
 Toews
 Tweed
 Van Loan
 Verner
 Warkentin
 Williams

Godfrey
 Goodale
 Guarnieri
 Guimond
 Hubbard
 Jennings
 Kadis
 Karygiannis
 Kotto
 Laframboise
 Lavallée
 LeBlanc
 Lessard
 Lussier
 Malo
 Mark
 Marston
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 McDonough
 McTeague
 Ménéard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Mourani
 Nadeau
 Neville
 Owen
 Patry
 Picard
 Priddy
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Rodriguez
 Roy
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Sgro
 Silva
 Simms
 St. Amand
 Stoffer
 Szabo
 Temelkovski
 Basques)
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Turner
 Vincent
 Wappel
 Zed- — 149

Godin
 Graham
 Guay
 Holland
 Ignatieff
 Julian
 Karetak-Lindell
 Keeper
 Laforest
 Lapierre
 Layton
 Lee
 Loubier
 Malhi
 Maloney
 Marleau
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 McGuinity
 Ménéard (Hochelaga)
 Minna
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Nash
 Ouellet
 Paquette
 Perron
 Plamondon
 Proulx
 Redman
 Robillard
 Rota
 Russell
 Savoie
 Scott
 Sikesay
 Simard
 St-Hilaire
 St. Denis
 Stronach
 Telegdi
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
 Tonks
 Valley
 Volpe
 Wasylcyia-Leis

PAIRED

Members

Freeman
 MacKay (Central Nova)

Lalonde
 Prentice- — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

● (1835)

It being 6:33 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Competition Act (personal information obtained by fraud), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. Once again I would ask all hon. members to carry on any conversations they may need to have outside the chamber so that we can continue with private members' business.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Mississauga South.

NAYS

Members

Alghabra
 Angus
 Atamanenko
 Bagnell
 Barbot
 Beaumier
 Bell (Vancouver Island North)
 Bellavance
 Bigras
 Blaikie
 Bonin
 Boshcoff
 Brown (Oakville)
 Byrne
 Carrier
 Chan
 Chow
 Coderre
 Comuzzi
 Crête
 Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
 D'Amours
 DeBellefeuille
 Deschamps
 Dhaliwal
 Dosanjh
 Faille
 Gagnon

André
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bains
 Barnes
 Bélanger
 Bell (North Vancouver)
 Bevington
 Black
 Blais
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Brunelle
 Cardin
 Chamberlain
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Crowder
 Cullen (Etobicoke North)
 Davies
 Demers
 Dewar
 Dhalla
 Easter
 Folco
 Gaudet

Private Members' Business

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a recent poll conducted by PhoneBusters of Canada has revealed that approximately 9,000 people have fallen prey to identity theft in the last 10 months. Almost 77% of them were concerned about it, but only a meagre 10% of us are aware of what we have to do to protect ourselves from identity theft.

The financial damages caused by this crime amount to \$7.2 million.

Another shocking personal fact is that nearly 45% of Canadian adults do not monitor their credit card bills. This is part of the problem.

I looked at some of the statistics generally available and found that persons under 18 years of age represented only about 2% of the persons who fall victim to this crime of identity theft. Those from ages 18 to 29 were at about 25%, those 30 to 39 were at about 28%, those 40 to 49 were at about 20%, those 50 to 59 were at 12%, and those over 60 years of age were at a little less than 10%.

So it appears that working people between the ages of 18 and 50 account for about 75% of identity theft. These are the people who have assets and cash that it may be able to detect.

The reason I raise this is that Bill C-299, which is before us today, seeks to address the whole issue of identity theft. It is an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Competition Act.

We have had some excellent speeches from the members who spoke during the first hour, including the mover, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, as well as the member for Hochelaga, and also the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, I believe.

I think that what was concluded by the speakers was that there is a general agreement that in principle this is a matter which has to be addressed from the standpoint that it is a function of the improvement in the technological tools available. It is a function of criminals becoming more sophisticated in what they are doing. It is a function of the need of Canada to continue to ensure that it keeps pace with the changing approaches that those who would perpetrate identity theft have evolved to.

I am not going to talk too much to the specificity of the bill, other than to suggest that hon. members already have raised some concerns about details within the bill, but we are at second reading, which asks hon. members to consider approving the bill in principle, this being that we should examine and identify ways in which we can mitigate the impact and consequences of identity theft.

I doubt very much that there are too many members in this place who are going to argue with the basic premise or the fundamental principle of this bill. Therefore, I will be supporting it at second reading to go to committee and I will be recommending that to my caucus colleagues.

Having said that, I note that committee is the best place to address some of the points that have been raised by hon. members in debate with regard to potential deficiencies or areas in which the approach may be augmented. I believe in having the experts come before committee to provide more detailed analysis and consideration of

perhaps the deficiencies within Criminal Code amendments, or ways in which there may be enhancements, and also to deal with section 403 of the Criminal Code. On section 403, there seems to be some disagreement between the Bloc and the Liberal member who spoke.

Notwithstanding that, I believe these matters are reparable in committee or at report stage. I much suspect that they will be.

I thought it would be useful simply to use the rest of my time to advise Canadians on how they can protect themselves from identity theft.

● (1840)

There are government and general websites that include a substantial amount of information about consumer protection. Let me highlight a few suggestions.

The most important thing obviously is to prevent access to our personal information. It is recommended that people not release their social security or account numbers in response to email, phone or in person requests. Instead of using Internet links, type the full address. Keep all sensitive documents, cheque books and credit cards securely locked away at home and at work. Carry only those credit cards that one needs to have on one's person or in one's wallet.

All private documents should be shredded before discarding them. Retrieve paper mail promptly from the mailbox and place outgoing cheques or other sensitive documents in the postal box directly and do not keep them on one's person for any great period of time.

Signing up for automatic payroll deposits is another preventive approach. Replace paper bills, statements and cheques with on-line paperless versions. Keep passwords hidden even in one's own home and change them frequently. Use regularly updated firewall and anti-virus protection software on computers. The public should know that computer access is one of the growing areas in which identity theft is occurring.

Do not respond to suspicious emails. Delete them, and if there is any doubt, contact the company from which they were sent. Do not discard a computer without completely destroying the data on the hard drive. Even in the case of a severely damaged computer where the hard drive does not work, very important information still can be recouped from the hardware components.

Another aspect of taking regular general prevention measures is to detect unauthorized activity. That includes reviewing bank, credit card and bill statements weekly through on-line access accounts. Contact the financial provider if statements are not received in a timely manner. Often what happens is people will take mail out of someone's mailbox.

We should review our credit information regularly. Free annual credit check reports are available through the web. Use email based alerts to monitor transfers, payments, low balances, withdrawals, or to detect other irregular activity in an account. Visit banks, credit card and other bill statement websites frequently to monitor regular account activity.

Private Members' Business

After doing the prevention and following some good habits, if something should happen, it is absolutely vital that the conflict be resolved. Some members have already indicated that in some cases resolving a loss related to identity theft and sorting out all the problems with regard to the accounts can take weeks, months and maybe even years. It may be quite expensive and very disruptive.

This invasion of personal matters is very disruptive. With regard to resolving matters which come up, obviously we want to minimize losses and protect the credit record. Having one's credit record jaundiced is a problem.

The financial provider should be asked about zero liability guarantees. Victims of theft should notify the financial providers and begin monitoring the accounts more frequently in the event that there may be subsequent attempts. Federal and local enforcement authorities should be alerted if one suspects identity fraud.

These are just some examples of things that we can do. This is all because the member thought it important enough to bring to the House a bill that in principle says we need to be more vigilant to reduce the incidence of identity theft. It is a good bill in principle. In my view, any matters on which concerns have been raised would appear to be reparable at committee and report stage.

I congratulate the hon. member for bringing this bill forward.

● (1845)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Competition Act (personal information obtained by fraud).

I will try to summarize the content of Bill C-299 for the people who are watching. I will also try to explain the Bloc's position on this bill, which is at second reading. After the vote, we will decide whether or not the bill will go to committee.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the definition of "personal information". The Personal Information Protection Act says:

"Personal information" means information about an identifiable individual, but does not include the name, title or business address or telephone number of an employee of an organization.

The bill will create three new criminal offences: obtaining personal information from a third party by a false pretence or by fraud, counselling a person to obtain personal information from a third party by a false pretence or by fraud, and selling or otherwise disclosing personal information obtained from a third party by a false pretence or by fraud.

Consequently, the bill really adds one new offence to the Criminal Code: obtaining personal information on a third party. In our view, at first blush, the Criminal Code already includes these types of offences. Once again, the Conservatives are trying to control the work of the judiciary, the work of judges, so that they have no leeway.

I will read section 403 of the Criminal Code, because it gives a good idea of the existing offences with regard to personal information. Section 403 of the Criminal Code says this:

Every one who fraudulently personates any person, living or dead,...is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years or an offence punishable on summary conviction.

Section 403 of the Criminal Code already provides that it is an offence to impersonate someone else. We feel it is pointless to add "personal information on a third party" because it is already included in the Criminal Code.

Section 403 says this:

Every one who fraudulently personates any person, living or dead: (a) with intent to gain advantage for himself or another person, (b) with intent to obtain any property or an interest in any property, or (c) with intent to cause disadvantage to the person whom he personates or another person ... is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years.

To add "with intent to obtain any record containing personal information about a third party" serves no purpose, in our opinion. Once again, this shows the Conservative tendency to try to restrict judges and lead them in a certain direction, although this is not the authority our society has given itself in the Criminal Code. The values defended by Quebeckers, and the values defended by the Bloc Québécois on behalf of Quebeckers, are very important to us. We support a society founded on a justice system that is balanced between the harm caused and the sentence that the courts may impose on a person who commits a crime.

We must always strive for balance. This is why our judicial system is based on an independent judiciary. For some time, we have been repeating in this House that we are anxious to see the day when patronage appointments no longer exist in the judiciary, and when we have independent committees to select our judges to ensure they are the most competent individuals for the role. I am not saying that the current judiciary is incompetent. What I am saying is that judges are often appointed on a partisan political basis. The press often criticizes this state of affairs, thus informing the general population.

Lastly, we hope to pass on to today's youth the values that we learned from our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. This is the society that Quebeckers want, an equitable society based on a fair balance between the crime committed and the sentence imposed.

● (1850)

That is why we put our trust in the judiciary. Every time members introduce bills such as Bill C-299, the Conservative Party seeks to provide a framework for the work of the judiciary, that is, they try to package the work of the justices so that, in the end, all they have to do is read the text and apply the sentence. Quebeckers do not want this kind of society or these values. That is why the Bloc Québécois always challenges these bills.

In our opinion, the changes that Bill C-299 seeks to bring about are already found in the Criminal Code under section 403 and other sections that the bill would amend. Why try to add just a little bit more? This question comes up all the time. Our citizens are entitled to question the values of the Conservatives, these values that are often borrowed from the Republicans in the United States. That is why, although they only came into power nine months ago, the Conservatives already seem to be an old government. They clearly have a tendency, particularly as a minority government, of trying to pass on their values as quickly as possible.

When justice issues and amendments to the Criminal Code are at the fore, as in Bill C-299, we have an unfortunate tendency to try to control the judiciary's work and restrict judges' decision-making freedom. Obviously, this could be counter-productive and not in the best interest of the citizens we represent. We, the Bloc Québécois, are trying to maintain a balance here.

This is why, since 1993, a majority of Quebeckers have given Bloc Québécois members their vote of confidence: because the men and women of the Bloc Québécois know how to listen to what their constituents want. They did not make anything up. We trust the society our parents and grandparents left us. This is the very society we are fighting for today—a society seeking greater justice and equality. We hope it will be less controlling. It is this desire for control that leads to legislation like Bill C-299.

Since being elected, the Conservative government has been attempting to direct the decisions taken by the judiciary and judges. The fact is that no two crimes are committed under the same circumstances. That is why we as a society chose to have a judiciary system. Juries are sometimes brought into play. This is all pretty complex. An entire system is called upon in an effort to determine the appropriate sentence for the crime committed.

Of course, this unfortunate tendency to make penalties harsher or to take responsibilities away from the judges is reminiscent of the right-wing Republican tendency in that regard, and it is increasingly obvious from the actions of this Conservative government. Those are not values that Quebeckers defend or values that they want members of the Bloc Québécois to defend.

One might understand that, under the circumstances, we are not to eager to see Bill C-299 passed, especially since it concerns personal information about a third party. This could be interpreted quite broadly. We must bear in mind that there are certain realities in our society. I often think of our businesspeople trying to establish a client list who sometimes ask for information. We would not want matters of everyday life in our society to be misinterpreted. If the purpose of this bill is to prohibit the obtaining of any personal information, efforts should be made to strike a balance between the reality and business opportunities today.

Essentially, we have laws and amendment to the Criminal Code. There is no point adding in the Criminal Code that obtaining personal information about a third party constitutes a criminal offence. As I said, section 403 is already very clear:

403. Every one who fraudulently personates any person, living or dead,
- (a) with intent to gain advantage for himself or another person,
 - (b) with intent to obtain any property or an interest in any property, or

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(c) with intent to cause disadvantage to the person whom he impersonates or another person,

is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years or an offence punishable on summary conviction.

We believe obtaining personal information on a third party by fraud is already an offence that carries a maximum jail sentence of ten years, under section 403. Therefore, we see no reason to change that. However, the bill will probably be sent to committee and we will be open to debate the matter, and perhaps even to make amendments, in order to protect good citizens from bad ones.

• (1855)

Quebeckers were right again to put their trust in the men and women of the Bloc Québécois, because they will yet again protect their interests and make sure that the penalties imposed by the Conservative government strike a fair balance, given the offence committed.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-299, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Competition Act (personal information obtained by fraud). I will use my time today to discuss the proposed amendments to the Competition Act and the implications of the proposed bill for the privacy protections established by the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA.

Before dealing with the specifics of these amendments, I would like to briefly comment on the overall intent of the bill. As I understand it, Bill C-299 seeks to protect Canadians' personal information from pretexting, that is, the collection of their personal information through fraud and impersonation. This is a very real concern for Canadians. I fully understand the hon. member's desire to combat the collection of personal information through fraudulent means. The Government of Canada has taken a keen interest in this issue given Industry Canada's responsibilities for PIPEDA and its overall goal of building a safer, more secure Internet.

New information technologies have revolutionized the way business is conducted and helped to make Canadian companies among the most efficient and competitive in the world. However, the electronic collection, storage and transmission of personal information, at the same time, carries the risk that personal information may be misappropriated and used without the consent of the individual to whom this information pertains.

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What is particularly problematic here is that the full extent of the threat is unknown. Victims often do not know that their personal information has been stolen. When they do find out it can be months or even years. Victims can register their complaints with a variety of different organizations, such as credit bureaus, banks, credit card companies, federal and provincial privacy commissioners and, yes, law enforcement agencies. However, while it appears that this problem is pervasive, many victims do not report the crime at all. These victims silently suffer financial losses, a loss of reputation, emotional distress and the often difficult task of rebuilding their credit rating.

Those victims who do come forward report that their misappropriated personal information has been used in a variety of ways, including to open up a new credit card account, commit insurance or payment fraud, obtain government benefits, open up a new phone or utility account, or take out a loan in their name.

Clearly, we can all agree that this is a very serious problem, and the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc is seeking to tackle this. However, what is the best way to deal with it? With this bill, the hon. member has proposed a number of avenues through which to do so. It is in this light that I wish to make my comments with respect to the amendments to the Competition Act.

The Competition Bureau is an independent law enforcement agency responsible for the administration and enforcement of the Competition Act, the Consumer Packaging and Labelling Act, Textile Labelling Act and the Precious Metals Market Act.

The Competition Act is an extremely important piece of framework legislation touching on virtually all sectors of the Canadian economy. It promotes and maintains competition so that Canadians can benefit from competitive prices, product choice and quality services. Headed by the Commissioner of Competition, the organization investigates anti-competitive practices and promotes compliance with the laws under its responsibility.

The bill seeks to amend a number of sections of the Competition Act to include provisions dealing with fraud, false pretenses and fraudulent impersonation.

As I mentioned earlier, the Competition Bureau promotes and maintains competition so that Canadians can benefit from competitive prices, product choice and quality services. More specifically, the bureau's mandate, as it relates to misleading representations, is to ensure that consumers are able to make informed decisions based on the most accurate information possible.

Under the Competition Act, misleading advertising is dealt with in two ways: through criminal provisions in section 52 of the Competition Act, and through non-criminal provisions in section 74.01 of the Competition Act.

Bill C-299 seeks to amend section 52. Currently, section 52 of the Competition Act contains a general prohibition to deal with the most severe cases of misleading advertising. It prohibits all materially false or misleading representations made knowingly or recklessly in the promotion of a product or business interest. Misleading advertising occurs when a representation is made to the public that is false or materially misleading and such a representation could influence a consumer to buy the product or the service advertised.

● (1900)

Additionally, Bill C-299 seeks to amend section 74.01 of the Competition Act. Currently, section 74.01 deals with deceptive marketing practices which are dealt with through administrative rather than criminal remedies. Under this section, a person engages in "reviewable conduct" where that person, for the purpose of promoting, directly or indirectly, any product or business interest, makes a representation to the public that is false or misleading in a material respect.

"Reviewable conduct" includes representations to the public as to the efficacy or length of life of a product that is not based on adequate or proper testing. It also includes representations to the public in the form of a warranty, guarantee or promise that is materially misleading.

Finally, Bill C-299 proposes an amendment to section 36 of the Competition Act, which deals with the recovery of damages in criminal cases and where there is a failure to comply with an order of the Competition Tribunal.

As I indicated earlier, the Competition Act is a key piece of framework legislation. If this bill is in fact referred to committee, I would urge a detailed examination of the proposed amendments to the Competition Act.

Let me now turn to my comments on Bill C-299's relationship to the personal information Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act, PIPEDA, and the privacy protections that it establishes. There are varying consequences to deceitfully or fraudulently obtaining personal information. Individuals may be exposed to the risk of identity theft or their address may be obtained by a stalker or abusive ex-spouse. Alternatively, they may find their information populating a data broker's database or they may merely be subjected to unwanted marketing.

I would note that PIPEDA already addresses certain situations that Bill C-299 proposes to capture in relation to pretexting. For example, PIPEDA requires that organizations obtain individuals' knowledge and consent prior to the collection, use or disclosure of their personal information in the course of commercial activity.

Under the act, consent must be obtained anew for any use or disclosure for a purpose that differs from the purpose for which it was originally collected. On this basis, the act already requires that personal information be collected by fair and lawful means and that consent not be obtained through deception.

A very important aspect of PIPEDA makes organizations accountable for the information that is in their custody, including information that has been transferred to third parties for processing. Accountability is maintained whether these third parties are located in Canada or abroad. In this respect, there may be situations where PIPEDA provides a sufficient and adequate legislative response to the deceptive collection of personal information.

The member for Edmonton—Leduc has indicated that with this bill he aims to provide a remedy for individuals who have been subjected to the invasive practice of pretexting. I agree that effective recourse is essential to dealing with privacy violations.

Such a mechanism exists under PIPEDA, where privacy related conflicts are resolved through mediation and dispute resolution mechanisms with the assistance of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. Unresolved matters may be taken to Federal Court, which has the power to order organizations to modify their practices and award damages to the aggrieved.

In light of the wide range of activities related to identity theft and the urgency of addressing the many facets of this issue, I would hope that linkages between this bill and other related government initiatives be considered.

For example, during the first hour of debate of this bill, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada noted that justice officials had been consulting with key stakeholders on improving the Criminal Code of Canada to deal with identity theft, adding that the department was committed to ensuring that Canada's criminal laws contain comprehensive and effective tools to combat identity theft.

The parliamentary secretary noted that he looked forward to working with his colleague, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, on protecting Canadians' personal information from misappropriation. Similarly, I would suggest that the upcoming review of PIPEDA will provide an opportunity for members of Parliament to assess whether the act's oversight and redress regime provides sufficient recourse for victims of privacy invasions such as pretexting.

I expect that a collaborative approach could be quite effective in addressing these issues that are of great concern, including phishing, spyware and related Internet threats, all of which can facilitate identity theft in the online environment.

I take this opportunity to echo the parliamentary secretary's suggestion and express my support for collaboration to ensure the development of a coherent and comprehensive solution to address issues related to the deceitful or fraudulent acquisition of identity information and to identity theft.

• (1905)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise and speak today in support of my colleague, the member for Edmonton—Leduc, in whose name this legislation is presented.

As a hard-working member of the industry committee, the hon. member is in touch with the concerns of the marketplace and various business practices. I share his apprehension when it comes to the importance of protecting personal information about individuals. I also recognize the fact that this is a challenge of the information age and a relatively new problem.

Defining this issue may mean that more than one attempt may be necessary in order to address the predicament which Bill C-299 is seeking to address.

The issue of personal information, how it is obtained and its various uses, was not an issue that the residents of Renfrew—

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Nipissing—Pembroke indicated to me was of urging and pressing necessity. However, during the last election, when one of my opponents reverted to an all too depressingly familiar style of negative campaigning that has come to characterize the old Liberal Party, the issue arose in a nuanced context to this private member's bill now before Parliament.

As is the practice of many members of Parliament, I communicate with the constituents of my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke in a variety of different means. One way is by sending birthday greetings. In the case of birthday greetings, individuals will send me details on behalf of a friend or a loved one through various methods. Usually it is a child who sends in details of a parent who has reached a milestone of life and wishes a congratulatory message from his or her MP to help celebrate the occasion.

Only the Liberal Party could see something sinister in sending a birthday greeting or Christmas cards to individuals. Nevertheless, this was the issue that the Liberal Party deemed to be most important in my riding, and it proceeded to attack on that basis.

I am pleased to confirm, by my presence in the chamber today, that not only did this tactic backfire, but constituents tell me this caused my opponent to finish more poorly than did his predecessor. The electors, in their wisdom, gave me the honour of being re-elected for the third straight election with the highest percentage of the popular vote for a Conservative in the province of Ontario. The smart voters of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke are never wrong.

I relate this story to illustrate the difference between what Bill C-299 seeks to accomplish, which is to amend the Criminal Code to act as a deterrent to the fraudulent obtaining of personal information for abuse, and the generic use of information within the public domain, which is not the intent of this legislation to criminalize.

As a Conservative, I am proud to say that my party and I stand for less government, lower taxes, and a desire to interfere in the daily lives of Canadians in as few ways as possible. The one issue that separates the political labels of the left, which Canadians understand to mean Big Brother or more government, and the right, which Canadians understand to mean less government and more individual freedom, is the issue of personal information.

There are few topics I feel more strongly about than the privacy of individuals and the need to keep big government in check. However, the fact of the matter is that Canadians do live in the information age and in the electronic age a balance must be struck between the gathering of information and the use of that information.

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Since I was re-elected I have been working on behalf of the people of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke to bring high speed broadband, the information highway, to all the residents in my riding, particularly the residents in the rural parts of my riding who are without high speed Internet service.

New jobs and businesses are opening fast in the field of technology. We need to be able to provide companies that wish to locate in our rural communities with a skilled workforce and access to high speed communications. People cannot develop the skills needed to work in these new jobs if the tools to learn are not provided for them. Businesses will not locate in the rural communities without access to high speed communications. Without broadband technology, businesses in rural Renfrew County will not be able to fully compete on a local or global basis.

• (1910)

The future economic well-being of our residents depends on the smooth flow of knowledge. The difficulty is once the information highway is built, some things that travel on the information highway are not wanted. Spam fits that definition.

The May 2004 Anti-spam Action Plan for Canada defines spam as “unsolicited commercial email”. By this definition, the firm MessageLabs estimated that spam accounted for as much as 80% of global email traffic at the end of 2004, up from about 10% in 2000.

Spam is more than a growing nuisance. It is a public policy issue that challenges governments, internal service providers, ISPs, other network operators, commercial emailers and consumers to work together in new ways, with each stakeholder group fully playing its part to solve the problem that threatens the interests of all. Spam annoys and offends Internet users. It also provides a vehicle for activities that are clearly illegal, or should be.

While Bill C-299 would not curb all spam, it should curb: malicious actions that cause harm to computers, networks or data, or use personal property for unauthorized purposes, for example, viruses, worms, Trojan horses, denial of service attacks, zombie networks; deceptive and fraudulent business practices, including online versions of traditional mail-based frauds, for example, the Nigerian bank account, or 419 scam, and spoofed websites masquerading as legitimate businesses; phishing emails designed for identity theft or to steal money; and invasions of privacy, for example, email address harvesting, spyware.

Because of all the above threats, spam undermines consumer confidence in e-commerce and electronic transactions between citizens and their governments. In addition, it imposes significant costs throughout the economy. These costs fall on a wide range of stakeholders, including: ISPs and other network operators, large enterprise users, universities, government departments, which must invest in the technical, financial and human resources needed to deploy anti-spam technologies at the expense of investments in new or improved services and which must allocate resources to respond to customer complaints; legitimate commercial emailers and other users of email services whose messages get filtered out by an anti-spam technology before they reach their intended recipients; and private and public sector organizations which employees waste time dealing with spam sent to their business email address.

Ultimately, all these costs fall directly, or indirectly, on consumers and Internet end-users who must cover the costs of fighting spam not only by purchasing Internet security software, but also by forgoing other kinds of service improvements and paying higher prices for the online products.

In closing, I once again congratulate the member for Edmonton—Leduc for bringing forth this legislation to deal with a serious and growing problem. I look forward to working with the member as we seek to find a solution to this problem.

• (1915)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate.

There being no member rising, the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc has five minutes for reply.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the speakers, both those from today and in June. I think it has been a very good debate.

I want to thank: the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke; the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry; the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel; the member for Mississauga South, who had some very good points on identity theft in general; the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, who has been very helpful throughout this entire process; the member for Windsor—Tecumseh, from the NDP; the member for Hochelaga; and the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, who I think had some excellent suggestions in terms of improving this piece of legislation.

I want to touch on just a few points. First, I know that the two members of the Bloc Québécois have expressed some concern about this legislation. They argue that section 403 adequately addresses the issue of identity theft that I am trying to address in my bill. I would respectfully say that section 403 does not adequately address the issue of identity theft, particularly as it relates to new technologies like the Internet. This is a problem that needs to be addressed.

Second, I want to say very clearly that this bill is not in any way about micromanaging any actions of judges. I am not quite sure where the members were getting that in the legislation, but it is certainly not in the legislation. That is not the intent of this legislation at all.

Very plainly, the purpose of this bill is to protect individual citizens against identity theft. It does not deal with the whole problem of it, but it certainly deals with part of it. Identity theft is a problem that needs to be dealt with.

The purpose of this bill is to protect individuals against the collection of their personal information through fraud or through impersonation. The practice, which is known as pretexting, is a growing problem here in Canada and it needs to be dealt with.

Bill C-299 seeks to do three specific things.

First, it would make the practice of pretexting illegal through changes to the Criminal Code and the Competition Act.

Second, it seeks to provide a remedy for victims of this kind of invasion of privacy through legal recourse in the courts and compensation. It is very much about empowering individual citizens to respond to this invasion of privacy.

Third, the bill seeks to tackle the cross-border aspect of pretexting by holding Canadian affiliates of foreign countries liable for invasions of privacy committed against Canadians, one of which was committed against our own Privacy Commissioner, Jennifer Stoddart. I met with her on this legislation. I cannot speak for her, but I think, judging from her reaction, that she would very much like this bill to go to committee and move forward.

I want to also point out that a number of companies, associations and others that deal in the information technology area support this legislation. I am speaking of companies like Alcatel, Bell Canada, Alliance Bell, Telus, Rogers, the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association, and ITAC, the Information Technology Association of Canada. All of these companies have pointed out that identity theft is a growing problem here in Canada. They would like to see it dealt with. Even the Chamber of Commerce, which has pointed out some of its issues with specifics of the bill, supports the bill going to committee. The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association also has supported this bill.

I have sought to present a bill which deals with a problem that needs to be dealt with here in Canada. I appreciate the comments by all members. It has been a very good debate. I would ask all members to support in principle this bill at second reading and send it to committee, where I would be very open to engaging in a debate and to entertain any amendments that would improve the substance of the bill.

I would like to thank all members of this House for their participation. I look forward to the vote next week.

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● (1920)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those in favour of the motion will please say ye.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 1, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Hon. Diane Finley: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if you seek it, you would find unanimous consent to see the clock as 7:37 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It being 7:21 p.m. the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:21 p.m.)

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