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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, March 3, 2008**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 3, 2008

The House met at 11 a.m.

women risked their lives with self-induced abortion or turned to charlatans.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

### UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT

The House resumed from December 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-484, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (injuring or causing the death of an unborn child while committing an offence), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Repentigny had the floor and there are eight minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks.

**Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that my remarks were misrepresented after I spoke to this bill in the House in December. That is why I would like to set the record straight today. I think this is in order because my bishop and the apostolic nunciature in Ottawa have received a number of e-mails. I want to clarify and qualify a few things.

First, I am against abortion. I regard human life as sacred and abortion as always being a tragedy in our society. We must do everything in our power, while showing respect for those involved, to limit the number of abortions and promote life.

Second, I sincerely believe that human life starts at conception, and even before. From the moment that a couple decides to have a child, the process has already begun. I have never said that I agreed with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada whereby a child becomes a human being when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother, and that until then, it is not distinct from its mother. I simply quoted the definition given by the Supreme Court of Canada. I understand it, even though I disagree with it.

Third, the high number of abortions is distressing. We must identify the causes to be able to find solutions: lack of sexual knowledge, poverty, violence, emotional deprivation and lack of values, just to name a few.

Fourth, the recriminalization of abortion will not solve the problems I mentioned, since before abortion was legalized, many

Fifth, by educating, teaching values, fighting poverty, ensuring respect and dignity for people, achieving equality between the sexes, fighting for justice and supporting pregnant women, we can hopefully decrease the number of abortions or even eliminate them entirely. A doctor told me the following: "With all the resources we have available to us now, there should be no more abortions. But we need to promote these resources, which a number of religious institutions refuse to do to this day."

Sixth, I also said in my speech that the president of the Quebec office of the Campaign Life Coalition is a fundamentalist and an extremist who judges and condemns everyone who does not share his narrow views on life, and he does so in the name of God. That is not my God or anything like the God of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. I have been on radio shows with this man, Mr. Gagnon, and he has not once shown any compassion for people who are marginalized and excluded. But I think that is what the Christ of the Gospels would do.

Seventh, it is interesting to note that not one of the letters in which people insulted, threatened and condemned me was sent to me personally; they were all sent to my bishop or to the apostolic nunciature. The least people could have done would have been to send the letters to me too, since they do concern me. Moreover, the letters were written in English only. Can it be that people misunderstood what I said because my comments were made in French with simultaneous interpretation in the House of Commons? Why did no francophones write to criticize what I reportedly said? I get the feeling that comments made by two people, John-Henry Weston in LifeSiteNews.com and Mr. Jalzevac, incited this taking up of arms. This is the second time a reporter working for that website has attempted to discredit me.

After I appeared on a Télé-France broadcast with Luck Mervil and Imam Jaziri in Quebec, I received emails that misrepresented the statements I had made during the meal.

*Private Members' Business*

Eighth, in my pastoral experience as a Catholic priest, I learned that I could change things only by welcoming others, by being non-judgmental and open to people, through tolerance, dialogue, communication, compassion, forgiveness and unconditional love, and by living my faith. One cannot change things with rules, laws, punishment, warnings, exclusions and condemnation. I do not believe that this bill offers any solutions to the problem it sets out to solve. That is why I think we should vote against this bill.

I would like to end with the words of St. Vincent de Paul, friend to the poor and unfortunate, who said that it is better to free 20 guilty people than to condemn a single innocent one.

• (1105)

[English]

**Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-484 proposes changes to the Criminal Code that will have no real positive effect, but rather will potentially jeopardize a woman's right to choose.

This proposed private member's bill would have two charges laid against a person who kills a pregnant woman. This would in effect give legal rights to a fetus and change the definition of when a fetus becomes a person under the law. Currently a fetus is not considered a person until actual live birth.

While I will not argue that murdering a pregnant woman is particularly abhorrent, this bill will in the end do more harm than good for women's rights in Canada.

This House has heard from some who may contend that this bill has nothing to do with abortion and is just about ensuring that someone who murders a pregnant woman will pay doubly for his or her crime. However, this bill is the thin edge of the wedge as it will change the definition of when a fetus becomes a person.

This change will have an effect on the legal status of abortions in Canada. Canadians, Parliament, the courts and the Senate all made a determination on this issue and have supported a woman's right to choose. This is not something that needs to be opened to debate again.

Canadian women fought long and hard for the right to safe, legal abortions in Canada. Women have been forced to put their private lives under scrutiny in the courts in the fight for the right to choose. If we take away that right, women in desperate situations will have to take desperate measures, like a young woman who in 1989 bled to death after attempting to perform an abortion on herself. This tragedy was the result of fear and despair and happened while the federal government debated making non-emergency abortions illegal.

I am profoundly concerned that Bill C-484 is nothing but a thinly veiled attempt to make abortions illegal in Canada. I am extremely disappointed that the member would use tragic murders of young women to push an anti-abortion agenda.

Bill C-484 calls into question a judge's ability to take mitigating circumstances into account. Courts already take aggravating circumstances into account when deciding on sentences for crimes and would most certainly consider injury to or the death of an unborn child to be a serious aggravating circumstance.

Furthermore, two separate offences would not necessarily mean more jail time. In Canada, unlike the United States, multiple sentences are often served concurrently. I bring up our neighbour to the south for a reason. As many of my colleagues well know, this type of bill has been passed in several U.S. states. This bill does have some impact there because jail sentences are often served consecutively, thus actually increasing time served. I would also like to note that it is also the same country where there is an active attempt to ban access to abortions for American women at the state and federal levels. The supporters of this type of bill are the very same people actively working to ban abortions.

The evidence is clear. To date, courts across Canada have blocked provincial attempts to substantially regulate the issue of abortion, finding that the pith and substance of such attempts is actually an attempt to recriminalize abortion through the back door.

Bill C-484 essentially represents an indirect recognition of an unborn child as a person with legal status. Such an initiative could have significant ramifications in a number of different areas of law and opens a Pandora's box in the abortion debate.

I believe it is essential to this debate to discuss an area of concern that the Conservative government has failed to address, and that is, of course, violence against women. Homicide is a leading killer of pregnant women and it is well known that violence against women increases during pregnancy.

What the government needs to address is better measures to protect women in general and pregnant women in particular from domestic violence. A fetal homicide law would completely sidestep the issue of domestic abuse and do nothing to protect pregnant women from violence before it happens. It would also do nothing to protect women who are abused shortly after giving birth.

Before we start talking about laws to protect fetuses, the government has an obligation to make sure that women's rights are protected first by addressing the systemic problem of domestic violence. If a woman is safe, her unborn child is safe.

• (1110)

In Canada, women have guaranteed rights and equality under our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Persons do not gain legal status and rights in our society until after a live birth, as per the Criminal Code. Also, the Supreme Court has ruled that a woman and her fetus are considered physically one person under the law, as in *Dobson v. Dobson*.

If we give legal rights to a fetus we must automatically remove some rights from women, because it is impossible for two beings occupying the same body to enjoy full rights. If we try to balance rights, it means the rights of one or both parties must be compromised, resulting in a loss of rights. Legally speaking, it would be very difficult to justify compromising women's established rights in favour of the theoretical rights of the fetus.

It is also of concern that Bill C-484 essentially contradicts the election promises of the Conservative Party. During the last election, its platform stated, "A Conservative government will not initiate or support any legislation to regulate abortion".

Bill C-484 does just that. It initiates legislation that will effectively regulate abortion in Canada by changing the definition of the legal status of a fetus. It opens the door to making abortion illegal in Canada.

If the government is truly concerned about women and their children, it will abandon its recent budget and reverse its unacceptable policies, policies that have removed equality from the mandate of the women's program, cancelled the court challenges program, closed 12 regional offices of Status of Women Canada, and ended research, lobbying and advocacy on behalf of women in a dismal budget document that failed to reintroduce a national housing strategy or affordable decent housing.

Let us imagine what such a housing policy would do for these women fleeing violence, including those carrying unborn children. The government could also introduce a national child care program and needed changes to maternity and parental leave. It could have provided adequate funding for legal aid, restored the court challenges program, helped women with disabilities, implemented proactive pay equity and invested in programs that would address violence against women.

It could do all these things, but that would require a real commitment to women, children and families. Instead, the Conservatives have chosen to promote Bill C-484.

A woman's right to choose was hard fought for. It would be detrimental to Canadian women and an international embarrassment to remove that right. The Conservatives are not standing up for Canadian women by tabling such bills. It is indeed time that the government remembered its election pledge.

I hope all thoughtful members of this House will respect a woman's right to choose and respect the fact that women need safety, not this kind of indirect attack.

• (1115)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to support my colleague from Edmonton—Sherwood Park and his private member's bill, Bill C-484.

First, why do we need this legislation? Many Canadians are shocked to learn that when an attacker kills a pregnant woman's unborn child, no charge can be laid in that child's death, even when the attacker purposely intended to kill the child. This is because our criminal law does not recognize children as victims of crime until they are born alive. This gap in federal law gives rise to grave injustices.

In November 2005, Olivia Talbot of Edmonton who was 27 weeks pregnant was shot three times in the abdomen and twice in the head by a long time friend. No charge could be laid in the death of baby Lane.

### *Private Members' Business*

Another pregnant Edmonton woman was slain by her husband in the summer of 2005. Again, no charges could be laid in her baby's death.

In March 2007, a man from Surrey, B.C., was charged with second degree murder in the death of his wife who was four months pregnant at the time.

Recently, a woman from Toronto was seven months pregnant when she was repeatedly stabbed in the abdomen.

In all of these cases, there has been no recognition of a crime against these women's unborn children. Clearly, there are two victims in these types of crimes and this is recognized by the public. The grieving families of the victims have made impassioned pleas to their members of Parliament and the government to enact legislation to recognize unborn children as separate crime victims when they are harmed or killed during criminal attacks against their mothers.

This bill is totally focused on protecting the choice of a pregnant woman to carry her baby to term and to give her child life. The bill uses terminology that describes the injury or death of the unborn child during the commission of a crime against the mother.

The unborn victims of crime act would not change the definition of "human being" in the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code defines homicide as follows in subsection 222(1):

A person commits homicide when, directly or indirectly, by any means, he causes the death of a human being.

Therefore, in today's criminal law, legal protection is afforded the child only once it has been born alive.

The unborn victims of crime act would amend the Criminal Code, so that legal protection will not only be given to human beings as defined by the Criminal Code but also to unborn children who are harmed or killed during the commission of an offence against the mother.

The amendment would not change the definition of human being. It would offer protection to the unborn child in a very particular circumstance despite the definition of human being.

Why do we need to recognize the unborn child as a separate victim? Our criminal justice system already takes into account aggravating factors, so why can the pregnancy not be treated as an aggravating factor?

First, aggravating factors are taken into account only for sentencing purposes, not when determining what offence was committed in the first place. The issue here is not just about how severe the sentence should be. It is about creating an offence specifically for the harm done to the preborn child in recognition of the fact that the child is also a victim of a crime when it is harmed or killed during an attack on the mother.

Even though treating pregnancy as an aggravating factor would serve to acknowledge that pregnancy makes a woman more vulnerable, it would send the message that it is only the physical condition of pregnancy that is relevant and that prenatal human life has no intrinsic value.

*Private Members' Business*

Any pregnant woman who survives a violent attack but loses her preborn child, a child she wants and loves, will grieve for that child and no one can say she grieves for that child any less simply because that child had not yet been born. Failure to recognize these children as crime victims amounts to telling women that they lost nothing of value when their children were killed.

• (1120)

In existing criminal law, if the pregnant woman survives the attack but the child dies there is no murder charge. The offender is charged only with assault on the woman, but under the unborn victims of crime act the offender would be charged not only with the assault on the woman but also with the offence in the death of the child.

Second, if a mother and her already born child were attacked and intentionally killed, or if a person opened fire in a public place and killed multiple people, the offender would be charged with multiple counts of murder, not just one, regardless of our concurrent sentencing system. The point is that our criminal law recognizes each of these victims and recognition is not dependent on whether or not more jail time would be served.

In this respect, unborn victims legislation is no different about how our existing criminal law handles multiple victims. Some people have claimed that this type of law would be used to target pregnant women, citing U.S. examples of women with drug abuse problems being prosecuted under unborn victims of violence laws in the U.S. as evidence to support this claim.

Bill C-484 could never be used to prosecute pregnant women because it applies only during the commission of an offence against the woman. For greater certainty, the bill states that it does not apply in respect of any act or omission by the mother of the child.

I believe the intent of Bill C-484 is to protect the unborn child from third parties during the commission of an offence against the woman. Canada is unique in the democratic world for having virtually no legal protection for children before they are born. This legislation seeks to address this injustice by creating an offence for injuring or causing the death of an unborn child during the commission of an offence against the child's mother.

An Environics poll released in October 2007 found that 72% of all Canadians and 75% of women would support legislation making it a separate crime to injure or kill a fetus during an attack on the mother. Unborn victims of crime legislation protects a woman's choice to bring her child to term safely and it protects the life of that child. It is an area of common ground between those who call themselves pro choice and those who call themselves pro life.

Unborn victims of crime legislation is about protecting children whose mothers have chosen life for their children. The Supreme Court of Canada has said that any legal protection for unborn children must be decided by Parliament, not the courts. The legislation is an attempt by Parliament to do something the Supreme Court has said is up to Parliament to do.

According to the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System, women abused during pregnancy were four times as likely as other abused women to report having experienced very serious violence, including being beaten up, choked, threatened with a gun, knife or sexually

assaulted. It is very disturbing that when a woman is at her most vulnerable she is at increased risk of attack.

The bill would act as a strong deterrent to perpetrating violence against pregnant women. Researchers have found that the most common area of the body struck during pregnancy was the abdomen. This suggests that those who attack pregnant women are purposely targeting the baby.

We give more legal protection to animals than we do to the preborn human child. We have cruelty to animal laws, humane slaughter laws et cetera. What message are we sending to the woman when we refuse to recognize that the child growing inside of her is worthy of protection under the law? What message are we promoting about the value of human life?

Bill C-484 is supported by 72% of Canadians. Protecting preborn children in law is constitutional. The bill does not apply to actions by the mother. This new offence applies only if the woman's attacker knew or ought to have known she was pregnant.

I would urge all members in the House to support Bill C-484.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel it is my duty to rise in the House here today to speak to this bill. I would like to begin by quoting a majority decision handed down by the Supreme Court in 1999 in a historic case, which found that a pregnant woman and her fetus are physically one indivisible person. In *Dobson v. Dobson*, the majority judges eloquently stated:

Pregnancy represents not only the hope of future generations but also the continuation of the species. It is difficult to imagine a human condition that is more important to society. From the dawn of history, the pregnant woman has represented fertility and hope. Biology decrees that it is only women who can bear children. Usually, a pregnant woman does all that is possible to protect the health and well-being of her foetus. On occasion, she may sacrifice her own health and well-being for the benefit of the foetus she carries. Yet it should not be forgotten that the pregnant woman—in addition to being the carrier of the foetus within her—is also an individual whose bodily integrity, privacy and autonomy rights must be protected... The biological reality is that a pregnant woman and her foetus are bonded in a union.

During the first hour of debate on this bill back in November 2007, this House heard stories about the terrible violence suffered by pregnant women who compromised—and often ended—the incredibly complex and mysterious bond that forms during pregnancy. I would like to offer my deepest sympathy to the victims of such violence against women, which is somehow even more heinous when directed at a pregnant woman or young mother.

• (1125)

[*English*]

I have taken a great deal of interest in this bill since it was introduced and have studied it closely. In my view, it fails to adequately address what is a very real issue and what should be the central issue, that of violence against pregnant women and new mothers. It fails on two fronts, which I will now explain.

*Private Members' Business*

The first is in its painstaking and yet completely unnecessary focus on the fetus. In spite of the protestations of the bill's sponsor and some of the Conservative speakers who I have heard today that this was not his intent, the bill would effectively revolutionize how the Criminal Code defines life.

Currently under section 238 of the Criminal Code, paragraph (1) reads:

Every one who causes the death, in the act of birth, of any child that has not become a human being, in such a manner that, if the child were a human being, he would be guilty of murder, is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment....

As for how the code defines a human being, we must look to section 223 of the Criminal Code, which reads:

(1) A child becomes a human being within the meaning of this Act when it has completely proceeded, in a living state, from the body of its mother, whether or not (a) it has breathed; (b) it has an independent circulation; or (c) the navel string is severed.

(2) A person commits homicide when he causes injury to a child before or during its birth as a result of which the child dies after becoming a human being.

Bill C-484 completely rewrites section 238(1) of the Criminal Code, creating new offences for attacks against the mother that kill or injure the fetus. Furthermore, it has a specific clause, clause (5), which reads:

It is not a defence to a charge under this section that the child is not a human being.

By eliminating this defence, it effectively negates the section 223 definition of what is a human being. I can only imagine the legal confusion this would create around existing jurisprudence on human life and the relationship between a mother and her fetus.

As I mentioned at the outset, the Supreme Court has already ruled that the fetus and mother are one and the same. Any attempt to separate the two through a redefinition of a human being in the Criminal Code would only cloud the issue of a woman's rights over her own person. I cannot say whether this confusion and clouding of a woman's rights over her own body is the intended consequence of this bill or not but it is, nevertheless, alarming.

This brings me to my second criticism of Bill C-484. In introducing this bill to parliamentarians, the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park sent out a letter on November 28 to all parliamentarians of all parties in which he argued emphatically that:

This bill is all about protecting the choice of a woman and protecting the unborn child that she has chosen to give birth to.

Members will notice that there is no mention whatsoever about protecting the women, only about protecting her choice. Additionally, Bill C-484 implies that the protection of the woman and of the fetus are of equal but separate importance.

I have heard from various groups that this bill is about women's rights. If, indeed, Bill C-484 is about women's rights, why the blatant reference to the need to protect the choice of a woman, rather than protecting pregnant women, pure and simple?

Violence against pregnant women and new mothers is a very real and growing concern. In the United States, homicide is the leading cause of death for pregnant women and new mothers. According to a study, which was released in 2000, one in six women are abused during their pregnancy.

●(1130)

In 2004, Health Canada reported that women who were abused during pregnancy were four times as likely as other abused women to report having experienced very serious violence, including being beaten up, choked, threatened with a gun or knife or sexually assaulted.

Further, this same Health Canada study reported that of the women who were abused during pregnancy approximately 18% reported they had suffered a miscarriage or other internal injuries as a result of the abuse.

Those figures are shocking, but what is of great concern is that Bill C-484, which purports to protect the rights of women, ignores the 82% of abused pregnant women who do not have their pregnancy ended prematurely by abuse. To me, this is a glaring oversight.

The question is whether it is an intended oversight or simply an unintended consequence. All abuse against pregnant women is unacceptable. We should be concerned about the health and well-being of the mother.

While attacks on pregnant women in Canada are considered by judges during sentencing, by parole boards during parole hearings and are even included in the Criminal Code hate crime law, its gender clause would cover attacks against women because they are pregnant. There are also examples where new offences for attacking a pregnant or new mother can be created.

Thirteen U.S. states have enacted legislation which either makes assaulting a pregnant woman an aggravating factor during sentencing or have created specific new offences for attacking or abusing pregnant women. This, I believe, would be the most effective means of addressing this very serious issue.

In ignoring this more effective model for addressing violence against women, I can only conclude that the sponsor of this bill and his colleagues in the Conservative Party are hoping to divide Canadian women on the emotional issue of violence against pregnant women. By couching his proposal in the language of choice, the rights of the unborn and recognizing the grief for a lost child, the member is once again playing the classic Conservative game of playing on emotions and playing to its socially conservative base while trying to make this issue appear to be one that all women should support by playing on the grief and heinous nature of the crimes involved.

●(1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the presence in the gallery of my son Xavier.

I rise today—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant should know that only the Speaker may make such an acknowledgement and only at the appropriate time, that is 3 p.m.

*Private Members' Business*

**Mrs. Carole Freeman:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in the debate at second reading of Bill C-484, which makes it a criminal offence to injure or cause the death of a child, before or during its birth, while committing an offence against the mother. The bill presented by the member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park has the merit of being simple. However, it has serious repercussions for women in our society.

As a woman, mother and lawyer, I am disturbed, when I read this bill, by the underlying reactionary aspect of what at first seems to be a good intention. In fact, the logic of Bill C-484 suggests that an individual who causes the death of a fetus by attacking the mother may be prosecuted for the death of the fetus. Hidden behind what would seem to be a praiseworthy intention is a restriction on the right to abortion.

At first, this statement may seem surprising. However, my thoughts on the matter hinge on the fact that Bill C-484 attempts to limit abortion under the pretext of safety concerns which, typical of the Conservatives, emphasize repression rather than prevention. Therefore, the purpose of Bill C-484 is not what we might be led to believe by the preamble.

There are three points I wish to make. First, subsection 223(1) of the Criminal Code clearly states that a child becomes a human being when it has completely proceeded from the body of its mother. This is very clear. Moreover, in 1989, the Supreme Court ruled in *Tremblay v. Daigle* that Canadian common law and Quebec civil law do not recognize the rights of the fetus unless it is born alive.

However, Bill C-484 rejects this definition and gives the fetus rights. It gives the fetus a totally separate personality under the law. In other words, Bill C-484 opens the door to an automatic quasi-right to life. In my opinion, this would create a direct conflict with the woman's rights, her personal dignity, her physical integrity and her independence.

The bill sets a precedent by recognizing the right to life of the fetus, which would lead to a restriction on the right to abortion or even pave the way for abolishing this right.

I have two children, and I am very proud of them. I have nothing but admiration for these joys life has given me. Like many parents, I find it regrettable that some women choose abortion. It is not something anyone wishes for. But women must be able to make that choice, for any number of reasons. Women fought long and hard to win the right to abortion. I could tell stories about that fight. With this bill, the Conservatives are trying, in a roundabout way, to undermine that right.

However, the courts have repeatedly had to rule on the rights of the fetus and the possibility of restraining the conduct of the mother in order to protect the child's right to be born. In every case, the Supreme Court has refused to invade the privacy of pregnant women and limit their right to freedom and independence.

In the famous case of *Tremblay v. Daigle*, which I mentioned earlier, a father sought an injunction to prevent the mother from having an abortion, claiming that the fetus had a right to life under the Quebec Charter. The Supreme Court once again ruled that only human beings have constitutional rights and that these rights start at the time of live birth. The Court also rejected the father's claim that

he had rights over the fetus as a father. The Court determined that the father could not obtain an injunction to prevent the pregnant mother from exercising her constitutional right to choose to have an abortion.

This could not be clearer. Bill C-484 is at odds with this decision. It runs counter to the general consensus in today's society.

• (1140)

Furthermore, the Leader of the Conservative Party promised in the last election campaign that he would not reopen the debate on abortion. However, the measure proposed in Bill C-484 has just completely contradicted that promise.

Second, Bill C-484 can result in some rather absurd situations. For example, granting these rights to the fetus will have to be done against everyone else, including the mother, whose habits and behaviour can just as easily compromise the development of the unborn child. Should we control all pregnant women and their lifestyle? I will leave the worst scenarios to your imagination, but the fact remains that controlling the mother is precisely what the Supreme Court has previously rejected.

As I was saying, the nature of Bill C-484 is appalling considering how living conditions for women have improved and the context of the times we are living in. The sponsor of Bill C-484 cannot be neutral either, since the hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park is a self-described pro-life advocate. In 1997, he even said that if he were elected, he would work to exclude abortion from the services covered under the Canada Health Act. In 2003, he supported Motion M-83, a motion by the Canadian Alliance that attacked women's freedom of choice. The legacy of everything women have fought for is at stake here.

If he wants to protect life, my colleague should understand that far too often women's lives are endangered when they are forced to resort to underground abortions performed by people without training. To criminalize or restrict abortion is in fact to knowingly put in danger the lives of women who, for one reason or another, do not want to bring their pregnancy to term.

Third, I want to point out that there are solutions that better respond to the needs of pregnant women, or those who no longer wish to be pregnant. Those solutions would more easily achieve the hidden goal of this reactionary bill and still respect the freedom of choice of women.

I indicated earlier that abortion is a rights-based choice, but we have to recognize that it is a painful solution. It should be considered only as a last resort, after careful consideration. As a parent, I recommend to young women education, understanding and support as the best ways to help those who are pregnant and struggling with financial or marital problems. Compassion must also be shown to women in dealing with a pregnancy caused by rape, or any unwanted pregnancy. Through simple actions such as these, we could reduce the number of abortions in our society in a natural way.

*Private Members' Business*

Unfortunately, Bill C-484 does not provide for that. There is no compassion in it; only an expression of suffering and rancour, both of which would be dealt with using a purely punitive approach. It would invariably fail to achieve its hidden goal of curtailing abortion instead of protecting the fetus.

To conclude, for all these reasons, I must oppose Bill C-484, whose approach would slowly take us back sometime before 1969, to a time when it was illegal to perform abortions in Canada.

Again, the Conservatives would really like to take us back 40 years. It is the same thing with the death penalty. They supported it by defeating on January 31 Motion M-411 designed to reiterate our formal opposition to such an inhumane punishment. To my way of thinking, they are contradicting themselves because they want, on the one hand, to defend life and, on the other hand, to take it away.

Frankly, we can do better than that for pregnant women through enhanced social services, support from others and guidance with a human focus. Bill C-484 distracts from that necessity by making it illegal. Unless it proposed a solution respectful of the rights of women, this bill deserves at best a mention in the House of Commons records of deliberations. While the Conservative Party wants to take us back 40 years, Quebec chooses to be modern and to respect freedom.

• (1145)

[English]

**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 rise today to speak to private member's Bill C-484, which proposes to amend the Criminal Code to make it an offence to injure, cause the death of, or attempt to cause the death of a child before or during birth while committing, or attempting to commit an offence against the mother.

I do not think that anyone in the House could oppose the intent of this legislation. The assault of a pregnant woman and a direct or indirect assault against the child she is carrying is deserving of a very significant and strong penalty.

The bill is technically complex and therefore, in my opinion, should be carefully reviewed if it is referred to committee for study.

Bill C-484 proposes a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years for the offence of directly or indirectly causing the death of a child while committing or attempting to commit an offence against the mother, who the person knows or ought to know is pregnant. I am not a lawyer, but I hope that the term "ought to know" satisfies the constitutionally required mental elements for criminal offences intent.

I am concerned that if two charges are laid as proposed in the bill, one charge for assaulting the pregnant woman and one charge for injuring or killing the child she is carrying, it may not necessarily result in a lengthier sentence for the accused, as most sentences in this country are served concurrently. I therefore believe we need to address this deficiency not just within the bill before us today, but in general.

I know that the justice minister has had a full agenda over the last year, and I strongly applaud him for his initiatives, for example, with

the tackling violent crime bill, but I do hope that in time he will address the issue of concurrent sentences by allowing for consecutive sentences for limited offences. In my opinion, it is not right that an offender who may seriously assault multiple victims serves the sentences for each of those offences concurrently.

I would also urge our government to continue the ongoing commitment and efforts to address spousal violence and violence against women.

According to a 2006 Statistics Canada report, women in this country are still more likely than men to be the victims of the most severe forms of spousal assault, as well as spousal homicide, sexual assault and criminal harassment. The report states that only 8% of sexual assault victims report the assaults to police.

The key findings of the report with respect to spousal violence are: women are more than twice as likely as men to be physically injured by their partners; women are four times more likely than men to be choked; women are six times more likely to receive medical attention; women are five times more likely to be hospitalized as a result of the violence; women are twice as likely than men to report ongoing assaults, and by that I mean 10 assaults or more; women are more than three times as likely as men to indicate that they feared for their lives from a violent spouse; and, the rate of spousal homicide against females has been three to five times higher than the rate for males.

This government's tackling violent crime priority aims to ensure that everyone, particularly the most vulnerable members of our society, can feel safe and secure in their communities and their homes. This government has introduced and passed a number of bills, including Bill C-9 in the first session of this Parliament, which ended conditional sentences for serious personal injury offences such as aggravated sexual assault.

This government has also introduced a number of non-legislative measures, including the announcement of a \$52 million boost to programs, services and funding for victims of crime over the next four years to help federal, provincial and territorial governments respond to a variety of emerging issues facing victims of crime across the country. The appointment of Steve Sullivan on April 23, 2007 as the first federal ombudsman for victims of crime is a part of that package.

Since February 2006 the federal-provincial-territorial working group on missing women has been examining the issue of missing women and, in particular, cases involving serial killers who target persons living a high risk lifestyle, including but not limited to those working in the sex trade.

Justice Canada, through the family violence initiative, actively addresses family violence, which has a serious impact on women through ongoing activities that focus on criminal policy development and support research, programming, public legal education and evaluation.

*Private Members' Business*

Although Justice Canada does not have the mandate to provide sustained funding for direct service delivery, including shelters, it does contribute to programs, public legal education materials and consultations that are designed to protect aboriginal women and children from family violence.

This government is firmly committed to protecting women and other vulnerable persons from all types of violence and to holding perpetrators accountable for their acts.

The intent of the bill before us today aims to protect women. It is a bill that I wholeheartedly support, and I encourage all of my colleagues to support it as well.

• (1150)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 19-year-old Olivia Talbot from Edmonton was 27 weeks pregnant when she was brutally murdered on November 23, 2007. Her killer, Jared Baker, fired three shots into her abdomen and then two shots into her head. During his trial, Baker told the court he aimed the shots directly at her torso to “get the baby”.

The attack on Olivia's baby boy, Lane junior, was not treated as a crime. Although not yet born, baby Lane was alive before Olivia was murdered. Although not yet born, baby Lane was wanted and loved and anticipated before Olivia was murdered. Yet Lane junior was not recognized by our criminal law, our justice system, and our government as a victim of a heinous criminal act.

Lane junior was very much a wanted child. Olivia was very much a willing mother. Just ask Mary Talbot, the mother of Olivia and the grandmother of the baby, Lane. She has been campaigning since 2005 for a change to our law to allow charges to be laid in the injury or death of an unborn child when the child's mother is the victim of a crime.

More recently, Aysun Sesen from Toronto was eight months pregnant when she was stabbed to death by her husband. No charges were laid in the death of her daughter, Gul. Like Mary Talbot, Aysun Sesen's brother-in-law, Aydin Cocelli, has been campaigning for a change to our laws.

We have found at least 15 similar cases since 2004 where wanted unborn children were killed as a result of attacks against their mothers. Canadians are aghast to learn that no charges can be laid today in these deaths.

Bill C-484 would make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly harm or kill a pregnant woman's unborn child while committing a criminal offence against the child's mother.

This is a bill that families of slain women are urging members of Parliament to support. This type of legislation has wide-ranging support among all Canadians across party lines. A poll released in October 2007 found that 72% of Canadians and 75% of women would support legislation making it a separate crime to injure or kill an unborn child during an attack on the mother. Voter support was as follows: Conservatives, 77%; Liberals, 71%; Bloc, 71%; and NDP, 66%.

Why the strong public support? Because the vast majority of Canadians see this bill for what it is: a law that recognizes that a crime has been committed. This is a bill that is right and good and

necessary in a just and compassionate society. Such a law hopefully would act as a deterrent to committing violence against women when they are most vulnerable.

Surviving family members are asking for separate charges to be laid in these situations. From what we have seen from letters, emails, and signed petitions rolling into MPs' offices from Canadians across the country, this is also what the Canadian public is demanding. That is because it is obvious to Canadians and especially to the surviving family members that there are two victims in these crimes and the law needs to recognize this by allowing two charges to be laid. As for the family members who are left behind to cope, their grief goes unvalidated. They try desperately to mourn a death that our law refuses to recognize in that there are no charges to be laid in the injury or death of an unborn child when the child's mother is the victim of crime.

The Supreme Court of Canada has consistently said in numerous rulings that it is not up to the courts to decide what level of protection to give the unborn child, that it is up to Parliament. In fact, in the 1988 Morgentaler decision which struck down Canada's abortion law, all seven Supreme Court justices were unanimous in finding that the state has an interest in the protection of the unborn child. Justice Beetz said:

I am of the view that the protection of the foetus is and, as the Court of Appeal observed, always has been, a valid objective in Canadian criminal law.... I think s. 1 of the Charter authorizes reasonable limits to be put on a woman's right having regard to the state interest in the protection of the foetus.

• (1155)

In this ruling, the Supreme Court was looking at the issue of controversial abortion. Even in that context, all justices agreed that the criminal law had a role to play in protecting the unborn child and the court left it to Parliament to figure out how to do that.

Therefore, if the court is acknowledging that the state should protect the child in some circumstances, even when the mother wants an abortion, then how much more appropriate is it for the state to protect the unborn child when the woman does not want an abortion? If the state cannot step in and protect the wanted child from a brutal third party attack against the mother's will, then just when can it? What cases would the Supreme Court judges have in mind if not the cases where a pregnant woman and her wanted child are victims of a criminal act of violence?

Our current law, which fails to recognize a woman's unborn child as a separate victim of criminal act, amounts to telling those people who abuse women that since society places no value on human life growing inside of them why should they. If the state has no interest in protecting a woman's unborn child, why should they?

By our failure as a society to recognize any worth whatsoever in the baby, who the pregnant woman wants and is trying to protect, we are only encouraging abusive behaviour toward pregnant women. We must all share in the blame of the consequences of children maimed or killed in their mothers' wombs.

As for the family members who are left behind to try to cope, their grief goes invalidated. They try desperately to mourn a death that our law refuses to recognize because it refuses to recognize that a living baby ever existed at all.

Responding to the coordinator of the Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada, who has publicly misrepresented both Bill C-484 and the intentions of the member who introduced this bill, last week Mary Talbot said:

I hope you never have to experience the pain and anguish and sense of injustice of losing a beloved family member to violence, only to learn that no crime was committed, only to learn that the one your heart breaks for, was of no worth.

I hope colleagues in the House would also demonstrate this respect in a concrete way by voting on Wednesday in favour of sending Bill C-484 to the justice committee to be studied further.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank all members who have spoken on both sides of the bill. I cannot possibly, in the few minutes I have now, answer all the objections from those who spoke against the bill. Therefore, I invite them to visit [kenep.com](http://kenep.com) within a day or two. When I get *Hansard*, I will do the same analysis that I did with the member for Halifax, which is already on the website. I have the speech repeated and then my comments to it.

I will say a few things that are very important.

First, some changes could be made in committee. A few minor things have come up, which has been suggested, for example, by the member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre. I encourage people to vote in favour of sending the bill to committee so those issues can be addressed. If there are issues that need to be fine tuned, I welcome that.

Meanwhile, I want to emphasize that the bill does exactly what I want it to do, which is to address the issue of the protection of the child to whom the woman has chosen to give life.

The key word is that this is not a fight of rights between the unborn child and the mother or the pregnant woman, as the critics of the bill have stated. Every one of those who spoke against the bill this morning put that, and it is not. This is one place where we should all come together. The child is very young, but let us assume that the child wants to live. This is a case where the mother wants the child to live.

It is interesting to note that the Liberal member has said that generally a woman does everything possible to protect her unborn child. I think I have that right. I cannot for the life of me understand then why people would not support the bill. If the woman has chosen to have a child and she, in the words of the Liberal member, has done everything possible to protect her unborn child, why should she have to stand alone?

We have so many laws that help us to do what is right. Certainly, the people who call themselves pro-choice, should say that they support the bill. The bill says that a woman has chosen to have a child and we will put the strength of the law behind protecting the child who she has chosen to want and protect. This is protecting her right.

There were words like “protecting the woman's autonomy”. The member from the Bloc and also the member from the Liberal Party said this. It is true we are protecting the woman's autonomy. Whether the woman lives or dies, the choice of the woman was to have the child. This has nothing to do with elective consensual abortion. This

### *Government Orders*

has to do with the case where the woman has not given her consent. The woman has said that she wants to have the child.

One of the speakers even mentioned that the man should not have power over her body. Usually, not always, the attacker is a man. The man is saying to the victim, “You want to have your baby? I am sorry, I'm going to prevent that”. We have several cases where the woman made that choice, was attacked, lost her child and the woman survived. Women are not getting justice.

There is the gruesome case in Halifax where the guy plunged a sword into a women's abdomen up to 15 times, according to testimony in court. He did that against her will. When he was sentenced, the young women said to the media, “He took so much away from me”. There was no charge for the death of the child.

I urge people to support sending the bill to committee and let us look at it. Meanwhile, visit [kenep.com](http://kenep.com) for the full debate.

● (1200)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The time provided for debate has expired, so 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. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, March 5, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from February 28 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

*Government Orders*

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in debate on budget 2008. This year's budget is a balanced financial plan that builds on our Conservative government's strong foundation of lowering taxes, reducing debt and focusing on the clear priorities of Canadians.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, taxes are at their lowest level in nearly 50 years. The unemployment rate is at its lowest level in 33 years. Canada's debt burden is at its lowest level since the 1970s. Thanks to our careful management, Canada is in the strongest economic position of the G-7 countries to go through a time of economic turbulence.

Budget 2008 builds on our record of responsible leadership. It is a balanced, focused and prudent budget to strengthen Canada and British Columbia amid global economic uncertainty. It continues to reduce debt and taxes, focuses government spending, and provides additional support for sectors of the economy that are struggling. It is a budget that responds to our country's current needs.

With regard to taxes, this budget builds on last fall's economic statement, offering further assistance to hard-working Canadians and their families. In October, the finance minister announced \$60 billion in tax cuts, including \$12 billion for this fiscal year. We have cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%, increased the basic personal amount deduction to \$9,600 with another \$500 increase for next year, and cut the lowest personal income tax rate to 15%. Almost three-quarters of all tax relief implemented by our government benefited individual Canadians and their families directly.

Our broad based tax reductions are providing substantial tax savings for Canadians at all income levels, with proportionately greater savings for those with lower incomes. By increasing the basic personal exemption and cutting the GST, our government is helping those Canadians who are more most in need. We are making sure that low income Canadians, including the working poor, single mothers and seniors, who are struggling to make ends meet, have more money in their pockets to pay for the essentials of life.

Since coming to office 24 months ago, our government has taken action that will reduce the overall tax burden for Canadians and businesses by \$190 billion. As well, we have removed hundreds of thousands of Canadians from the tax rolls.

The tax-free savings account introduced in this budget provides further financial support by giving Canadians a new savings vehicle. This will allow individuals to contribute up to \$5,000 a year in a registered account that grows tax free. Withdrawals can be made tax free and at any time. The money can be used for anything from retirement to the purchase of a new car or a vacation. These accounts will encourage Canadians to save for the future and improve their standard of living.

The government's comprehensive ecoAction plan is making progress on preserving and enhancing the environment, improving air and water quality, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing the health effects of environmental contaminants.

This budget includes new measures to strengthen and ensure effective implementation of Canada's ecoAction plan. It provides funding to implement regulations that will lead to significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improvements in air

quality and proposes additional incentives that will advance progress on cleaner energy generation and use. With this budget, we are also improving Canada's capacity to enforce environmental laws and support conservation.

The budget provides: \$66 million over two years to set up the regulatory framework for industrial air emission targets; \$240 million to develop a full scale commercial demonstration of carbon capture and storage in the coal-fired electricity sector; \$250 million for an automotive innovation fund to develop greener and more fuel efficient vehicles; and \$10 million for research and analysis on biofuel emissions.

•(1205)

After years of empty rhetoric and broken promises by previous governments, we are moving forward with sensible initiatives to improve our environment for future generations of Canadians.

Our government is making the largest single federal investment in public infrastructure since World War II through the building Canada plan. This includes a total of \$33 billion over seven years for roads, bridges, water systems, public transit and international gateways.

In this budget, we have announced our government's intention to permanently extend gas tax funding to the municipalities to give our cities and towns a guaranteed source of revenue for their infrastructure needs. To help entice people out of their cars and onto public transit, we are providing \$1.3 billion in support for public transit capital investments and a tax credit for public transit passes.

The budget provides \$500 million for further investments in public transit. This money will assist with the completion of the Evergreen Light Rapid Transit line, which is a vital component of B.C.'s lower mainland transportation system. Investments in public transit are about preserving our environment and making our communities more livable. It is about taking cars off our crowded streets and improving the quality of the air we breathe.

In these challenging times, it is important for the government to focus on its core responsibilities and prepare Canadians to excel in an increasingly competitive world. Our government is therefore investing \$350 million per year in a new Canada student grant program that will reach 245,000 college and university students. We will be helping over 100,000 more students from low income and middle income families than under the current system.

We are also providing \$100 million for the Vanier scholarships, \$21 million for Canada global excellence research chairs and \$123 million to improve the Canada student loans program.

*Government Orders*

For seniors, this budget increases the exemption for employment earnings for those collecting the guaranteed income supplement.

For aboriginal Canadians, the budget provides: \$330 million to improve access to safe drinking water; \$43 million to improve child and family services on reserves; \$70 million to establish a new framework for aboriginal economic development; and \$147 million for first nations and Inuit health programs.

The budget also includes \$22 million to modernize the immigration system to allow for speedier processing of permanent residents and shorten wait times.

As well, it includes \$400 million to hire 2,500 new frontline police officers.

Needless to say, my constituents are interested in the impact the federal government's spending decisions have on their own province. I am happy to report that as a result of restoring fiscal balance British Columbia will receive \$5.1 billion this fiscal year, an increase of \$367 million over the previous year. This includes \$3.3 billion through the Canada health transfer and \$1.4 billion through the Canada social transfer.

For B.C., this transfer payment represents an increase of \$400 million or 16% since the 2005-06 fiscal year. This is just further evidence of how our government is responding to the real needs of British Columbians. Not only are we putting more money into B.C. infrastructure, helping fight B.C. crime and working to improve the province's environment, but we are also giving the provincial government the money it needs to serve the needs of British Columbians.

This budget sends a clear message about the importance of prudence in uncertain times. With increasing economic turmoil in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is more important than ever that Canada's government keep its fiscal house in order.

What Canada cannot afford is weak leadership and risky spending that will jeopardize Canada's fiscal position and the jobs that depend on it. Some would have us go down the path to higher spending, higher interest payments and higher taxes. That approach is misguided.

Our government is taking on challenges that require focus, prudence and discipline. The Prime Minister and our Conservative government will continue to set clear priorities and follow—

• (1210)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Questions and comments.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, budget 2008 is balanced, focused and prudent. It builds on decisive pre-emptive action taken in the 2007 fall economic update and during winter 2008 to lower taxes for people and businesses, pay down debt and provide targeted support to troubled industries.

Budget 2008 contains more than 100 new measures, including a tax-free savings plan, the most significant personal savings vehicle

since the introduction of RRSPs. For Canadians this is a powerful tax-free incentive to save.

Unlike our opponents, we are providing decisive leadership. Four months ago in the fall economic update, we provided \$60 billion in tax relief to strengthen our economic fundamentals, including historic reductions to corporate income taxes and a further reduction of the GST to 5%. This budget prepares Canada and Canadians for the challenges ahead. It continues reducing debt and taxes, focuses government spending and provides additional support for sectors of the economy that are struggling in this period of global uncertainty.

Our government is providing responsible leadership. This is the third straight balanced budget. It is both responsible and realistic. Our fiscal projections are based on the most up to date private sector economic forecasts.

We are planning surpluses over the entire budget horizon. After accounting for measures proposed in the budget, we are planning to reduce the debt by \$10.2 billion in 2007-08, \$2.3 billion in 2008-09 and \$1.3 billion in 2009-10. By 2012-13, we will have reduced the federal debt by more than \$50 billion since coming to office.

We will not leave our children or grandchildren with the burden of paying for excessive spending, as in the past. Unlike the previous government, we will not be going on a year-end spending spree. Instead, we are giving Canadians a direct stake in and a direct benefit from debt reduction through our tax back guarantee.

Under the tax back guarantee, the government dedicates the effective interest savings from federal debt reduction each year to permanent and sustainable personal income tax reductions. As a result of 2009-10 tax reductions provided under the guarantee, this will amount to \$2 billion.

[*Translation*]

Reducing the country's debt is sound fiscal management. It reduces the amount of money allocated to paying interest on the debt, it helps to keep interest rates low and encourage investment, it improves our ability to cope with economic surprises, it reduces our foreign debt while keeping Canadian dollars at home, and lastly, it ensures that our children will not have to bear the burden of a national debt created by former governments.

In the fall of 2007, we gave \$60 billion in tax assistance to strengthen our economic base. That was what needed to be done. We also supported workers and communities in need.

*Government Orders*

• (1215)

[English]

Budget 2008 prepares Canada and Canadians for the challenges ahead. It continues reducing debt and taxes, focuses government spending, and provides additional support for sectors of the economy that are struggling in this period of global uncertainty.

My opponents here in Ottawa have been telling the media and Canadians that we are blowing the surplus. It takes a certain kind of Ottawa politician to view giving people their hard-earned money back as blowing the surplus.

What our opponents fail to understand is the government has no money. The money belongs to taxpayers. We have taken a balanced approach by providing sustainable tax relief, spending on the priorities of Canadians and reducing debt.

Budget 2008 is good for Ontario. Federal support for provinces and territories has reached unprecedented levels. For Ontario this totals \$13.9 billion in 2008-09, an increase of \$1.4 billion from last year and almost \$2.7 billion since 2005-06.

Budget 2008 provides Ontario with: \$358 million over three years through the \$1 billion community development trust to support efforts to help vulnerable communities adjust to global uncertainty; \$195 million over two years through the \$500 million public transit capital trust; \$156 million over five years for the \$400 million police officers recruitment fund to recruit an additional 2,500 new front line police officers across Canada.

Ontario will also benefit from continued targeted support in 2008-09, including: \$515 million for infrastructure initiatives, which will total \$1.6 billion for all provinces and territories, including significant support under the building Canada plan. This includes the gas tax refund, the building Canada fund, increased GST rebate from municipalities and the provincial-territorial equal per jurisdiction fund which will be \$25 million in 2008-09. A further \$117 million is being made available through the public transit capital trust.

Budget 2008 extends the gas tax fund to \$2 billion per year nationally beyond 2013-14 and makes it a permanent measure. We are providing \$195 million for labour market training as part of a commitment of \$500 million a year in new funding to provinces and territories which begins this year, \$303 million as its share of the following: \$1.5 billion for the clean air and climate change trust, \$300 million for the HPV immunization trust, and a \$612 million patient wait times trust.

In addition to these measures, Ontario will continue to receive support through major federal transfers in 2008-09: \$8.6 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of almost \$523 million from last year, for a total of \$22.6 billion for all provinces and territories, and this funding will continue annually through a 6% escalator; \$4.1 billion through the Canada social transfer, which will provide provinces and territories with \$10.6 billion, including an additional \$800 million for post-secondary education.

This funding will grow annually through a 3% escalator, which takes effect this year. For Ontario this payment represents an increase

of \$931 million since 2005-06, which is a 29% increase. This is due mainly to an increase per capita cash allocation of the CST.

Budget 2008 builds on decisive and timely tax reductions for individuals, families and businesses which was introduced in 2006. Since coming to office, this government has provided \$74.8 billion in tax relief to the people and businesses of Ontario.

• (1220)

Over this and the next two fiscal years, additional tax reductions in budget 2008 will provide the people and businesses of the province with tax relief of \$199.3 million, including \$24.1 million through the new tax-free savings account and \$74.9 million through the extension of the accelerated capital cost allowance.

Ontario will also benefit from \$22.1 million nationally to support changes to provide for easier access to credit through the agricultural advance payments program and \$50 million through the cull breeding swine program.

It is obvious. This government is getting things done for the people of Canada and in particular for the people of Ontario.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked a lot about debt payment and in abstract, everybody understands the fact that lower debt is a good thing, but let us put this in context.

I want to give the hon. member an example of a typical Canadian family that has a mortgage and comes across a bonus at the end of the year of extra money. Now they have a choice. They have a child who needs to go to university, or they have the option of reducing their mortgage. What does he think the family chooses to do? Does the family put the money into the mortgage payment or save that money for their child so he or she can go to college?

• (1225)

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, what I personally have done and what most Canadians would do is both.

We would take part of the excess money, or the extra money we had after budgeting for the year, and put some toward our children's education, perhaps through an RESP, and we would also put money down on our debts, or our mortgages.

That does two things. That reduces the amount of interest we pay on our mortgages, which makes us more able to pay later on for our children's education.

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It is worth knowing that since coming to office, this government has increased post-secondary education funding by 40%. This goes toward what the member just mentioned. We do both and that is what this budget does.

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is not an environmental budget. It does nothing for climate change. We really missed an opportunity to be global leaders.

The biggest amount of funding was for nuclear development with \$350 million. There was \$250 million of taxpayers' dollars to help the biggest polluters clean up their act, and very small funding for clean energy development. There are no new financing instruments for combating climate change, such as climate bonds, for example. There is no funding for a cap and trade system, apart from analyzing it of course. I am wondering if he would comment on those numbers.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is 100% wrong. This budget and previous budgets do very much for the environment.

I thank her for mentioning the nuclear industry, to which the government committed \$300 million. Nuclear power generation, especially in the province of Ontario, reduces by millions of tonnes the amount of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere, so an investment in nuclear technology is a good investment when it comes to the environment.

In this budget, we are providing \$500 million for modern public transit, \$250 million for three carbon capture and storage demonstrations, and \$66 million over two years to implement binding national regulations on greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants across all industrial sectors.

The member has it very wrong. We are doing a lot for the environment and there is more to come.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West very eloquently pointed out about how we have increased funding for post-secondary education by more than 40%. He talked about how more than 100,000 more students will qualify for grants under our new student grant program, something I am very proud of.

He talked about all the measures that we have taken to protect the environment, and certainly nuclear, for companies like Camco in his riding and GE Energy - Nuclear Energy and Numet in my riding. These are big industries.

The member has a long and distinguished career in law enforcement. I wanted to ask the member how much it means to the policing community in Canada that this government has committed new funding for 2,500 more police officers in Canada.

**Mr. Rick Norlock:** Mr. Speaker, my brothers and sisters in uniform across this great country of ours have been waiting a long time for additional members in their ranks.

I want to thank the member for bringing up some of the matters we have been addressing with regard to post-secondary education. He left out the fact that we are providing \$250 million over five years to support strategic, large scale research and development projects in the automotive sector. The enhancement of Export Development Canada's guaranteed program to support the auto-

motive and manufacturing sectors is great news for his riding and mine.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saint Boniface.

I rise today to speak to a budget which impacts many Canadians and my constituents of Brampton—Springdale.

It is striking how little attention has been paid in this budget to Canada's most vulnerable citizens. Listening to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister trumpet the principles of fiscal prudence has truly been an exercise in the art of deception considering that the Conservative government's own measures have put our nation on the verge of a deficit.

Governing is really about choices, and last week's budget clearly demonstrates that irresponsible economics over the past couple of years has created a budget that has left millions of Canadians out in the cold, including many of my constituents in Brampton.

On February 21, just days before the delivery of the budget speech, Statistics Canada reported that Canadian corporations earned record high operating profits of \$262.5 billion in 2007. Yet, systematic corporate tax cuts over the past two years have ensured that these record profits are not going to benefit the country as a whole, but rather a select group of shareholders whose financial portfolios probably do not need much assistance from the government.

It is clear that this budget has continued to ignore those who truly need the resources, the skills and the tools in our nation to succeed.

As the critic for social development, I am also acutely aware of the extreme void that exists for many Canadians who live at the lower end of the economic spectrum. We only have to look at the statistics which show that 11% of Canadians, or almost 3.4 million people, actually fall below Statistics Canada's low income cutoff.

There are 800,000 children living in poverty. It is a shame that this budget does nothing about raising the minimum wage, about creating a better plan for child care in this nation, or helping the most vulnerable.

The Conservative government has been systematically dishonest with regard to its so-called fiscal prudence over the past couple of years. Take for example the first budget that was delivered by the Minister of Finance in 2006, when a tax increase was described falsely as a tax cut.

Then there was last year's budget, which one well known Conservative columnist called "uncontrolled, unfocused, and above all, unconservative". This is in addition to the mini budget that was delivered this past November where the finance minister spoke glowingly about \$60 billion worth of tax cuts. Of course, for low income earners the tax savings resulted in a meagre 39¢ a day for a single individual and 25¢ for single parents. This is how the government has picked winners and losers when it comes to responsible fiscal management.

*Government Orders*

Now in 2008, after years of offering corporations and the richest tax brakes, the most favourable tax rates, and raising spending to record levels, the Minister of Finance is almost feeling his own crunch and is speaking again deceptively about fiscal restraint.

We all know that the tiny surpluses that have been predicted over the next two years are certainly not responsible and certainly not prudent when it comes to ensuring Canadians are able to maintain their economic security for the future.

Many segments of the Canadian national housing and homelessness programs are due to expire in the fiscal year 2007. We all know these critical issues have been ignored by the government and the budget.

Canada is one of the only industrialized countries in the world without a national housing program. Over 125,000 families in my home province of Ontario remain on the waiting list for affordable housing, and one in five children continues to live in poverty in this nation. There was absolutely no commitment by the federal government to renew those programs within the next 12 months.

If the government does not renew these programs, it is going to be leaving thousands of people who are living on sidewalks out in the cold. The government is going to be letting down the thousands of people who are relying on affordable housing programs.

In the budget, \$110 million was set aside for demonstration projects about homelessness and mental illness, indicating that the government clearly believes that this phenomenon is somehow in question. However, one only needs to talk to the stakeholders, the advocates, the activists, and the organizations across the country who are helping the most vulnerable to realize that we have a crisis when it comes to homelessness and when it comes to affordable housing.

• (1230)

If the housing minister had bothered to show up at the first national summit of provincial and territorial housing ministers in Vancouver last month, the first since the Conservatives were elected, he would have heard about the Vancouver police study which showed that a shocking one-third of all calls coming into its organization related to mental illness and that police officers were having to serve as mental health councillors, something that is truly unjust.

He also would have heard about the report by the Wellesley Institute where over 1.5 million households, or almost 4.2 million men, women and children, were in a core housing need. Perhaps he would have heard about the 300,000 Canadians who will experience homelessness over the course of this year.

Housing insecurity has a large personal cost which has led directly to increased illness and premature death. One recent study estimated that homelessness costs Canadians between \$4.5 billion and \$6 billion annually. Our country is in a crisis when it comes to these areas. Despite our economic surpluses and our economic prosperity, we have ignored the most vulnerable. This budget does absolutely nothing to help and reach out to them.

Nothing is in this budget to create child care spaces that families across this country so desperately need. There is absolutely nothing in this budget to address the growing crisis of poverty.

The budget provides dozens of new tax breaks, virtually all for corporations and investors, but does nothing to benefit our working Canadians. When we look at the tax-free savings account, which was supposed to be one of the highlights of the budget, we see that it is, once again, a tax measure for those who have the \$5,000 and therefore have the opportunity to invest the \$5,000. This will benefit people who are already making their maximum RRSP contribution. This tax-free savings account will do nothing to benefit low income families or single mothers in my constituency of Brampton—Springdale.

For the average person with moderate savings in a bank account or GIC, the tax saving on interest income will be minimal. However, high earners in a top tax bracket who are able to save \$5,000 year after year will be able to reinvest. The budget contains nothing for low income families in Canada.

Let us look at the manufacturing sector. In my riding of Brampton—Springdale, over 1,100 families and individuals have been impacted by layoffs. The budget's promise of a one-year extension in the tax break for investments for new equipment and machinery, followed by two more years of smaller tax breaks, will do nothing to benefit those families and those individuals who have lost their jobs.

We have seen almost 300,000 factory jobs disappear in Canada in the last few years. The money that has been promised to trickle down over the coming years falls very short of a comprehensive strategy and leadership that is needed to support those families, to support Canada's most vulnerable.

We could talk about the fact that this budget has ignored low income and vulnerable Canadians but one thing we can conclude is that the budget has clearly chosen winners and losers. It has clearly put a divide between the rich and those who are poor.

The government, unfortunately, has not provided the leadership or the vision, nor has it taken the actions necessary to ensure that people who are not as well off in our society have the opportunities, the resources, the skills and the tools they need to succeed: the women, the single mothers, the families who are not making much and young children.

We had hoped that in this budget there would have been investments of ensuring that we as a country continue to succeed for many years to come.

• (1235)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's speech but she is being less than genuine with people at home. As she well knows, budget 2007 contributed \$3.8 billion in new money to the Province of Ontario, which is money from the fiscal balance transfer that this government made and which the Government of Ontario is providing directly to people in need.

*Government Orders*

We also increased funding for health care and post-secondary school. We are providing more opportunity for poor individuals, people from non-wealthy backgrounds, the common people to attend university and get the skills and the trades they need. We are supporting them each and every day.

We are behind manufacturing. We have provided accelerated capital cost allowances to manufacturing. We have provided more jobs. We have created almost 700,000 jobs since coming to government. The statistics that the hon. member states for the loss of manufacturing jobs, most of that occurred under the Liberal government.

The hon. member needs to read this budget and the last budget because she clearly does not know what was in them.

I would like the hon. member to respond as to whether she is aware that the Government of Ontario received \$3.8 billion just in the fiscal balance transfer, money that her government refused to give.

• (1240)

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for the member, if the Conservatives truly cared about Ontario and Ontarians, we would not have that Minister of Finance launching an attack on the province on a daily basis and saying that Ontario is the last place that any single business would ever want to invest. We would have that Minister of Finance and that Conservative government showing some leadership and sticking up and standing side by side with Ontarians.

I would just remind the hon. member what the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters said in regard to this budget. It said, "...the new measure concerning accelerated depreciation..." will not do. It went on to say that manufacturers were under the gun to innovate and that this measure, basically, would take the manufacturing industry back to where it started.

There has not been enough investment to help those Canadians who have lost their jobs.

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with my colleague when she says that there is nothing in this budget for the most vulnerable, for the poor, for day care and for women. There is no new money for affordable social housing or for renovating or retrofitting existing homes, nor is there a strategy to reduce homelessness. There are no tax incentives to build new rental housing. The only new money is for five pilot projects to study this very serious issue even further.

The member seems to be in violent disagreement with the Conservatives and yet the Liberals have indicated that they will vote for it. I do not understand the contradiction there and I was wondering if she could enlighten me.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right when she says that this budget delivered absolutely nothing for the most vulnerable in our society. She mentions the three programs that have provided a tremendous amount of assistance to thousands of stakeholders and organizations: the affordable housing program, the homelessness partnership initiative and the residential rehabilitation assistance program. These programs are all due to expire at the

end of fiscal 2007 but this budget has no commitment to renewing that funding.

As Liberals and as Canadians, we want to ensure that, as we go into an election campaign, we can continue to champion a particular issue. As Liberals, we will continue to fight for those issues and we will ensure that as a minority Parliament we will work to compromise, to collaborate, to fight and to advocate those issues that are important to Canadians.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here for 14 years and I have listened to these kinds of speeches delivered very eloquently, but then, in every case in the past, members certainly would not support the bill because of the way they spoke. I would assume from her speech that she dislikes this budget so much that she will be voting against it. That is, after all, the indication.

Will the member be voting against this budget or will this be a typical Liberal speech—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Brampton—Springdale has 20 seconds left.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, the only thing I can say is that there is absolutely no price to my vote. I hope the Conservatives are not putting a price to the vote of the Liberal Party because we will never have a price on our votes. We will do what is right for Canadians in building a richer, fairer and greener Canada.

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here today and to speak to the budget which affects all Canadians. The budget contained some good things because the five major initiatives that were actually good came out of the Liberal handbook.

I know the Conservatives love to quote and, in particular, the Minister of the Environment, so I figured I would do the same thing to support my arguments.

The first major initiative, which I think is important, is making the gas tax for municipalities permanent. We brought that in under the leadership of the former prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard. If we were to speak with people from the municipalities, I think they would say that is probably the one thing that has allowed them to plan long term. Making it permanent was the next step.

I would like to quote from the speech by the leader of the official opposition given in Toronto on February 27. He states:

I will make the \$2 billion per year gas tax transfer to municipalities permanent, through legislation.

We are very pleased that the Conservatives were listening to our leader at that time.

The second issue is on help for the auto sector. Weeks before the budget, the Minister of Finance said that he would not help the auto sector or any other industry for that matter, any manufacturing industry. He thought that we could let the market take its course and things would weed themselves out type of thing.

In the budget, all of a sudden the Conservatives announced some funding for the auto sector. Again I would like to quote the speech given by the Leader of the Opposition in Hamilton on January 18. He said:

*Government Orders*

—a Liberal Government will create the \$1 billion Advance Manufacturing Prosperity Fund—the AMP Fund. This fund will support major investments in manufacturing and R&D facilities that will serve as an anchor for clusters of economic activity.

Here we go again, the Conservatives were listening. They have nobody looking at this stuff or planning this stuff but it is nice to see that they at least are listening to the Liberals.

On the third issue, they stole our issue on the idea for job creation through infrastructure. I will go right to the quote.

On February 15, 2008 in Ottawa, the leader of the official opposition said:

We would make this investment through the Gas Tax Transfer agreements for sustainable municipal infrastructure. Public transit, water treatment, waste management, and cleaning up contaminated sites are the most pressing needs.

That was another Liberal Party platform issue that was taken out of our handbook by the current government that is void of all ideas.

**Mr. Myron Thompson:** He didn't get it done.

**An hon. member:** Remember the red book?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, please, a little order.

Number four: Providing funding to hire more police. On March 14, 2007, the Leader of the Opposition said:

We will provide funds to provinces to hire more municipal police officers, starting immediately. The Conservatives promised 2,500 more police in our cities - then didn't do it.

Police officers told us that. They came to lobby us here in Ottawa and told us exactly that.

The quote continues:

We will give the RCMP an extra \$200 million for an extra 400 officers as part of a new rapid enforcement team, that will be mandated to provide immediate help to local police departments to combat guns and gang activity, as well as organized crime and drug trafficking.

Of course we never did it. We are not in power. The Conservatives are the ones in power. We were committed to doing this but they stole our idea. The government, which is void of ideas, has been listening to the Liberal Party.

The last major initiative is the investment in R and D and reversing the previous cuts. I think that R and D is probably the future of Canada. We have all seen what has been going with jobs being shopped overseas, so we must really focus on research and development. That was done under the last Liberal government but when the Conservatives came into power they cut everything when it comes to research and development. When it comes to innovation, they are like dinosaurs.

On January 18 in Hamilton, the leader of the official opposition said:

...a Liberal Government will make the SR&ED Tax Credit partially refundable. That means that companies will be able to take advantage of the credit, even if they are not profitable in the short-term. We want every company that puts money into R&D to be rewarded for innovating.

There are a lot of things that are not in the budget that should be there.

● (1245)

The first one is health care. Health care is still number one, two or three on the minds of most Canadians. There is nothing in the budget to reduce wait times. Provinces are still not being held accountable for wait times. Some \$41 billion approximately was given to the provinces over a period of several years with certain conditions respecting wait times. There is absolutely no accountability. The government transfers the money to the provinces and lets them worry about the results.

On the environment, Canada continues to be seen as a laggard on the environment. We would have thought the government had been embarrassed in Bali. It was probably the worst pony show we could imagine. Our minister was cruising around attending little cocktail parties, while other countries were discussing serious issues. Our international reputation has been sullied probably for a long time. The foreign affairs minister for one of our allies, France, indicated that France no longer recognized Canada. This is the kind of reputation we are starting to get overseas.

On affordable housing and homelessness, when I do my round tables in Saint Boniface, Winnipeg, it is probably one of the issues that comes up most. We bring in immigrants, as we should. However, 30, 40 or 50 families come to Winnipeg every month, but they have no place to stay. We have invested absolutely nothing in affordable housing, which is ridiculous. Something has to be done about that.

In the aboriginal community in Winnipeg, it is a huge issue. Members from Winnipeg, Manitoba or Saskatchewan will know it is a huge social issue for us. Eight out of the ten kids in Agassiz Youth Centre are from the aboriginal community. That does not make any sense. Sure, we have a crime issue, but we also have a social problem. Those are the things we should address. In Stony Mountain, our maximum capacity prison, 32% of prisoners have fetal alcohol syndrome. There is an issue. Why do we not deal with the fetal alcohol syndrome issue?

On child care, the Conservatives have promised to deliver 125,000 spaces. We have asked them to table a report showing where they have set up these spaces. Show me 10 or 20 spaces. In Manitoba they could not show me 10 new spaces created by the government. There is a demand right now on that.

● (1250)

[*Translation*]

Personally, I think that the worst part is their treatment of official languages. They made commitments, they talked to francophones across the country, they held consultations for months and months, they made promises, and they told francophones living in minority communities that they would come up with a new plan, a better plan specifically designed for communities.

But the budget came, and there was no plan. What does that mean? I think official language communities are very disappointed in their government's lack of commitment. This is just like the elimination of the court challenges program. It shows the same vision and the same lack of respect for our minority communities.

*Government Orders*

[English]

My time is running out, which is unfortunate because I am having a lot of fun. The last thing I want to mention is the disastrous fiscal record of the government. I have mentioned it before. Some of my colleagues on the other side of the House do not believe this. The last time the Conservatives had a surplus, prior to inheriting the surpluses from the Liberal Party, was 1912. That is a fact.

The Conservatives have been trying to spin that they are good fiscal managers, that they can manage a downturn in the economy. They are creating the downturn in the economy. The Conservatives have been in government for two years. They create instability in the marketplace and all of a sudden we are back in deficit, and here we go again. The Liberals will have to come back in to clean up the mess. That is a fact of life. Hon. members do not have to take my word for it, they should look at the record. It says 1912. That is a long time. I would put my money on the Liberals. We will be back eventually and we will have to clean up this mess once again.

Overall, it took 13 years to build a solid economic structure in Canada. It took the Conservatives two years to destroy it.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I notice there is a lot of interest in the speech so there will be a lot of questions and comments. Therefore, perhaps the questions of members can be very succinct.

The hon. member for Wild Rose.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very quick. The member gave four points on some good things in the budget. These are in the budget mainly because the Liberals never got any of it done. Then he gave about 20 some reasons why the budget was no good. Because there are four good things out of some twenty things in the budget, I assume he will vote no on it.

If he does not vote no, could he please explain why? After all, he said that it was not a good budget.

• (1255)

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, I probably identified about five things that were good. Obviously, Liberals did not put them in place. We are the opposition and the Conservatives are the government. It is their responsibility to get it done. Liberals are here to keep an eye on those guys. It is the responsibility of the Conservatives to get things done.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is most enjoyable to watch the violent agreement going on between the Liberals and Conservatives. All day there has been much brouhaha and yelling, but on the substantive, as my hon. colleague from Wild Rose asked earlier, if the Liberals have such disagreement with the budget at a fundamental level, are they concerned more for the welfare of our country or the welfare of their backsides?

Will the Liberals vote against the budget if they have such problems with it on such a fundamental level, yes or no?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, it is really funny coming from a member of the NDP Party. The NDP is polling at about 10% right now, lower than the Green Party. Its members were praying that the budget would go through.

I do not want the member to stand and make accusations about the Liberal Party. In fact, NDP members were at home praying that the budget would pass. If it did not, they would come back to Parliament with half the number of members. Therefore, I do not want to hear anything from that member on this issue.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think my Conservative colleague's question was the right one. The member claims that the Liberal Party will soon be in power. But why would it come back to power when the Liberals are voting with the Conservatives? Why would the Liberals want to be back in power when they agree with the Conservatives' views? Why would they come back to power when they agree with the Conservatives' values, which focus on the war, the oil companies and nuclear energy, what we might call killer values?

Why would the Liberals want to return to power if they are voting in favour of the budget? Could the member explain?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, this opposition party has agrees in many ways with the Conservative Party. I will explain.

I find it irresponsible that the Bloc Québécois and the NDP decided to vote against the budget even before it was tabled. That is very shocking. If I were one of their constituents, I would be shocked to hear that my member had already decided to vote against the budget before he or she even knew what was in it. I find that completely unacceptable.

As the official opposition, we are responsible for examining the content of the budget and deciding whether it is worth defeating the government over it.

[English]

Everything has an end.

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy the comments of the member for Saint Boniface. There are a couple of things. He talked about all the things in the budget that were previous Liberal promises, but never fulfilled. We fulfilled them.

Being a member from Manitoba, I hear people talk about what the budget does for their province. The budget provides \$340 million more to the baseline funding for the province of Manitoba. Could the member vote against that?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Saint Boniface has 30 seconds left.

[Translation]

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I can answer in 30 seconds.

[English]

The member mentioned \$340 million. He has to deduct \$170 million right off the top. The \$170 million that was supposed to be taken out of a national strategic infrastructure fund was taken out of Manitoba's share of the infrastructure fund.

*Government Orders*

Once Manitobans realize they have been robbed of \$170 million by the Conservative Party, absolutely, I can vote against this budget, or I can support it, one or the other. However, I can say—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** We are about to resume debate. I want to commend all members of the House for keeping their questions succinct. This way we were able to put four questions.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am not finished my answers and you are cutting me off. My time is not up.

• (1300)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Yes it is.

The hon. member for Peterborough has the floor.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise and stand in support of this tremendous budget, a budget that increases health care funding for Canadians, a budget that increases support for post-secondary education and creates a new student support program that will provide funding and grants to over 100,000 more students than currently qualify under the old Liberal millennium scholarship program. It is a wonderful new addition to the budget. It provides funding for 2,500 additional front line police officers, new support for technology development for industry that will benefit the environment and new environmental initiatives.

I want to focus my speech on what has been the focus of some national media stories, and I have even heard some disparaging remarks in the House. I want to talk about the \$500 million trust fund that our government has created to support public transit and specifically the new route between Toronto and Peterborough.

First, I was never more proud than when I heard the word Peterborough in a federal budget. I do not think any government has ever mentioned the word Peterborough in a budget, certainly not the Liberal government, which was in place for 13 years. It never did anything for the riding of Peterborough, certainly not affordable housing. I heard a member speaking about affordable housing a little while ago. I have made more affordable housing announcements in two years than my predecessor made in thirteen years, not because he was not a decent man but because his government never provided him with the support for that.

The new Toronto-Peterborough passenger commuter route is a sound transportation, non-partisan project that was supported by Liberal MPs. We heard a Liberal MP say that we had stolen a bunch of Liberal ideas. I guess I am guilty of that. I will demonstrate exactly how I probably have stolen some Liberal ideas.

I refer the House back to Friday, May 4, 2001 and to a petition presented by Peter Adams, former Liberal MP for Peterborough. The petition was from citizens of the Peterborough area who wanted to re-establish VIA Rail commuter service between Toronto and Peterborough. They pointed to the environmental advantages such as reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a reduction in accidents on highways and that it would help Peterborough become an even stronger business, tourist and educational centre. The petition had the support from the federal ridings of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, Durham, Whitby—Oshawa, Whitby—Ajax, Pickering—

Ajax—Uxbridge, Markham—Unionville and even Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

In a letter dated September 26, 2000, John O'Reilly, the former Liberal member of Parliament for Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, said:

You are correct in saying the commuter/tourism passenger service will benefit the region in more ways than simply providing a more efficient mode of transportation. There are several offshoots of potential employment related to VIA passenger service. I believe it is a very worthwhile endeavour and I support your initiatives. I will discuss this with my fellow caucus colleagues and garner support.

Alex Shepherd, former Liberal member of Parliament for Durham, said:

As someone who actually rode the old line, I am convinced this method of transportation is consistent with other policies such as, land use planning and environmental concerns in the GTA.

I look forward to working with your very capable Member of Parliament, Peter Adams, and groups like yourself, in an effort to turn this into a reality.

Is this not Interesting?

The current member for Pickering—Scarborough East said:

I understand the importance of this service to your community, and I am aware that many of my own constituents—particularly those in north Durham—will also benefit by the return of VIA to the Kawartha Region. As such, your campaign has my full support and I will gladly work with your M.P., Peter Adams, in ensuring your petition reaches the floor of the House of Commons.

John O'Reilly, former Liberal member of Parliament for Haliburton—Victoria—Brock, in a letter dated January 24, 2001, said:

I fully support this endeavour and have already taken the liberty of speaking with the Honourable David Collenette...Minister of Transport. I asked him to endorse the plan, as it would greatly benefit many in the Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton-Victoria-Brock regions.

Alex Shepherd, former Liberal member of Parliament for Durham, on February 6, 2001, said, "You can be assured that this is of great interest to the riding of Durham as well as that of Peterborough".

That is pretty remarkable.

• (1305)

In fact, this is every bit as much a benefit to Toronto as it is to Peterborough. I have made this point before.

I should let you know, Mr. Speaker, that I am going to split my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

The member for Ajax—Pickering last week was quoted in the media as saying that this is like a 64th level priority of the MoveOntario 2020 plan. That is news to me. Maybe the member should look into the MoveOntario 2020 plan. He just might find out that this route is described as hub number five. It goes directly through his riding. I suppose if he lived in his riding he might know that it is of interest to the people in Ajax—Pickering, but he is kind of busy digging into personnel files, trying to dig up dirt and being a major part of the Liberal rat pack. He really does not care that much about his constituents and finding out that this is a major issue in the northern part of his riding.

*Government Orders*

I would like to talk a little about what this means. The Places to Grow Act, which of course is an Ontario Liberal government document, identifies Peterborough and the Durham region as rapid growth areas under the greater golden horseshoe. The re-establishment of commuter rail between Toronto's Union Station and Harper Road in Peterborough will provide significant environmental, recreational and social benefits to all communities along the route.

The Havelock sub-route operated by Kawartha Lakes Railway and owned and operated by CP Rail is a critical spoke to hub five in the province of Ontario's 2020 MoveOntario plan. This investment into public transit will support healthy future growth of all communities along the route while combating a growing traffic congestion problem in the greater golden horseshoe region, which is expected to grow by an additional 3.7 million people over the next 30 years alone.

Since the rail line was terminated in 1990, the population that would be serviced by this line has grown by more than 320,000 people. This places us among the fastest growing areas in Ontario, in Canada and indeed in all of North America.

These facts tell us that this is a critical piece of economic infrastructure. This is short line rail that will not only serve as passenger rail but also will support freight traffic and contribute substantially to reductions in greenhouse gases, smog and vehicle traffic on Toronto highways.

One-way service from Peterborough to Toronto will provide for rush hour travel times of less than 90 minutes. In fact, we are looking at about 84 minutes from Peterborough to Toronto at the height of rush hour. There is no other way to do this. There is no other way to get people there.

In October 2007, I wrote and released a 43 page commuter rail report. It took hundreds of hours of work. I presented it in the presence of my local community leaders, media representatives and my local member of the provincial parliament, Jeff Leal, who is a member of Dalton McGuinty's government. Indeed, he is the parliamentary secretary to the new department of Indian affairs. All voiced their support and promised to work toward this eventuality.

That eventuality became a reality with last week's budget and the commitment by the federal government that we are going to create this trust and provide the support. I would like to say a little about what others are saying about this.

For example, Durham regional chairman Roger Anderson said that the proposed train line would pick up commuters from his region. He went on to say, "Anything that alleviates congestion in downtown Toronto is a good thing".

The president of Trent University, Bonnie Patterson, said:

While it's true that the restored rail link will have important benefits for local businesses and the environment, it will also directly impact the Trent University community in many positive ways. Dean Del Mastro is commended for his role in securing—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order. Order. The hon. member made a mistake. I am just going to remind him, and I do not need help from all the other members, that even when referring to himself the member should use riding, name or title.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bonnie Patterson says that the member for Peterborough:

—is to be commended for his role in securing one of the largest federal investments in the Peterborough region in our history.

From Fleming College, a letter states:

On behalf of Fleming College, I would like to extend our thanks and appreciation for your efforts to establish a new high-speed commuter rail link between Peterborough and Toronto, as announced in the federal budget.

At Fleming, we are drawing more and more students from the GTA and beyond. The rail link will provide a new transportation route and much-improved access to the College for our students from the Toronto area.

I could go on about this for an hour. I have built a sound business case for this. It is non-partisan. It services more Liberal ridings than Conservative ridings. This is a great news story for Ontario. It is a great news story for Canada. It is environmental and it is economic. I stand in this place, I fight for my community and I fight for Canada.

• (1310)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is one more of those Conservative promises that does not get kept, sort of like accountability and transparency. What is the price of a vote?

I want to know from the hon. member whether he agrees with the statements of his hero, the finance minister, who said that "if you're going to make a new business investment in Canada, and you're concerned about taxes, the last place you will go is the province of Ontario".

Does he agree with that statement? Does he have any idea of what effect that would have on any potential investments from around the world? Does he have any idea of the effect on Ontario? Does the member understand, in the remotest sense of the word, how the financial capitals of the world will read the statement by that irresponsible finance minister? Does he understand?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Mr. Speaker, not only do I understand it, but I agree 100% with it. That is why I have encouraged the Liberal premier, Dalton McGuinty, to get rid of job-killing taxes in the province of Ontario: so that we can start attracting employment in Ontario. We should be moving away from the retail sales tax and moving to a value added tax immediately. We should be getting rid of corporate surtaxes. We should be reducing the taxes on manufacturing in our province.

That member can stand in this place, support high taxes in Ontario and support job-killing taxes, but I will stand in this House and defend jobs in Ontario. I will defend taxes that will create investment in Ontario. He can defend Dalton McGuinty. I will not.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's speech about new investment in Peterborough. My goodness, I thought, this is really quite something, in that the member is admitting that good planning and investment in public infrastructure will drive businesses forward.

*Government Orders*

Yet at the same time, his government has taken the irresponsible step of reducing the revenues of the federal government so that the kinds of investments that he is talking about for his particular community cannot be spread across the country. In my constituency in the Northwest Territories, we desperately need roads, transmission lines and better airports, all the things that must be made with public investment, but the finance minister has given all the money away. How am I supposed to come up with the dollars for my riding that his Minister of Finance has so graciously given to Peterborough?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Mr. Speaker, let me say for the member that I understand the difficulties in creating infrastructure in Canada's north, but our government does too. We are working to provide things like high speed Internet in Canada's far north in the Arctic. We have created the building Canada fund, which provides base funding to all regions in the country. Over and above that, it provides funding on a per capita basis.

The building Canada fund has \$33 billion over seven years to support Canada and to support the creation of economic infrastructure that creates jobs, is good for the environment and puts Canada on a sound footing moving forward. It attracts investment. Quite frankly, I am more proud of it than almost anything else our government has created.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell the hon. member that I completely agree with him in his assessment of Ontario. Ontario is my province and I am quite scared by what is going on in the provincial government of Ontario, which is destined to force this once great province into becoming a have not province.

I do remember that in the last budget the federal government gave the premier of Ontario some \$95 million for child care spaces. The premier of Ontario chose to pass on only \$25 million of that money. I would appreciate a comment on that lack of accountability on the part of the premier of Ontario.

• (1315)

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** What happened?

**Mr. Gary Goodyear:** Also, I hear the Liberals say that these were their ideas. I totally disagree with that. Could the member tell me, if these were the Liberals' ideas—we know they were not, but if they were—why did they not get it done?

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer my colleague's second question first. I would propose that like many things it is a Liberal record of shame, with a lot of promises made and very few things actually delivered.

With respect to child care, it is a provincial jurisdiction, but our government did provide all provinces, including Ontario, with significant new funding for child care on top of creating direct support to parents with the universal child care benefit and the child tax credit. Dalton McGuinty should invest that money in child care.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour and privilege to rise in this House today to speak about our latest Conservative budget.

In addition to being a responsible, prudent and well balanced budget, which reduces debt and helps Canadians, several good initiatives in this budget were very well received by the constituents in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. They include real measures for business, agriculture, infrastructure and, naturally, families and seniors, the very foundation of our society and closest to our government's heart.

Before going into the details, allow me to mention once more some of the initiatives taken by this Conservative government since coming to power just two years ago.

We kept our promise made to Canadians to reduce the GST from 7% to 6% and then to 5%, and we did so ahead of schedule. We reduced taxes by cutting personal income tax rate from 15.5% to 15%. Furthermore, the basic personal exemption was increased to \$9,600 and will rise to \$10,100 in January 2009. A new \$2,000 child tax credit will result in savings of hundreds of dollars for millions of Canadian families.

Corporate income tax rates have been cut drastically and will move from 22% to 15% by 2012, giving Canada the lowest federal corporate tax rate of all G-7 countries.

We reduced taxes for small business to 11% one year earlier than promised. Once again, these initiatives will give Canada one of the most competitive corporate tax rates in the world. In total, more than \$200 billion has been invested in tax cuts since our government came to power.

Our Conservative government realizes that the months and years to come are full of uncertainty. For that reason, the theme of the budget is responsible leadership. It is vital that we proceed with a sense of caution and responsibility. This budget encourages Canadians to do the same. I am referring to the new tax-free savings account. For the first time in Canada's history, Canadians from all walks of life will have the opportunity to save their hard-earned money, which has already been taxed, without being penalized.

That does not mean that we will no longer do things to help Canadians. As I was saying, the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell are big beneficiaries of the priority spending announced in this government's budget. One of these priorities is infrastructure. I was very pleased to see in the previous budget the introduction of the building Canada fund, which is a \$33 billion fund for infrastructure. During the past year, this program has helped finance a number of infrastructure projects that are resulting in a better quality of life for the people of my riding, from Hawkesbury to Clarence-Rockland and everywhere in between.

In addition to this historic building Canada project, which was part of the previous budget, this new budget does even more to meet the infrastructure needs of my constituents by making the gas tax fund permanent. This will bring in millions of dollars annually for the municipalities, which will help them to better plan and finance their infrastructure work in the long term.

•(1320)

[English]

A large part of my riding is also dedicated to agriculture, and there is something in this budget for that as well. Since 2006, this Conservative government has taken direct action to help farmers. In fact, we have provided \$4.5 billion in additional funding to farmers. This is funding above and beyond the annual funding provided to farmers.

We all remember the hardship felt by our cattle producers during the past few years and now more recently by our pork producers, which is why the government is accelerating programs designed to help them in their time of need. One new measure being introduced in this budget is a \$50 million fund to be delivered to hog farmers to reduce the overstock that is currently putting pressure on the hog industry. This investment should translate into a 10% reduction, which is welcome news for the struggling producers of my riding. In addition, our Conservative government is delivering real support by making up to \$3.3 billion available in loans to help producers weather current storms and adjust to new market realities.

Our government has listened to producers. We have worked with producers and now we are delivering for producers.

On the issue of seniors, there is no doubt that they are the big winners in this budget. In fact, even the *Globe and Mail* on Wednesday named seniors as being among the biggest winners. This is because our government has shown tremendous leadership and initiative by allowing pension income splitting for seniors and pensioners, something which has never been done before. We are also raising the tax exemption for income earned under the guaranteed income supplement from \$500 to \$3,500, a sevenfold increase. Seniors asked for this and we are delivering.

We also realize that with the increased life expectancy of Canadians, many seniors are willing to stay in the workforce longer and continue living as productive members of our society. Previously these seniors were penalized. By permitting phased retirement, we are giving older workers the choice to stay in the labour market.

As for RRSPs, we are also increasing the age limit for converting them from age 69 to age 71.

My constituents in Glengarry—Prescott—Russell welcome the additional fiscal measures taken by this government regarding the effort of tackling crime and bolstering our security.

In addition to making a giant leap in the right direction with the passage of Bill C-2 just last week, budget 2008 calls for a significant investment toward the creation of a new police officers recruitment fund. By allocating \$400 million toward the recruitment and training of new police officers, our government is planning on assisting municipalities with the hiring of an additional 2,500 police officers throughout the country.

I can already hear the NDP, a party which opposes our efforts to better protect Canadians by getting tough on crime, complain that there is too much of a focus on correction and not enough of a focus on prevention. Allow me to respond that this is simply not the case.

### Government Orders

The fact is that we are dramatically increasing the funding toward the national crime prevention program. This budget is investing an additional \$60 million over the next two years, essentially doubling the annual funding, which currently stands at \$33 million. These funds are used by the national crime prevention strategy in partnership with community groups designed to help vulnerable families and children determined to be at risk of later engaging in criminal activity, including gang or drug crimes.

[Translation]

As the Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, I am very pleased to see in budget 2008, that our Conservative government intends to go beyond its previous investments by developing a new action plan for official languages, since the current five-year action plan is coming to a close this year. The priority of the government's new action plan will be to protect and promote linguistic duality across the country.

As a member of Parliament who represents a riding with a very large official language minority community, I very much appreciate the work that has been done by Bernard Lord and, now, by the hon. Minister of Official Languages to ensure that the necessary measures for ensuring the vitality and development of these communities will be included in a new action plan.

In closing, this budget is fabulous news for the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and Canadians across the country. It is a responsible, well-balanced budget that respects its commitments to Canadians and will help our country to move forward in the year to come.

I want to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for his work and the consultations he held to produce budget 2008.

•(1325)

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

I am pleased to join the debate here today on the budget, although we are unhappy that, with this budget, the Conservative government passed up an opportunity to help the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Here are some figures.

Since January 1, 2003, Quebec has lost 151,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. In Quebec, in 2007 alone, the manufacturing sector lost 49,000 jobs. In November 2007 alone, that is, one month after the Minister of Finance's economic statement, 11,700 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector, which represents 71% of jobs lost in this sector in all of Canada in November 2007. In 2007, 90,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector in Canada, of which over half were lost in Quebec.

*Government Orders*

Must I remind the House that Quebec will receive only a meagre 22% of the assistance offered by the Conservatives' aid package? Quebec represents 28% of all jobs in the manufacturing and forestry sectors in Canada. This amounts to 51%, if we take the job losses, and therefore the needs, into account. This demonstrates how much this major crisis in the manufacturing and forestry sectors is affecting us. In short, of the 51,000 manufacturing jobs lost in nearly five years in Quebec, most of them, 56%, have been lost since the Conservatives came to power only 21 months ago.

Indeed, since the Conservatives came to power, one in every seven manufacturing jobs has been lost in Quebec. Since April 2005, including related activities such as logging and transportation, the forestry industry has lost 21,000 jobs in Quebec. The wood products manufacturing sector alone lost 12,700 jobs last year, including 5,800 in the paper subsector. It was just as bad in 2006. In fact, the situation is only getting worse and worse. According to industry analysts, this year is shaping up to be even worse than previous years.

The forestry industry is extremely important to Quebec. Quebec has 88,000 jobs in forestry, sawmills and pulp and paper plants; 230 cities and towns depend primarily on the forestry industry, and 160 cities and towns depend exclusively on it. Nearly half the forest communities in Canada are in Quebec. The forestry industry is a key reason for settlement patterns in Quebec.

To our way of thinking, the budget was supposed to make up for the many weaknesses in the Conservative aid package. I would remind hon. members that Quebec will receive \$216 million over three years, which is clearly not enough to meet industry needs.

For all these reasons, the budget was an opportunity for the federal government to recognize this major crisis in the manufacturing and forestry industries and demonstrate its sensitivity to the workers and all the communities affected. But this government's *laissez-faire* attitude and ideological obstinacy are undermining Quebec's whole industrial base. That is why the Bloc Québécois will vote against this budget.

The Bloc Québécois is certainly not alone in voicing these criticisms, which are the criticisms of Quebeckers. We have only one purpose: to defend Quebec's interests. Quebeckers have unanimously spoken out against the Conservative budget. Nothing for Quebec, lots for Ontario and the rest to the debt: those are the three pillars on which this budget is based.

Here are some reactions from Quebec to the Conservative budget. Jean-Luc Trahan, CEO of the Quebec manufacturers and exporters association, had this to say:

We said that these measures [the throne speech, the October economic statement and the aid package] were not enough, and we still feel that way...The budget shows that manufacturers and exporters are not among the [federal] government's priorities.

Avrim Lazar, president and CEO of the Forest Products Association of Canada, said this:

The forest products industry is facing the worst economic conditions it has seen in many decades...[the federal government] is not doing its part.

● (1330)

Marta Morgan, vice-president of the Forest Products Association of Canada, said this about extending the accelerated capital cost allowance treatment for three years:

This is clearly not enough. We were hoping for more aggressive tax measures.

The Quebec federation of chambers of commerce said:

Not only did it [the government] not answer the call, but the financial aid sharing formula is still based on the provinces' demographic weight. This hurts Quebec, because the economic weight of its manufacturing sector is more significant. It is also very disappointing to see that the [government] is providing \$250 million for an innovation fund for the automotive industry, which is primarily present in Ontario, while not giving one penny to other manufacturing and forestry industries in Quebec.

Guy Chevrette, the president and CEO of the Quebec Forest Industry Council said:

—the [Conservative] government has just thrown in the towel and wants market forces to clean up the forestry industry—

Quebec's Minister of Finance, Monique Jérôme-Forget, said:

Despite this very problematic environment for economic growth, you will understand that, of course, I am very envious of the federal government's \$20 billion margin, over three years .... Because ... I find myself with a \$200 million margin, perhaps a little more, if I include the one time [payment] of \$216 million that it made to the manufacturing sector.

She also said that she was hoping to get more money for older workers because, in her opinion, the current aid is inadequate. And then Radio-Canada added this:

It is the same thing regarding the forestry and manufacturing sectors, since the moneys allocated are those that had already been announced by the Harper government in January. And [according to the minister], Quebec was expecting to get more.

The Bloc Québécois had made a number of demands. We asked that a loan and loan guarantee program be created to help businesses modernize their production equipment. We asked that the accelerated capital cost allowance for production equipment be extended. We asked that the research and development tax credit be made refundable, so that all businesses could take advantage of it, even if they are at the development stage or are experiencing problems, and are not yet turning a profit. We wanted the government to reinstate the Technology Partnerships Canada program, through which it invests in industrial research and development. Finally, we wanted the government to increase the budget of the program focused on small and medium businesses.

The Bloc Québécois also asked for the establishment of a program to support energy and ethanol production with forest waste, which is a state of the art technology. We also wanted an income support program for older workers, and we asked that the employment insurance program be improved.

*Government Orders*

Now let us take a look at what is in the budget. In its unanimous report submitted in February 2007, the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology asked the government to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for production equipment and rolling stock. This is the only one of the many recommendations that the committee included in its voluminous, unanimously adopted report that the government chose to follow. Yet even this measure's effectiveness is limited. It is a tax cut, so it will help only those companies whose financial health is good enough to pay taxes. The capital cost allowance was announced last year for a two-year period, so the measure was already in place for 2008-09. The budget announcement will not come into effect until next year. This year, we get nothing.

I would also note that the government is introducing a new accelerated capital cost allowance measure for oil companies. This accelerated capital cost allowance measure applies to oil companies that invest in carbon capture and storage.

The government announced the end of the accelerated capital cost allowance for the tar sands, then turned around and reintroduced it for oil companies that invest in carbon capture and storage, and that is in addition to the \$250 million in subsidies for carbon capture and storage projects. Instead of putting an end to these kinds of gifts for oil companies, as the Bloc wanted, Ottawa is introducing new ones.

The budget provides \$250 million in subsidies over five years for investment in research and development, but only for the auto industry. There is nothing at all for Quebec's leading sectors even though the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology asked the government to support research and development in leading sectors. Several industrial sectors are concentrated in Quebec, including environmental technologies, the pharmaceutical industry, reproduction technologies, advanced transportation and new materials. All of these businesses would have benefited from renewed federal investment in research and development.

• (1335)

Ottawa decided to support just one: Ontario's auto industry. We think that is an outright insult.

The government has also made minor changes to tax credits for research and development, which is not a bad thing, but it is not much. It is a kind of administrative fine-tuning, not a brand new measure.

I see that my time has expired. In short, this failure to do anything for the manufacturing and forestry sectors is a tragedy. This budget does not give us our fair share—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas for questions and comments.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Trois-Rivières for her speech, which wonderfully illustrated the Bloc's position on the budget. I would like to ask her about something she did not have a chance to discuss, which is the problem we now have in the House of Commons with the position of the other parties, in particular that of the Liberal Party.

What does she make of this position? Most speeches in this House are along the same lines as the arguments of the Bloc Québécois, that

this budget does not benefit the forestry and manufacturing companies, workers, and so on. But this party is prepared to vote in favour of the budget.

What does she think about that?

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, I have trouble understanding the Liberal Party's reasons. I think the worst part about the fact that the Liberals are voting for this budget is that they gave up very quickly, thus losing out on any bargaining power and pressure that existed before this budget was tabled.

I will remind members that there is still time for the government to change, and instead of putting everything towards the debt, the government should help the manufacturing and forestry companies. They must absolutely not put \$10 billion towards the debt this year. If there is an industry in crisis, the government should intervene and resolve the problem.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part today in this very important debate concerning the economic life of many communities in Quebec and in Canada. My colleague from Trois-Rivières was eloquent. We must intercede en masse to make the Conservative government rethink its position with regard to the use of the surplus. My colleague indicated that the surplus for the current year alone totals over \$13 billion and is estimated at \$8 billion for next year. That means that more than \$21 billion over two years could be used to boost the economy in troubled sectors, as indicated earlier by my colleague.

What is wrong here is that these choices are guided by values that are not our own, that are not the values of Quebecers. The Conservative values are based on a culture of war, a petroleum culture and a nuclear culture. Very significant budget items reflect these political choices, which in turn are accompanied by a series of secondary choices that shape the overall budget. I will try not to repeat my colleague's remarks because she provided a very descriptive analysis of the situation. I will seek to describe the political situation.

In ridings represented by Conservative MPs in Quebec, constituents often turn to us. This happens in ridings represented by Liberals as well, but in the past few months, this has occurred particularly in ridings represented by Conservative MPs, where people feel abandoned. In ridings represented by Conservatives, people feel abandoned.

Recently, on January 8, to be more specific, I was in the riding of Mégantic—L'Érable with my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska. We were there at the request of the workers. They told us that even when they call on their MP, he does nothing for them. They asked us to come see them and explain why the programs that existed before have been dropped and why they no longer receive any help today. They no longer get any help because of the cuts that were made in employment insurance. Older workers no longer get any help because in 1997, the Liberals eliminated the program for older worker adjustment, known as POWA.

*Government Orders*

We cannot always answer these requests, but from time to time we do meet with the people. On January 8, I went to the riding of Mégantic—L'Érable, represented by the Secretary of State (Agriculture), with my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska. Dozens of workers explained their situation to us. We held a press conference to outline the problems these workers are experiencing and the solution that should be found and recognized in the budget, the one that has just been brought down. In the days that followed, the Secretary of State (Agriculture), the Conservative member for that riding, said the following in the press:

We will work swiftly and enthusiastically with Quebec to support the vulnerable communities and laid-off workers through this new major national initiative to help them build a better future.

People were starting to be happy. They thought good things were coming with a statement like that. Immediately thereafter, the Conservative member called on my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska, who can back me up on this, and said, “I invite the Bloc member [from Richmond—Arthabaska] from a neighbouring riding to do the same”. He wanted people to be positive about the upcoming budget, which they were. He added:

This will certainly do more for the voters than the recent activities in my riding of Mégantic—L'Érable involving a useless press conference.

He called it “useless”.

● (1340)

He said it is useless to describe the workers' circumstances and ask for help for them because their industry is in crisis.

The Secretary of State added:

Fortunately, they have a government that is delivering results so as the turn today's economic challenges into opportunities for tomorrow and make Quebec and Canada stronger and more prosperous in the long term.

That is what he said in response to our press conference. He called it useless, as though what these workers are going through had no importance or meaning. If he says that what we did was useless, then he should also say the same thing about the statement by Quebec's finance minister, because she said exactly the same thing we did. Here is what she said.

The government likes to make a big show of saying that it is speaking on behalf of the workers in the industry, the people who are going through the crisis. But the government's values are not the values embraced by the people we represent. The hon. member should go and tell the workers and the companies—

**An hon. member:** —that they are useless.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** —that they are useless.

The minister said exactly what my colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska said: that the new federal budget does not reflect Quebec's priorities.

He said that the budget had to reflect Quebec's priorities. I was there when he said it. She said that the budget does not reflect Quebec's priorities. At a press conference, Ms. Jérôme-Forget said:

I am disappointed... With \$20 billion worth of room to manoeuvre, the minister... had plenty of opportunity to announce new support measures for the forestry and manufacturing industries

That is what my colleague said. Was what she said useless? If it was, then he should say so again today, here in the House, and he should say so in his riding and the other ridings where he goes around posturing. The minister added that despite that, the federal minister had “made choices” that did not meet the needs expressed by the Government of Quebec. That is what she condemned.

It is not just the Bloc that is saying so. My colleague who spoke before me mentioned that all the industry stakeholders and major players in Quebec had spoken out against this budget and had said that it did not represent Quebecers' economic or social values.

Let us now take a look at older workers. We met with about twenty of them when we travelled there. The hon. member can attest to that. They told us that they had been abandoned. They asked what would happen. We told them that the state, the federal government, had set up a training program to encourage people to rejoin the labour force. If we take a closer look—and this is where the government is investing even more—we realize that this is not a problem, because older workers are willing to back to work when there is work is available, and when they can do the job and have the proper training to do it. Then, there is no problem.

However, what do we tell those for whom there is no work available, and those whose basic training does not allow them to retrain for existing jobs in the riding, in the constituency? Are we going to have to endorse the Conservative government's position and tell these 55, 57 or 60 year old people to move to Alberta? They have families. Are we going to tell them to sell their houses or whatever, move to Alberta and work there for next to nothing? In Alberta, those who earn good salaries are workers who are qualified, who have proper training.

There are still 880,000 people in this country who rely on food banks. About 14% of them are workers, and the highest rate of workers relying on food banks is in Alberta. Why? Because these people were uprooted and made to work for a pittance. This is merely displacing poverty.

● (1345)

Such is the situation presented by this budget, and this is what the Liberal Party supports, along with the Conservatives. It is shameful. To vote with the Conservatives on their budget is to support war, oil and nuclear weapons. It is to support ideas that kill.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the following. In Donnacona, I had the opportunity to attend a demonstration held by employees who were worried their plant would shut down. That plant is now closed. In Shawinigan, I also met with workers where 530 jobs had been lost.

Because of these job losses and beyond just the numbers, we are seeing families, women, children and communities that are falling apart. I see it in my riding, in Trois-Rivières. The paper mills are also experiencing difficulties. I would like to ask my colleague whether the Conservative members from Quebec are insensitive, or whether they are not acting because the caucus is dominated by western Canada and by right-wing values that we do not share?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague raises an important point. In my opinion, this is merely a question of right-wing ideology. For anyone who belongs to that party or subscribes to that ideology, there is no point in having good intentions. We saw the hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean who had promised to save everyone in the forestry industry, but voted to force them into poverty. He voted against both motions we presented last fall to introduce a program and revitalize the forestry industry.

The other Conservative members from Quebec also voted against those motions. Yet they are all grappling with the problems described by my colleague. It is not unique to her area, where the workers are being equally hard hit by plant closures. My hon. colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska, whom I referred to earlier, must also deal with the closure of the Jeffrey mine, which will mean laying off another 200 workers or more in July.

We could go from one riding to the next, including ridings such as Louis-Hébert and Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, for instance. It is shameful. In that riding, people can no longer even go see their MP. He ran off. People call me and want me to go meet with them, which I did last year. I am going to return there. Their MP is running away from them. He is hiding because he cannot defend the positions that he votes for here. It is completely shameful and does not represent the will of his constituents.

• (1350)

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague for his eloquence and, more importantly, for the passion and heart he has put into this issue, which is obviously a much more emotional one than some others.

He mentioned our visit to Mégantic—L'Érable to meet with workers from the areas of Plessisville and l'Érable. He described what happened at that meeting requested by these men and women, particularly the women who used to work in the textile industry, because the member for Mégantic—L'Érable was refusing to meet with them a second time. In a previous meeting, he tried to explain his government's position but, beyond that, he wanted nothing more to do with these women. That was it; they had become unimportant, useless to borrow a word he uses all the time. It is totally unacceptable for a duly elected MP to behave like that.

In my constituency office, I deal with the concerns of people from that member's riding, who is part of the cabinet in a way, in his capacity as secretary of state. He is a pseudo-minister. That is pretty outrageous. I would like my colleague to tell us what makes the representations and demands of these people useless, to use the word of the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

**Mr. Yves Lessard:** Mr. Speaker, whenever these people came to us, we did our best to represent them here and to try to change things for the better. Perhaps I can talk about this some other time.

The question is a very relevant one. To say that these situations are useless and insignificant is to refuse to assume one's responsibilities, when in fact our primary responsibility as MPs is to ensure that there are measures to support these people, particularly the most vulnerable ones, when they are faced with a problem.

We talked about the plight of older workers, but the same goes for older people who qualify for the guaranteed income supplement.

They were deprived of \$3.3 billion. This budget still does not even recognize that the government owes that money to these people. The government still owes guaranteed income supplement benefits to 43,000 Quebecers. The government is depriving them of that money. That is truly scandalous. It is the same thing with the misappropriation of the employment insurance fund. We are talking about \$54 billion. That money belongs to the unemployed.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my speaking time with my colleague, the hon. member for Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission.

At lunchtime today, I had the privilege of addressing the Outaouais chamber of commerce to outline the government's budget plan and principles. As we know, most businesspeople experience the daily reality not only of the constraints and obligations imposed by corporate budgets but also the possibilities created by such budgets.

Of course, the Canadian government's budget is much more complex than that of the companies and institutions whose representatives I met at this luncheon today. Nevertheless, the budget unveiled by the Minister of Finance last week and the budgets that our businesspeople and family heads may be preparing have something fundamental in common: when the goal is fuzzy, the means to achieve this goal cannot be efficient. In other words, both in the House of Commons and in the chamber of commerce, a clear vision and a specific plan are required. Above all, courage and determination to follow through are necessary, even when the times are hard, and especially when they are.

From the three budgets we have brought down since we took office, it is clear that our government is following a specific course based on sound principles.

The first principle is the following: Canadians are overtaxed, and Canada's debt load is too high. From its inception, the Conservative Party has voiced that conviction. Now that we are in government, we are taking decisive action to reduce the tax burden of all Canadians and pay down the national debt.

The steps our government has taken to date will produce \$200 billion in tax relief this year and over the next five years, \$140 billion of which will be for individuals. Never in the past 50 years has this country seen a lower tax rate.

In addition, taxes will continue to decline, thanks to our tax-back guarantee. So, as we pay down the federal debt, interest savings are being returned to Canadians in tax relief. Because we are reducing the federal debt by more than \$37 billion, including \$10.2 billion this fiscal year, personal income tax reductions provided under the tax-back guarantee will amount to \$2 billion.

We have reduced consumption taxes, income tax, corporate taxes, excise taxes and even taxes on savings through our new tax-free savings account.

*Statements by Members*

● (1355)

*[English]*

The tax-free savings account is the single most important personal savings vehicle since the introduction of the RRSP in 1957. It is the first account of its kind in Canadian history. It is a flexible, registered, general purpose account that will allow Canadians to watch their savings grow tax-free.

*[Translation]*

These measures will result in a rather significant improvement of the financial situation of all Canadians. And we are not stopping there. Over the coming years, our government will continue to reduce taxes and to repay the debt.

Our government also believes that we, as individuals, businesses and public administration, must live within our means. That is why we are currently conducting a thorough review of the expenditures of every federal department. That program review is also designed to improve the services provided to the public, and to ensure that these services reflect the priorities of Canadians.

We have reformed the employment insurance program so that it will adequately fulfill the role for which it was created. From now on, any surplus will be used to reduce EI premiums, and not to help out the government.

Here is another Conservative principle: initiative and effort are the best instruments to ensure the economic progress of society, and the financial security of individuals and families. Without private businesses and individual responsibilities, we simply cannot support a strong and sustainable economy. The government wants to ensure that Canada is a country of choice to launch a business and to make it grow.

*[English]*

Reducing our overall tax burden at the federal level is providing a terrific shot of adrenalin for the national economy. Actions taken by the government since 2006 are providing \$21 billion in incremental tax relief to Canadians and Canadian businesses this year. This is a significant and substantial economic stimulus equivalent to 1.4% of Canada's GDP. As a share of the economy, this is significantly greater than the stimulus package offered by our American neighbours.

*[Translation]*

Given the increasingly stiffer international competition, we must take measures to encourage investments and to increase our competitive advantage.

Some may know the old joke, "How do you start a small business in Canada?"; the answer being, "Start with a big one and just wait".

We are experiencing the opposite. And the best way to ensure that our businesses can maintain their viability, expand and conquer new markets is to relieve them of excessive taxes and regulations. That is why we abolished the federal tax on capital—

● (1400)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order, please.

*[English]*

I hate to interrupt the minister, but it is 2 o'clock. He will have three minutes after question period to conclude his speech.

Statements by members.

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**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government works hard for official language minority communities and we are taking concrete action to ensure the vitality of French and English in Canada.

*[Translation]*

In the last throne speech, we undertook to propose a new strategy for implementing the next phase of the action plan for official languages.

The Prime Minister and the minister of Official Languages announced last December the appointment of Bernard Lord as special adviser for consultations on linguistic duality and official languages. In the 2008 budget, our government reaffirmed this commitment.

I am pleased to announce to this House that the report on the Government of Canada's consultations on linguistic duality and official languages has been submitted to the minister.

*[English]*

This report and the consultations that took place will shape the development of the next phase of the action plan for official languages.

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**INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY**

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, February 24, I joined members of my community to raise funds for a monument in Toronto commemorating International Mother Language Day. UNESCO declared February 21 of each year International Mother Language Day. It is meant to represent the solidarity among languages and multiculturalism.

The monument will be a symbol of the 325 major languages, through which more than six billion people engage in dialogue, inspiring tolerance and understanding while helping to preserve culture, heritage and diversity. Toronto, a city which is one of the most multicultural in the world, will now join only Tokyo and Sydney in commemorating both the diversity and solidarity that language creates with an International Mother Language Day monument.

*Statements by Members*

As the chair of the Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group, I am proud to represent this initiative which was inspired by the language movement day that took place on February 21, 1952 in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. This initiative is embraced fully by the Bangladesh community in my riding of Beaches—East York. The monument has been designed by a local Bangladeshi Canadian architect, Nazmul Jaigirdar.

I applaud the International Mother Language Day monument committee for this initiative and symbol of diversity and togetherness.

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[*Translation*]**CONCEPT MAT**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a Matane business, Concept Mat, was recently awarded two prizes at the *Trophées Innovation 2007* gala in Montreal.

Concept Mat earned accolades in two of the five categories, specifically, “innovative product or technology—residential” and “innovative product or technology—sustainable development”.

The company broke new ground by creating environmentally friendly walls made of soya vegetable oil and recycled plastic. Expanded with water, these walls are air tight, have superior soundproofing qualities and are even recyclable.

The eco-concept walls are mildew resistant, emit no harmful substances for the ozone layer and have the advantage of being fire retardant.

This business from my riding is a good example not only of ecological innovation, but also of sustainable development.

Congratulations to the management and staff at Concept Mat in Matane.

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[*English*]**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the budget that the Conservatives introduced last week does nothing to help the 10,000 people in the forestry industry in B. C. who have lost their jobs in the last year.

Communities across my riding, such as, Fort St. James, Burns Lake, Houston, Smithers, the Hazeltons and Terrace have all lost because of the government's sellout in the softwood lumber negotiations. Add to that the pine beetle devastation and what we have is a perfect storm.

Tonight, when the Liberals help the government pass this bad budget and give nothing more than help to their Conservative buddies in the oil sands and across industries that do not need the help, resource communities across this country will suffer. That is why I will not be supporting this budget.

On behalf of the people who sent me here, I cannot support a budget that does nothing to meet the needs of people in northwestern British Columbia.

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**TACKLING VIOLENT CRIME ACT**

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, how many times have we seen a violent criminal get off with a light sentence only to reoffend? How many times have we watched repeat offenders prey upon our communities?

This past Thursday, Bill C-2, the tackling violent crime act, received royal assent. This legislation makes changes to Canada's Criminal Code that will protect Canadians against those who commit serious and violent crimes. It was finally passed after being delayed by the Liberal dominated Senate for three months.

The Liberals attempted to water it down. They could not resist coddling the criminals. Their supporters, the defence lawyers, thought that ambiguity in law would mean more billable hours. Liberals do not want a streamlined judicial system.

Canadian families need real protection against serial criminals. The new law strengthens the Criminal Code by bringing in tougher mandatory jail times as well as better defence from adult sexual predators by increasing the age of protection from 14 years to 16 years.

Canada's government has made streets safer for the public and life harder for criminals.

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● (1405)

**MEDAL OF BRAVERY**

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had the honour to attend a very moving ceremony at Rideau Hall where Her Excellency the Governor General presented decorations of bravery.

Among the 41 heroes honoured was Wayne Russell of Williams Harbour, Labrador. On January 2, 2006, Wayne rescued a fellow snowmobiler who had broken through the ice just a short distance from the small isolated community, which by the way is my hometown. He raced to the scene on his own snow machine, broke through the ice and nearly ended up in the water himself. He was able to get close enough to throw a rope to the victim and secure him until a boat could bring both of them to safety.

For his selfless courage, Wayne was awarded the Medal of Bravery.

I congratulate him and the other recipients of the decorations for bravery. They are an example to us all of how the worst of circumstances can bring out the best of our humanity.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS**

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks, I have repeatedly asked members of the Bloc Québécois to talk about their record here in the House. The reality is that the members of the Bloc Québécois simply raise their voices to mask their powerlessness.

The Bloc is all talk and no real, concrete action for families, workers and seniors.

I cannot help but conclude that the Bloc Québécois record in 18 years is lighter than a blank sheet of paper. In fact, the Bloc Québécois could carry on for another 118 years and never advance a single major issue, resolve a single problem or pass a single bill. The only thing gaining ground with the Bloc members—and everyone knows it—is their pension.

I am proud to be a Quebecker who can take action within a government that delivers the goods for Quebec families and workers.

I invite the Bloc members to listen to their supporters and pack up. Now there is a party that is not limited to defending their interests, but can take action in their best interests.

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**LYDIA ANGIYOU**

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my gratitude and admiration for a woman from Ivujivik, a small village in northern Quebec, who received a Medal of Bravery for risking her life to save the lives of children in her village.

In February 2006, Lydia Angiyou confronted a polar bear to protect her son and his friends. When she saw the bear approaching the children, Ms. Angiyou ran towards it. In an attempt to scare it away, she yelled and kicked at it, but the bear swatted her back in the face. Alerted by one of the children, a neighbour rushed to the scene, armed with a rifle. Seeing Ms. Angiyou wrestling with the bear, he fired a few warning shots. The sound diverted the bear's attention from Ms. Angiyou just long enough for the man to fire again and neutralize the animal.

Once again, I have nothing but admiration for the courage shown by Lydia Angiyou.

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[English]

**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, February 26, the House of Commons witnessed a third straight budget that provides lower taxes, less debt and continued emphasis on individual Canadians' needs and goals.

This is in sharp contrast to the Liberals' demand to raise the GST, the NDP's call to spend, spend and spend some more. We cannot forget the Bloc Québécois members, who whine because, unlike Conservative MPs, they cannot deliver for their constituents.

Conservatives have worked to put individuals ahead of bureaucracy. In this budget we chose to emphasize a savings plan to allow Canadians to put \$5,000 each year in investments out of the reach of big government forever. It is a measure that will give Canadians more freedom to control their destiny, a plan that stops the taxman from taking what rightfully belongs to the people of Canada.

The GST is down. Income taxes are down. The debt is down. While the opposition may not like these changes, this is good news for Canadians because it means that in the end, Canadians' take home is up.

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● (1410)

**HEALTH CARE**

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's emergency rooms are in crisis, a crisis so bad that fire marshals were recently called to the Royal Columbian Hospital in British Columbia. They said that the level of overcrowding is so dangerous that it cannot be tolerated.

This is not an isolated problem. It is a chronic national, lethal, systemic crisis that has to be rectified immediately. As an emergency room physician, I have had to treat people in hallways, on chairs and benches without the privacy and dignity these patients deserve.

The underlying problem is a lack of funds for hospital beds, chronic care facilities, and outpatient treatment health care workers. Canada's emergency room physicians are desperately trying to get the federal government to act in the name of patient safety but with no success.

Now, the current Conservative government has wasted billions of dollars leaving little room for federal spending on health. This is appalling. Will the government give an emergency injection of cash to tackle the ER overcrowding crisis, or will it simply stick its head in the sand and ignore this crisis? It is a matter of life and death.

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week was a great week for Souris—Moose Mountain, and Estevan in particular. It was also good news for Saskatchewan and the country of Canada as a whole.

Budget 2008 allocated \$240 million to Saskatchewan to set the stage for world leading technology to occur in carbon capture and storage.

It positions Estevan, Saskatchewan, the city in which I live, for a \$1.4 billion investment to ensure clean coal can provide a source of electricity for Saskatchewan's booming economy.

It is a positive step to reduce greenhouse gases and to improve our environment. It will provide for a reduction of nearly 3,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per day, or a reduction of approximately one million tonnes per year.

Also, the town of Pangman in my riding produced a hero in the name of Barry Kessler who last week was awarded the Governor General's Medal of Bravery. The award was for his heroic actions on August 30, 2004 when he rescued a farmer and neighbour by pulling him from a burning tractor.

We are proud of Barry and congratulate him.

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#### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget is deeply flawed, with massive giveaways for the wealthiest and crumbs for the poorest of the poor.

In the 1990s the Liberals dragged Canada's international development assistance from 0.53% down to 0.23% of gross national income.

In 2005 Parliament adopted unanimously an NDP motion committing Canada to meet our 0.7% ODA obligations by 2015 in accordance with the millennium development goals. The New Democrat budget infused crucial funding toward those goals.

Three Conservative budgets bring us no closer to meeting our global poverty reduction obligations. Development aid is stagnant at 0.3%.

While Conservative senators block the more and better aid bill, Bill C-293, successor to the NDP bill, Bill C-243, undermining transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, the world's poorest of the poor suffer along with Canada's reputation as a caring nation.

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#### CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the network of centres of excellence is supposed to be a national program of partnerships between the public, private and academic sectors to help commercialize research across the country. Yet Atlantic Canada was shut out of the last round of awards, even though an excellent project proposal on wind energy made it to the final cut.

This project had the financial support of the government of Prince Edward Island to the tune of \$4 million and would have been located at the Wind Energy Institute of Canada at North Cape, P.E.I. We would have been able to build on that success story.

The limiting of Atlantic Canada to a peripheral role sends a very negative message. How can we ever catch up economically if the federal government refuses to invest in the region in an area where the province is prepared to step up to the plate and in an area where we have an advantage?

Are we being written out of any meaningful role in this country? Of the last 18 awards, Atlantic Canada got one.

I call upon ACOA to provide the funds required to establish the centre of excellence in North Cape now that it is painfully obvious the national selection process will never give us a fair hearing.

#### Statements by Members

[Translation]

#### SOCIAL HOUSING

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very worried about the future of our most disadvantaged citizens. Social housing is seriously lacking for thousands of men, women and children who do not have decent homes.

A number of federal spending programs on social and affordable housing will end in March 2009. What will happen after that time? These federal commitments for cooperative housing, which have been an effective solution since the 1970s, are expiring, although no renewal process has been proposed by this government. March 31, 2009, will also mark the end of the homelessness partnership initiative.

People who work in the field are disappointed that the Minister of Finance decided to ignore the recommendations made by the United Nations special rapporteur, who denounced the housing conditions endured by too many families and called on the federal government to invest the money needed to ensure a long term renewal of the programs.

The Conservatives are insensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society.

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●(1415)

#### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this week, women around the world will be celebrating their international day. This year's theme is, "Strong Women, Strong World".

We will remember the pioneering Canadian women whose determination made it possible for women to be recognized as people.

Nevertheless, let us not forget that a Canadian woman today earns just 71¢ for every dollar a Canadian man earns.

Let us not forget that this Conservative government eliminated the court challenges program, which helped women.

Let us not forget that this Conservative government abolished the law commission.

Let us not forget that this Conservative government cut 12 of the 16 Status of Women Canada regional offices.

We salute Canadian women and call on this government not to make any more decisions that will hinder their progress.

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[English]

#### ETHICS

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have been inventing false smears against our government for a long time. Normally they do not have the guts to say them outside the House of Commons. Well, this time they got sloppy.

### Oral Questions

Without any proof, they have made outrageous accusations of criminal activity. This devastatingly defamatory attack is absolutely false, is contradicted by Chuck Cadman's own words, and the Prime Minister is demanding a full apology from the Liberal leader.

The real question is, if they thought there was a crime, why did the Liberals hold back this attack for more than a year, until after their climbdown on the tackling violent crime act, until after their climbdown on our budget, until they were forced into months of humiliating back downs on votes here in the House of Commons?

Why is it that the Liberal leader had to fall into a period of leadership crisis before he threw this smear out in the House of Commons and outside this place? Why will he not stand up now and apologize?

\* \* \*

#### LENA JACOBS

**Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the remembrance of Lena Jacobs who passed away on February 23, 2008.

Lena Jacobs, mother of Chief Gibby Jacob, was born on the Mission reserve in North Vancouver, British Columbia on February 9, 1910. At age 98 she was the eldest member of the Squamish First Nation.

Yet, we rejoice in her life. We will remember and treasure her love for her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and for her wisdom and knowledge of her community.

Mrs. Jacobs instilled her teachings and values of her culture and language upon her people, and she will be greatly missed. She was one of the few fluent speakers of the Squamish First Nation language.

She is remembered for her active role with the Squamish First Nation, Your Grandchildren's Upbringing Elder Language Authority program, and as a loyal member of Saint Paul's parish.

Mrs. Jacobs was a lady of courage and dedication. She was a loved and respected elder whose legacy will continue to thrive for generations to come.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### ETHICS

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has tried everything to avoid answering questions about his party's million dollar bribe. He has even resorted to threats of lawsuits. Well, it is going to take much more than the threat of a lawsuit to stop us from getting to the truth.

Is the Prime Minister willing to change his story? Is he ready to tell the truth?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is that in the past several months, as the problems of the Liberal Party and its leader have mounted, they have engaged

in more and more extreme accusations, going to the point last week of publishing on their website a series of false and unfounded allegations of criminal misconduct on my part.

The truth is that this will prove to be in court the biggest mistake the leader of the Liberal Party has ever made.

● (1420)

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is a tape of the Prime Minister. On that tape, the author of the book, Mr. Zytaruk, asks the Prime Minister whether he knows anything about the \$1 million insurance policy. Anyone who was not aware of what had happened would have asked what Mr. Zytaruk meant and why he was talking about \$1 million. But the Prime Minister answered that he was not aware of the details. The Prime Minister therefore knew that an offer had been made.

How could he have been so lacking in judgment and so morally bankrupt?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, in recent months, the leader of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party have decided to deal with their own problems by making more and more extreme accusations, without proof.

What is more, last week, the leader of the Liberal Party and his party posted allegations of criminal conduct on my part on a website. That will not help solve the problems of the leader of the Liberal Party; it will prove to be the biggest error in judgment in his political career.

[English]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the mistake of judgment we are talking about is the one made by the Prime Minister. He had knowledge prior to the question that has been asked of him and knowledge that there was an offer being made to Mr. Cadman.

There is a tape. The Prime Minister is on tape discussing financial considerations for Mr. Cadman.

Will the Prime Minister call in the RCMP to investigate immediately?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that the government does not direct the activity of police authorities.

The leader of the Liberal Party today in his questions repeated once again an allegation that there was a million dollar bribe offered.

We will be watching with great interest to see whether, after question period, the leader of the Liberal Party publishes those questions on his website.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for the charming letter he sent me this morning. I was very impressed.

In the taped interview with Mr. Zytaruk at Mr. Cadman's residence, the Prime Minister clearly mentions Mr. Cadman's "financial insecurity" and financial considerations he might lose due to an election.

*Oral Questions*

I want to know whether that was why the two individuals, who in the Prime Minister's own words were "legitimately representing the party", offered Mr. Cadman a financial inducement to change his vote?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only financial inducement to change a vote was offered to the member for Newmarket—Aurora and we know what she did with that vote.

With regard to our government and Mr. Cadman, the only conversation that took place was in regard to our desire to have Chuck Cadman rejoin the Conservative Party and run for us in the subsequent election campaign. As Chuck Cadman himself said in television interviews, there was in fact no deal offered.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the tape made by a reporter, Mr. Zytaruk, we have a Prime Minister who clearly states that he is aware that two representatives of his party tried to change Mr. Cadman's vote by making him a questionable offer.

The key question is very simple: why did the Prime Minister not put an end to this pathetic attempt?

• (1425)

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can invent their policy, but they cannot invent the facts. The facts are clear. There were three people at that meeting. Each of those three people has said that the only thing that was discussed was our desire to bring Chuck Cadman back into our caucus and have him run as a Conservative candidate in the next election.

Those are the facts. That is all that was discussed. All the Liberals' accusations are completely false.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, by way of defence, the government stated that Chuck Cadman himself declared in an interview that he never received a financial offer. In the interview, Mr. Cadman referred to the meeting he had with the Prime Minister on May 19, 2005. The government's defence does not stand up because two advisers close to the current Prime Minister, Messrs. Finley and Flanagan, visited Mr. Cadman on May 17, 2005 and, according to Mrs. Cadman, made him an offer.

Will the Prime Minister admit that Mr. Cadman never commented publicly on the May 17 meeting, when Mr. Finley and Mr. Flanagan allegedly made an actual financial offer.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Chuck Cadman was very clear. The party representatives asked Mr. Cadman to rejoin the Conservative caucus and therefore to obtain the Conservative nomination. Naturally, he would have had the party's support, as do all our candidates, for his bid to be re-elected in his riding. Mr. Cadman was clear on this point.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is a somewhat surprising version of the story. Everyone knew that Mr. Cadman was terminally ill and it is somewhat surprising that

they would ask him to run in the next election. However, what is clear is that the Prime Minister said in an interview, "Of the offer to Chuck, it was only to replace financial considerations he might lose due to an election—"

Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that when money is offered to influence a vote, no matter the amount or the form, it constitutes a financial offer and is a criminal offence.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, I have answered this question. Mr. Cadman publicly answered these questions almost three years ago. The facts are clear. It is quite proper to have someone who voted regularly with the Conservative Party in the Conservative caucus.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during an interview in 2005, the Prime Minister showed that he was aware of discussions between representatives of his party and Chuck Cadman. In response to reporters' questions, he said, and I quote: "I don't know the details. I know that there were discussions." Later, he clarified that it was "only to replace financial considerations he might lose due to an election."

In light of that recording, will the Prime Minister admit that an offer was made to buy Mr. Cadman's vote? Is that not against the law?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, no such offer was made. The only offer presented to Mr. Cadman was the one the Prime Minister talked about. We wanted Mr. Cadman to run as the Conservative Party candidate if the budget vote triggered an election in 2005-06. The only offer that was made was to have Mr. Cadman run as a Conservative. That is all.

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, evidence is mounting concerning the offer made to Chuck Cadman. His wife, his daughter and his son-in-law have confirmed that Mr. Cadman told them that such an offer was indeed made. The fact that Donna Cadman is the Conservative Party candidate for the Surrey North riding reinforces the credibility of their statements.

Does the Prime Minister realize that extremely incriminating evidence about this affair is accumulating against the Conservatives?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** No, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps my colleague has not yet heard the news. Perhaps he should listen to what Mrs. Cadman said today. Once again, all I can say is that Mr. Cadman himself said that no inappropriate offers were made. Those are Mr. Cadman's own words. I can understand that the Bloc Québécois might not want to take my word for it, but they should take Chuck Cadman's word for it because during three separate interviews, two on television and one with a Vancouver radio station, he said that no such offer was made.

*Oral Questions*

• (1430)  
[English]

**TRADE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, since 1989 working families have been increasingly squeezed financially and that is why more and more leaders are saying that we have to amend NAFTA in order to fix this problem.

However, Canadians have become increasingly alarmed at reports that the Prime Minister's Office has been interfering in the democratic primaries with false accusations, trying to silence Barack Obama who simply wants to amend NAFTA. It is completely unacceptable for that kind of interference to be taking place.

Will the Prime Minister fire the source of the interference? Will he fire his chief of staff?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, without getting into the NAFTA issue, I understand the Canadian embassy in Washington has issued a statement indicating it regretted the fact that information has come out that would imply that Senator Obama has been saying different things in public than in private. The Government of Canada does not condone this and certainly regrets any implication.

I have watched the U.S. presidential campaign very closely. In my judgment, all of the leading candidates for both parties would continue the strong friendship and partnership that Canada and the United States enjoy.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I wish the Prime Minister would just watch it and not try to interfere with what is going on in the election on the other side of the border.

In fact, he should show some leadership for the working families of this country. Instead of interfering with the U.S. election, he should be grabbing hold of the opportunity to amend NAFTA to create stronger workers' rights, protect our environment, and protect our industries.

I ask the Prime Minister, instead of sticking his neck out for the Republican Party down there, why does he not stand up for working families right here?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit amused by the question from the leader of the NDP who is suggesting that we are all so powerful we could interfere in the American election and pick the president. This government does not claim that kind of power.

I certainly deny any allegation that this government has attempted to interfere in the American election. The American people will make the decision as to their next president. I am confident that whoever that person is, man or woman, Democrat or Republican, that person will continue the strong alliance, friendship and partnership that we enjoy with the United States.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that Conservative representatives tried to bribe Chuck Cadman but now they are trying to misquote and twist

his words from media interviews to defend themselves. Actually, however, those quotes just dig them in deeper.

The parliamentary secretary quoted a Global TV interview where Mr. Cadman said that no offers were made but that was about a meeting with Liberals. He was also asked about meeting the current Prime Minister, not a meeting with the two Conservative operatives.

Dona Cadman said again today that the meeting did happen. Why are the Conservatives twisting the words of Chuck Cadman?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague just mentioned the interview with Global that I cited in the House of Commons. I will read the entire thing right now.

Tara Nelson, from Global, interviewed Chuck Cadman and he said, "I was voting because two-thirds of my constituents were telling me they didn't want an election". She then asked, "You had a meeting with the Prime Minister prior to the vote? Did he offer you a deal?" He said, "No, absolutely nothing. There was never any deal offered". She said, "And the same with [the Prime Minister]?" He said, "Yeah, the same with [the Prime Minister]".

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. In a Vancouver—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We are on to the next question. The hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe has the floor.

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. In a Vancouver radio interview broadcast on June 12, 2005, Mr. Cadman was specifically asked about allegations of Conservative vote buying. His response was, "I think people have to interpret that the way they want to. There were certainly some offers made and some things along those lines about not opposing me and helping me with the finances of the campaign".

If the financial support that the Conservatives offered Mr. Cadman was not an inducement, just what was it?

• (1435)

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was our desire to see Chuck Cadman present himself as a Conservative in the following election campaign. Chuck Cadman was elected as a Conservative and was then elected as an independent. He supported this Prime Minister when he ran for the leadership of the Conservative Party and we wanted to see him serve as a Conservative member of caucus and to continue that going forward.

If the Liberals are really so outraged, why did they sit on this story for a year? They sat on it for a year because they wanted to wheel it out now because they have no confidence in their leader and they want to distract Canadians from the truth, which is that the Liberal Party has no policies that Canadians like.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when a member retires, he or she can convert his or her public life insurance policy to a private insurance policy with Industrial Alliance. It is more expensive and the benefits are less advantageous, but it is possible, and with no medical exam.

Did Tom Flanagan, Doug Finley or anyone else make an offer to Chuck Cadman to pay his higher premiums? And does such an offer comply with the Federal Accountability Act and the Parliament of Canada Act?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was no offer concerning life insurance, as my hon. colleague states in his question and as others have stated. Each of the three people at that meeting all clearly said that no such offer was made. It is clear, it is out in the open and everyone knows it.

[English]

The Liberals can keep on trying to push this but they cannot ignore the facts. The simple facts are that no offer for insurance was put forward. The three people who were at the meeting have said so and it is clear as day even if the Liberals do not want to recognize it.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, by converting his public life insurance policy into a private insurance policy, Chuck Cadman, who had terminal cancer, could have guaranteed his family's financial future.

Why does the Conservative government refuse to be transparent? If an offer really was not made, why did the Prime Minister simply not deny it when he was asked about it by a journalist in 2005?

[English]

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have this incredible way of taking a little bit of this and a little bit of that and, as I have said, trying to mash it together and turn it into some vast conspiracy.

The facts are clear on this and the facts were spoken clearly and plainly by Chuck Cadman on *CTV National News*, on Global and on CKNW in Vancouver. He said that there was no offer made in this regard.

The only thing that was discussed was our desire to have Chuck Cadman present himself as a Conservative candidate in a subsequent election campaign. That was all that was discussed. That was all that was offered. It was entirely appropriate. We wanted Chuck Cadman to present himself as a Conservative because Chuck was a dear friend of ours who believed in our agenda.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BILL C-10**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec's cultural community is worried. Bill C-10 on tax measures contains a

clause that redefines the conditions for obtaining a film production credit. This highly vague provision is a mistake and must be corrected.

Can the Minister of Canadian Heritage assure us that she will intervene to correct this mistake immediately, a mistake that does not reflect the intention of the legislators?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, this tax measure is not new. This measure was announced in 2003 by the previous government. It was reintroduced in 2006 and received support from all the opposition parties. The question I have today for the hon. Bloc Québécois member is the following. Why did she not speak up sooner if she had questions?

That said, in Quebec, SODEC also has measures in place to ensure that Canadian taxpayers do not end up sponsoring excessive violence or any heinous attacks against targeted groups in society.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are the ones who ask the questions and they are supposed to answer the questions.

The risk here is the undue use of a very broad provision that could be used as a censorship mechanism because it is confusing. Does the minister agree to respond favourably to the artistic community that is very worried and will she ask her finance colleague to propose an amendment to the bill to correct the situation?

● (1440)

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, this measure is not new. The opposition parties, including the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois, had an opportunity to ask questions on this. However, I presume that, as usual in the Bloc Québécois, they voted without even reading the bill.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Stupid idiot. Insipid. She is insipid.

\* \* \*

**SECURITIES INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec's finance minister is confused and annoyed by her federal counterpart's stubbornness in wanting to create a Canada-wide securities commission, in an attempt to encroach on yet another one of Quebec's exclusive jurisdictions. She advises the minister to mind his own business and scrap his plan.

Does the Minister of Finance plan on taking his colleague's recommendations and focusing his energy on fighting economic crimes that fall under his jurisdiction, instead of interfering with Quebec's jurisdictions?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a single commission would provide better enforcement of the acts and regulations.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

We recently appointed a committee, headed by Mr. Hockin, to look at drafting a bill that would respect the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories and respect the jurisdiction federally on this subject. This is not an academic point. We have a great challenge with respect to securities regulation in Canada that needs to be addressed to protect our capital markets and protect Canadian citizens.

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I see that the Minister of Transport is supporting the Minister of Finance. How can he, as a former member of the Quebec National Assembly, endorse the finance minister, whose objective is to strip Quebec of its jurisdictions to ensure that Toronto dominates the Canadian financial sector? The Minister of Transport should be ashamed.

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, our intention is to respect the various jurisdictions. In fact, Mr. Hockin's panel will report back, not only to me but also to the provincial and territorial ministers of finance.

Having said that, it is somewhat strange that, at the same time that the TSX and the Montreal Exchange are getting together willingly, the Bloc advocates for the location of a national carbon exchange in the city of Montreal at the same time that the member opposite argues against a common securities regulator for Canada.

\* \* \*

#### ETHICS

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want Canadians to believe that they only met with Chuck Cadman once, on May 19, but the Prime Minister's two operatives, his campaign chair, Doug Finley, and his former chief of staff, Tom Flanagan, also met with met Mr. Cadman two days earlier, on May 17. Of course, the Conservatives do not want to talk about that meeting.

When will the Prime Minister tell Canadians the truth about what really happened at that meeting on May 17?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Doug Finley and Tom Flanagan have publicly stated that they did not meet with Mr. Cadman on May 17. They have made that clear.

All we want is for the Liberals to simply accept the facts that are clear, that are on the table and that are unavoidable. Chuck Cadman said multiple times that there was no inappropriate deal. It is clear and it is on the table.

I will keep saying that until the Liberals accept it and, if they keep asking, I will keep saying it because they need to understand that is the simple fact of this case.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would be clear if the Prime Minister stood up and said no. It would be real easy to understand then.

In Tom Flanagan's book he admits that there was more than one meeting with Mr. Cadman in an effort to sway his vote. On page 215 of his book, Flanagan states, "Doug Finley wanted to make one last attempt to persuade Cadman to rejoin the Conservative caucus".

Dona Cadman again confirmed today that at one of those meetings the million dollar offer was made.

Are the Conservatives calling their candidate in Surrey North a liar?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals can keep trying to design and come up with these elaborate schemes and conspiracies but it is like designing a lead airplane; it cannot work.

They cannot develop a conspiracy that is devoid of facts and the facts on the table are clear: there was no such offer. The only thing that was put on the table for Chuck Cadman was our expressed desire to have him present himself as a Conservative candidate in the 2006 campaign, that we would help and support him in a nomination campaign and that we would help secure his re-election to the House of Commons.

Chuck Cadman was a great asset to the House. We wanted to see him re-elected as a Conservative and we were going to fight with Chuck to retain his seat for the people of Surrey North.

●(1445)

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know in a TV interview that Mr. Cadman said that he had received certain offers but did not mention a life insurance policy. We know he told his wife that he was offered a \$1 million policy and told his daughter and son-in-law the same thing.

We know the Prime Minister was aware that certain offers were being made to Mr. Cadman by people, as he put it, "legitimately representing" the Conservative Party.

Would the Prime Minister not agree, from his own life experiences, that under those circumstances it is far more likely one would decide to be less clear in a TV interview than with one's own wife, daughter and son-in-law?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for York Centre may want to call Chuck Cadman a liar in what he said on TV but we will not call Chuck Cadman a liar. He was clear. He was on the record. He was concise.

Chuck Cadman had a record in public life, both as a member of Parliament and, prior to that, as an advocate for victims of crime. He had an unblemished record of being a person who shot straight, who was honest and who was straightforward. He spoke the truth in those television interviews. He spoke the truth on the record when he said that no such offer was made.

We trust Chuck Cadman. We do not trust the Liberals who sat on this story for a year. They do not believe it. They are talking about all this righteous indignation but they do not believe what they are saying. We believe Chuck Cadman. We believe that he told the truth.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, through all the their noise and spin, we know that if what Mr. Cadman's widow, daughter and son-in-law are saying is true, this was about offering money for a vote to bring down a government. Buying a vote to bring down a government: unimaginable, unthinkable, Canada. This is as serious as it gets.

I am sure the Prime Minister would agree that if this is true, he can only, resign.

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is one thing for a member of Parliament to get up in this place and accuse somebody of a crime under parliamentary privilege but if that member has the guts and he believes in what he is saying he should say it outside the House of Commons where people can defend themselves.

He does not have the guts. He does not believe it. If he really believes what he is saying and believes he is on the side of the angels on this, then he should have the guts to stand by what he says and say it outside the House of Commons so people can defend themselves against the Liberal lies in this mess.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from producers who want freedom of choice to market their own barley.

Last year, 62% of producers voted for choice and that number is growing. Western Canadian farmers know how to best market their products and they want the right to choose.

I know that the government is putting farmers first. Could the Minister of Agriculture tell the House when we will see legislation to give farmers barley marketing freedom?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Brandon—Souris for his excellent work on this issue. I can assure him that I am introducing legislation this afternoon to give the 62% of western farmers the freedom they have been demanding. I call on all parties to support the growing demand from western Canadian barley growers for market freedom.

Only the opposition believes that by taking away rights, they somehow empower farmers. We do not believe that. We know they deserve the right to market and fill those opportunities that will give them better return on their investment.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, lawsuits are flying, reputations are at risk and people's good names are being sullied. The Cadman affair is spiralling out of control.

The director of public prosecutions was created for the express purpose of independently investigating politically charged situations just like this. For the sake of all those concerned, will the justice minister agree to assign an independent person from the director of

public prosecutions office to determine whether charges should be laid, and if a criminal prosecution should ensue?

• (1450)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have been trying to get the director of public prosecutions in place. I know the resistance we received in moving forward with the appointment earlier did not come from this government; it came from that party over there.

We hope later today we will have a director of public prosecutions in place, if members opposite will allow that to occur.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if the House leader understood the system, the acting director could take on this role, but he probably does not understand that.

To put an end to the attacks from the Liberals on Mr. Cadman's family reputation, to stop the stonewalling by the government, will the Minister of Justice direct the director of public prosecutions to hire independent counsel to conduct an investigation and recommend as to whether prosecutions should be taken against Mr. Finlay and Mr. Flanagan?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the role of the public prosecution service is to prosecute when a charge has been laid. The investigations are done by the RCMP.

That being said, I have no doubt this matter will probably end up in court, but the people answering charges will be the leadership of the Liberal Party.

\* \* \*

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS**

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend the finance minister took the unprecedented step of trashing the investment climate of his own province, telling the world to avoid investing in Ontario. With the livelihoods of Ontario families at stake, he remains mired in his personal vendettas of the past.

When will he start working with Dalton McGuinty and when will he stop fuelling the long, tired, unproductive era of federal-provincial bickering?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the reality is a question of fact.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Are you the bickerer or the bickeree?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty:** Mr. Speaker, the member for Wascana is being very noisy today. He should take a rest for a moment.

*Oral Questions*

The reality is the highest taxes on new business investment in Canada are in the province of Ontario. The reality also is the major part of manufacturing is in the province of Ontario. The result is the policies of the McGuinty government are harming manufacturing in the province of Ontario at the very time that we need to stimulate growth. He needs to reduce corporate taxes in Ontario and he needs to do it now.

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it sounds like he is running for the leadership of the Ontario Conservative Party.

[*Translation*]

Imagine that foreign investors are looking to build an automobile plant in either Ontario or Michigan. Now, imagine that Michigan happily shows them a video of the Minister of Finance saying that they should not invest in Ontario.

Why is the Minister of Finance not working to make life easier for Ontario families, instead of boosting his ego by provoking former political opponents?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we cannot ignore the facts. Mr. McGuinty's own task force on competitiveness says that Ontario has the highest taxation on new business investment, not only in Canada and in North America but among developed economies.

What needs to be done is to reduce corporate taxes. Who said "corporate tax cuts are one of the best strategies to attract investment and help manufacturers battered by the high Canadian dollar"? The member for Markham—Unionville.

\* \* \*

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government's ideological true colours may be showing now more than ever.

There are concerns from the artistic community that right-wing lobbyists have influenced new guidelines regulating grants to the cultural sector. These new guidelines would allow the government to arbitrarily decide which productions would be deemed offensive and therefore could not receive financial assistance.

Exactly who, apart from Mr. McVety, was consulted in the preparation of these new Conservative guidelines?

• (1455)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I have never met the individual that the member mentioned earlier.

Now, the member should remember that these measures were introduced under the former heritage minister, Sheila Copps. Our government pursued them in 2006, and received the support of all the parties in this House. I wonder why all of a sudden the member is asking questions.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the new guidelines this government is planning to introduce, which, by its own admission, were influenced by a campaign mounted by Mr. McVety, who is well-known to the Conservatives. He even went as far as to say that his production censorship campaign was in line with Conservative values.

Why are the Conservatives listening only to Mr. McVety? Is it because he is a Conservative? What about others, such as the artistic community? Will they listen to them?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is pure hypocrisy on the part of the member opposite, who keeps denouncing this measure even though he knows full well that it was put forward under the previous government.

That said, members of the cultural community and the industry were meeting with officials earlier this afternoon to obtain explanations.

Now, I would like the hon. member to tell me whether or not he intends to support a tax credit for films promoting juvenile pornography, excessive violence or hate propaganda targeting specific groups of people.

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**TRANSPORT**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Quebec government made the right decision in 2004 to participate in a feasibility study on a high speed train between Montreal and New York. The Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, is reiterating his interest in such a project. His government would even be willing to assume more than its share of the costs for the tracks.

Does the federal government intend to cooperate with the Quebec government to create a high speed train between Montreal and New York?

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is already supporting the Quebec government's initiative, as well as the Ontario government's initiative to get the study from seven years ago back on track—if I may use that expression—to examine, in fact, the possibility of updating the data bases and moving forward.

The Government of Canada is actively participating in this initiative. We will of course have the opportunity to share the findings of that report when the work is completed.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the State of New York is open to the project and the Premier of Quebec is prepared to invest time and money to complete it.

Does the federal government intend to concretely support this high speed train between Montreal and New York, which would complement the development of the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, thereby making Montreal a hub for passenger rail travel in North America?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have not received any requests from the Quebec government concerning the so-called “Bloc express”.

We know full well that the Leader of the Bloc Québécois has always preferred to favour the State of New York over the rest of Canada. We, on the other hand, will concentrate on the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, passing through Montreal, Ottawa and other parts of Canada.

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[English]

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of International Trade.

We have learned that the employment insurance, the capital gains tax exemption, the small craft harbours program and even the gas tax card for Canada's fishers are being challenged at the WTO. If found illegal, this could have disastrous consequences to the industry.

Will the government fight back against this disastrous attack on the inshore fishery and ask our negotiators at the WTO to start to stand up for our inshore fishermen?

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that the draft text recently put forth in relation to this issue is inappropriate and it is controversial. We certainly will stand up. Not only Canada but every fishing nation in the WTO would never go along with that stuff.

The problem is that it has not been on the go since last week or last month. It has been on the go since 2001.

\* \* \*

●(1500)

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, residential schools mark a sad period in our nation's history for generations of aboriginal children.

We have heard stories of abuse, loss of language and culture, the effects of which are present even to this day. It is the time to turn the page on this sad chapter. It is time to bring about greater reconciliation between the government and churches that ran the schools and those who attended them.

My question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs. What is the government doing to make this happen?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege last evening to attend a function at the Museum of Civilization with church leaders who launched their own campaign to raise awareness of that sad chapter in Canadian history known as the residential schools era.

The government is committed to the residential schools settlement. We have already paid out over a billion dollars to students. We are setting up the truth and reconciliation commission. The Prime Minister has promised an apology on behalf of Canadians that will

be meaningful and respectful. It is time to move ahead with the truth and reconciliation.

I congratulate the church leaders on the work they have done.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative-Liberal wrong-headed budget gives over \$250 million to promote pumping carbon dioxide into the ground, a high cost, uncertain method known as sequestration. Also the fossil fuel industry does not have to clean up its own environmental mess.

The government gives nothing new to help working families deal with sky-high energy bills through energy conservation measures, nothing for remote communities for wind power and no more money for solar energy.

When is the Conservative-Liberal government going to stop shovelling dollars to the big polluters and start helping average Canadians?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do not need to take any lessons from the NDP.

Carbon sequestration is one of the leading technologies. We take CO<sub>2</sub>, which would normally go in the atmosphere, and put it in the ground where it came from, not to mention the fact that we have committed more money in renewable energy and on energy efficiency.

We are taking concrete action that will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, unlike previous governments after 13 years of letting them rise by 35%. We are getting the job done on behalf of all Canadians.

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative budget is a failure when it comes to health care. Today we learned that almost 20% of hospital beds in Ontario are occupied by patients who cannot find home care or long term care. The result is hallway medicine and the cancellation of life-saving surgery. Here in Ottawa almost 200 patients cannot go home to their families. Why? Because there is no home care available.

Does the government understand that to end hallway medicine and excessive wait times, we must invest in long term care and home care? That is why we will not be voting for the budget.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in budget 2006 we added \$1.1 billion of federal transfers for health care across the country. In budget 2007 there were \$1.2 billion extra. In budget 2008 there was another 6% extra.

We have been acting to benefit Canadians and access to the health care system. Now it is up to the provinces to live up to their promises as well.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture should know that before he can legally introduce legislative change to the Canadian Wheat Board Act, he must abide by section 47(1) of the act, which states in part that the minister is required to consult with the board.

On February 29, the Canadian Wheat Board chair stated, “We have not been consulted on this legislation”. That was a few days ago.

Will the minister inform the House as to the date he claims to have consulted with the board on the specific legislative proposal, or is the minister just intent on breaking the law?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we are intent on is giving western Canadian farmers barley marketing freedom, and we will get there.

Let me quote for the member for Malpeque what someone said. The person said, “It doesn't matter what politicians or bureaucrats think about grain marketing. What matters is what farmers think and want”. Who said that? It was the member for Wascana.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order. We are going to hear from another member now. The hon. member for Essex has the floor.

\* \* \*

● (1505)

**AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, following a recent speech by the Minister of Industry to the Toronto Board of Trade, a speech I attended, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association of Canada said that the minister “has clearly carved out a positive role for government to support our industry going forward”. The CVMA also stated, “The government's policy is positive and should assist our industry as it transforms, adapts and strengthens in response to unprecedented global challenges”.

Can the Minister of Industry inform this House of what initiatives prompted this support from Canada's auto manufacturers?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, former gas-guzzling Liberal governments really failed to do what needed to be done for the automotive industry. Fortunately we have excellent members, such as the member for Essex, who have fought for the industry.

The government is moving forward with strong fundamentals that will make the auto industry competitive. On Friday, as the member has pointed out, I unveiled the government's new automotive strategy, which is built on four pillars: the best business climate anywhere in the G-7, the strongest economic fundamentals; an integrated North American approach to fuel efficiency standards and also to harmonization of other standards; investing in R and D; and finally, a new automotive innovation fund of \$250 million.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the compromise on Afghanistan, which keeps Canadian troops in Kandahar until 2011, is contingent upon specific obligations.

The Conservative government must shift the Canadian Forces' mission toward the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

It has also committed itself to true transparency and accountability in respect of its citizens and Parliament for the three objectives of the mission. The government knows that the people will demand that these objectives be respected.

My question is for the Minister of National Defence. In concrete terms, how can Canadians and MPs be assured that these undertakings will be respected?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer this question given that the House is currently debating the future of the mission in Afghanistan.

I can assure the hon. member of this House that we will do our utmost to have this vote as soon as possible. When this House has voted, I hope to have the support of NATO countries in terms of the troops and equipment needed to continue the mission.

When that happens, we will certainly inform the House on a regular basis of the action being taken and we will be accountable to this House, as we have been in the past.

*Points of Order**[English]***PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a group of aboriginal and church leaders in Ottawa to launch the “Remembering the Children” tour to prepare Canadians for the launch of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Mr. Georges Erasmus, the President of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation; Mr. Ted Quewezance, Executive Director of the National Residential Schools Survivors' Society; the Moderator of the United Church of Canada, the Right Reverend David Giuliano; the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Reverend Dr. Hans Kouwenberg; the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Archbishop Fred Hiltz; the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Diocese of Ottawa, Archbishop Terrence Prendergast; and National Indigenous Bishop for the Anglican Church of Canada, the Right Reverend Mark MacDonald.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

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**POINTS OF ORDER**

COMMENTS BY MEMBER FOR CHARLOTTETOWN

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker and members of this assembly, on Thursday afternoon last week during time allotted for members' statements, I made a number of comments that were wrong, improper, inappropriate and extremely unparliamentary.

I want to stand in the House today, apologize for my behaviour and retract those remarks.

First, I want to apologize to the House for these remarks, as they were, as I said, improper, wrong and extremely unparliamentary. Since being elected as the member for Charlottetown about seven years ago, I have attempted to conduct myself with dignity and honour, in other words, in a manner that acknowledges and respects the importance and significance of this institution. That certainly was not the case last Thursday afternoon. I deeply regret my actions.

Second, I want to sincerely apologize to the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney and his family. Although the remarks were rhetorical and meant solely as hyperbole, they were highly improper and ought not to have been made. I sincerely apologize to him and his family, and I do hope he accepts my apology.

Third, I want to apologize to my colleague and friend, the member of Parliament for Abbotsford. He had the floor at the time my remarks were made and they should not have been made. I should not have been saying anything at that particular time, let alone what I did say.

Also, I want to apologize to you, Mr. Speaker. You have a difficult job in this highly partisan environment. You do a good job. I did not make your job any easier. I want to apologize for my behaviour.

I also want to apologize to my family, immediate and extended, for any embarrassments caused to them. They have come to expect better of me. On this occasion, I feel that I have let them down.

I could go on and give some reasons or excuses or try to explain to the House what was going on in my mind at that particular moment. I will not, because I feel I would only detract from my apology and retraction. I want my statement to be full, frank, unqualified and without any qualifications whatsoever. In other words, I accept total responsibility for my inappropriate words.

In closing, I repeat that I do apologize for my inappropriate remarks and I do hope that all members of this assembly will accept my apology and retraction.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allotting me the time to address this House.

• (1510)

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Charlottetown for his retraction. I note that this matter was raised by the hon. member for Abbotsford last week. I believe that therefore completes the problem.

*[Translation]*

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Today, during oral question period, when the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages was answering questions, we clearly heard the leader of the Bloc Québécois use some very insulting language in reference to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages.

I therefore ask the leader of the Bloc Québécois to withdraw his comments.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** I withdraw what I said, which was not parliamentary language. Even though the response may have been insipid, that is not what I said.

I withdraw what I said about the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** Mr. Speaker, before oral question period, I made a member's statement. I would therefore like to table a document I referred to in my statement.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, you do not have unanimous consent.

**Mr. Luc Harvey:** I understand why the Bloc Québécois members might be a bit embarrassed after working here for 18 years.

**The Speaker:** It is too bad, but if the House does not grant unanimous consent, that is the end of that request.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS***[English]***NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-45, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

\* \* \*

**CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT**

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-46, An Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act and chapter 17 of the Statutes of Canada, 1998.

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

● (1515)

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. You accepted the introduction of a government bill to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act that is clearly illegal. We know that the minister, in an answer during question period, said that he was going to do this, but section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act is very clear in terms of what is required prior to a bill being brought into the House by the government.

The section is unique. It says that the minister cannot do what he is trying to do, that is, introduce legislation to diminish the Canadian Wheat Board single desk unless and until two conditions are fulfilled.

First, the minister must consult the Canadian Wheat Board's board of directors. The directors say that has not happened and they said that as recently as Saturday.

Second, the minister must hold vote among prairie grain producers about the specific legislative change the minister wants to propose. That vote has not happened.

The minister cannot say that his barley vote of a year ago satisfies that requirement. There was no voters list. There was only a fraction of eligible producers who voted. The ballots were marked and traceable. Three general options were raised and they were counted as only two.

More importantly, their questions might have been a multiple choice survey of general marketing philosophy, but they were most definitely not the specific and focused questions required by section 47.1 of the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

If the minister is allowed to introduce this barley bill, he will break the law. The act is clear. The Speaker must be satisfied, it seems to me, that section 47.1 has been fulfilled before this bill can be legally introduced. Again I say, the act is very clear. The minister therefore should not be allowed to proceed at this time, because in doing so he is breaking the very law that he took an oath of office to uphold.

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr.

Speaker, I admire the member for Malpeque's very enthusiastic critique of a bill that he has not even read yet, because of course it has only now just been introduced. I invite him to actually review the bill at some point. Then he could actually make some representations with some basis of knowledge, but that is nothing new from over there.

The reality is that the two points he raised about consultation were then refuted by his very own arguments. He said there was no consultation and then went on to explain at length the consultation that took place and why he did not like the consultation that took place. Clearly the necessary conditions have been satisfied. In both cases, the consultations that were required took place. As to whether or not he likes the form the consultations took or the outcome the consultations had, that is not the question. The fact is that the statute has been complied with in every way. The bill is in order and we would ask that it be allowed to proceed.

If the Speaker is not fully satisfied and wishes to have detailed submissions provided on the nature and the quality of the consultations that occurred, in order to satisfy the statute, we would be happy to provide that to you at a later date, Mr. Speaker. However, I really think that on its face that is not necessary.

**The Speaker:** The Chair will take the matter under advisement. Normally questions of law are not matters for the Chair to decide. The arguments by the hon. member for Malpeque, at first glance to me at this moment, appear to be arguments as to legal obligations that the minister may or may not have. I have not looked at the law. I have not seen the bill. Until we see it, I cannot say whether the bill complies with the law. Who knows, it may have a provision in it that repeals the previous law. I have no idea.

I think we will need to have a look at this before we can proceed, but in the meantime I believe the bill now has been read the first time and ordered to be printed.

When shall the bill be read a second time? At the next sitting of the House.

I hope before it is called for debate at second reading, I will have had a chance to review the necessary provisions in the law.

\* \* \*

● (1520)

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-518, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (compassionate care benefits for dependent children).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to introduce my private member's bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act with respect to benefits for the care of dependent children.

As we all know, being sick is hard, but being the parent of a very sick child is even harder. When a child gets sick and needs serious treatment, it is unthinkable for the parents not to be with their child. Sadly, the Employment Insurance Act shows little compassion in this regard.

*Routine Proceedings*

People should not be punished for the fact that specialized hospitals for children are often located outside of their region. Today, parents who want to be with their sick child in the hospital must voluntarily leave their jobs and are disqualified from receiving employment insurance. My bill would resolve this senseless situation and make parents eligible for 15 weeks of employment insurance so they can be with their child in a specialized hospital.

The employment insurance program must adapt to today's realities, and that is the goal of my bill.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**CRIMINAL CODE**

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-519, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail for serious personal injury offence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present my private member's bill entitled, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail for serious personal injury offence). I will refer to this bill as Michelle's law.

The bill was inspired by the terrible circumstances surrounding the murder of Michelle Lenius in 2003. Michelle was my friend and my wife's friend and co-worker. Michelle's ex-husband was convicted of her murder. Unfortunately, this man should not have been out on bail when he killed Michelle. This tragic case was one of the main reasons I entered federal politics.

The passage of this bill would give our hard-working Crown prosecutors another tool to help them in their difficult jobs. This bill would provide that for those accused of a serious personal injury offence in the Criminal Code, before a judge rules on that person's release, the Crown prosecutor shall present the judge with the prosecution's evidence relevant to the release of the accused.

I ask all members to support Michelle's law.

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

\* \* \*

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-520, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Home Buyers' Plan).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak to my bill, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (Home Buyers' Plan) This bill would amend the Income Tax Act to increase the home buyers' plan loan limit from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

The home buyers' plan currently allows individuals to borrow up to \$20,000 from their RRSPs to purchase their first home. Home prices are substantially higher today than when the \$20,000 limit was put in place in 1992. The home buyers' plan is the only mortgage program that focuses on first-time home buyers. The increase in the loan limit to \$25,000 would help first-time home buyers in every region of the country.

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

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SURPLUS TRANSFER ACT**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-521, An Act to provide for the transfer of the surplus in the Employment Insurance Account.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in the House a private members' bill.

In his budget presentation on February 26, 2008, the Minister of Finance referred to the creation of the Canada employment insurance financing board, which is to be an independent Crown corporation responsible for implementing a new mechanism for setting employment insurance premium rates and for maintaining a cash reserve provided by the government.

The purpose of this bill is to have the government return to the employment insurance fund, which is to become independent, the \$54 billion it has taken out over the past 18 years or so, since 1990.

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

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PETITIONS**

## PASSPORT OFFICE

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today containing thousands of signatures from the people of Sudbury asking that the government open a passport issuing office in Sudbury. In all of northeastern Ontario there is not one issuing office. For people to have access to emergency passport services, they sometimes must drive 10 hours or 15 hours. The closest issuing offices are in Toronto and Ottawa.

The people of Sudbury, the people of northeastern Ontario deserve a passport issuing office. These signatures will continue to come.

## UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today from my constituents of Okanagan—Shuswap.

The petitioners point out that in current federal criminal law an unborn child is not recognized as a victim with respect to violent crimes and that when a pregnant woman is assaulted or killed, no legal protection is offered for unborn children and no charge can be laid.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to recognize unborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers, allowing two charges to be laid against the offender instead of one.

*Routine Proceedings*

## DARFUR

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions today.

The first petition has over 125 signatures and comes from Stanley Humphries Secondary School in Castlegar, a school in which I taught before retiring from teaching.

These dynamic young people are calling upon the government to support the NDP's three step plan in Darfur; namely, to support UN Security Council Resolution 1769 by committing troops and resources; by investing in the long term development of a civil society and the peace process in Darfur; and the divestment of all Canadian corporations that trade with Sudan.

This is an interesting and dynamic group of young people who have taken it upon themselves to circulate this petition in their school.

• (1530)

## ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from friends in Nelson, Castlegar, Grand Forks and the Slocan Valley.

It calls upon the Canadian government to establish a department of peace that will reinvigorate Canada's role as a global peacebuilder and will have as a top priority the abolition of nuclear weapons. The reasons given are that 50 of today's modern nuclear weapons could kill 200 million people, that there is no medical response to the effects of a nuclear war and that prevention is the only answer.

## SECURITY AND PROSPERITY PARTNERSHIP

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition comes from over 125 people in my riding who are against the proposed Security and Prosperity Partnership.

They call upon the Government of Canada to stop further implementation of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America with the United States and Mexico until there is a democratic mandate from the people of Canada, parliamentary oversight and consideration of its profound consequences on Canada's existence as a sovereign nation and its ability to adopt autonomous and sustainable economic, social and environmental policies.

This is only a small part of all of those people who are contacting my office hoping that our Parliament will do something.

## CANADA MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition comes from over 900 students of Selkirk College in Castlegar who are saying that whereas the Canada student loan debt is increasing by more than \$1.5 million each day and has ballooned to more than \$12 billion, that whereas the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has largely just replaced pre-existing provincial grants, that whereas the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has failed at improving access to post-secondary education, and that whereas among developed nations only Canada and Japan do not have a national system of

needs based grants, they call upon the House of Commons to replace the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation with a national system of needs based grants through the Canada student loans program for students at public universities and colleges.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this petition containing over 1,000 names is regarding the Canadian content levels for Canadian manufacturing in public transportation. The bulk of these signatures comes from two ridings, the riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North and the riding Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

It basically asks that the government, and in particular, the Minister of Industry, implement a policy that is consistent with the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization policies and guidelines that already permit that, to mandate Canadian content levels for public transportation projects, and to ensure that public funds are used to provide the best value to Canadians by supporting domestic suppliers and labour markets.

## IRAQ

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition calling upon the government to demonstrate its commitment to international law and the treaties to which it is signatory by making provisions for U.S. war objectors to have sanctuary in this country. When over 50,000 draft age Americans made their way to Canada, refusing to participate in the moral war in Vietnam, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau said:

Those who make the conscientious judgment that they must not participate in this war... have my complete sympathy... Canada should be a refuge from militarism.

Thirty years later, Canada is faced with the same moral choice as brave soldiers opposing the illegal war in Iraq are seeking refuge in our borders.

I encourage the government to abide by the Canadian tradition of giving sanctuary to soldiers opposing illegal and immoral wars.

## UNBORN VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured today to present in the House again a large number of names signed to petitions in support of Bill C-484, the bill that would provide for charges to be laid when an unborn child is a victim of a crime against its mother. These petitions are from right across the country, from, little towns, big towns, cities and rural areas. These signatures represent the 72% of Canadians who support this legislation.

I am very honoured to present today another 2,276 names to be added to the list, so that we now have almost 10,000. I think that the next time I stand up it will be 10,000.

*Points of Order***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, Question No. 168 will be answered today.

[English]

Question No. 168—**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:**

With regard to the Temporary Resident Permits issued by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration during the 39th Parliament up until and including November 30, 2007, how many requests were received by the Minister according to federal electoral district, indicating whether or not the permit was granted?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Citizenship and Immigration Canada does not have this information as there is no application form for requests for ministerial permits.

\* \* \*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURN**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 187 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** The question enumerated by the hon. parliamentary secretary has been answered. Is it agreed that Question No. 187 be made an order for return?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

Question No. 187—**Ms. Penny Priddy:**

With respect to the Annual Report of the Office of the Correctional Investigator 2006-2007: (a) what progress has been made in addressing the twelve key barriers to public safety identified in the report; (b) what internal strategies have been developed to ensure the five key priorities listed in the report are achieved; (c) how much additional funding was made available following the release of the report on June 29, 2007, and how was that money allocated; and (d) how much targeted funding is required to achieve these goals in 2008-2009?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

PROCEEDINGS IN STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION,  
PRIVACY AND ETHICS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise on a point of order, which I believe is a matter which not only undermines but challenges the fundamental authority of the House. I refer specifically to an action taken in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics on Thursday, February 29, at the meeting at 3:30 p.m.

I am reading from the minutes. There was a motion of the committee that was agreed to, and which I reported to the House on Friday, as follows:

That the Committee report to the House that it is finished with the witnesses and information gathering phase of the Mulrony Airbus settlement and recommends that a public inquiry be held forthwith.

I tabled that report on Friday.

However, following the adoption of that motion, there was a motion moved by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, which reads:

That pursuant to Standing Order 108(1)(a) in relation to the conflicting reports about the fundraising practices of the Liberal Party, the committee investigate the fundraising practices of the Liberal Party—

It goes on to say that it would potentially violate the Canada Elections Act. There are further details in the motion. I will table it at the end of my comments, Mr. Speaker.

This particular item I ruled out of order. My ruling was specifically that in the notice of motion by the member for Dufferin—Caledon, there was no mention of any ethical standards that may have been violated, nor was there any reference to the conflict of interest code for members. It also makes reference that there may be potential violations of the Canada Elections Act.

As the motion draws attention to the Canada Elections Act, I said to the members that Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi) mandates that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs is responsible to review and report on all matters relating to the election of members of the House of Commons. Accordingly, I ruled the motion out of order.

The chair's ruling was challenged by the member for Dufferin—Caledon and, indeed, the chair was overturned. As a consequence, that particular motion is now an order of business of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, which I chair.

The committee also then passed a motion, which states, according to the minutes on the website of the committee, "That in relation to the motion adopted by the committee", i.e., in regard to the fundraising practices of the Liberal Party adopted by the committee, "that the committee proceed with the study immediately". Indeed, speaking to that, it was before any other business, and therein lies the problem.

Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 108, as you know, lays out the mandate of all the standing committees. It also lays out specific responsibilities and you will indeed see that in Standing Order 108(3)(a)(vi) the issue with regard to the Canada Elections Act is specifically a matter under the purview of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. You also know, Mr. Speaker, that that standing committee is having some difficulty dealing with another matter, referred to as the in and out matter.

It would appear to me that the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has decided to pursue a matter of business which is not included specifically in its mandate, nor generally in the mandate of this committee and in fact is specifically in the mandate of another committee. As a consequence, the actions of this committee are effectively to disregard and ignore Standing Order 108 in its entirety, which lays out the mandates of committees.

*Points of Order*

● (1535)

The consequences of this are very serious. It means that any committee could effectively do anything it wanted to, notwithstanding Standing Order 108. What is the point of having Standing Order 108? To allow this order of business to proceed improperly in the ethics committee would be to admit that Standing Order 108 is moot and should be deleted from the Standing Orders. That is absolutely ridiculous. It is the House itself that made the determination as to the contents of Standing Order 108, for good reason. Any changes to Standing Order 108 must be made by the House or by special committee with the approval of the House.

There is substantial jurisprudence on this question and I would be pleased to table it with the Speaker.

There are two consequences I want to raise specifically with the House. The first, as I have mentioned, is that it would render Standing Order 108 irrelevant. The second consequence is very serious and it has to do with the Mulroney-Schreiber investigation.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the committee has conducted its hearings. Last Friday I tabled a report indicating that we had completed our witness phase. The committee agreed that the House should recommend to the government that the public inquiry proceed.

The same day, however, there was an opposition day motion and there were speeches on this very item, that the government proceed with a public inquiry on the Mulroney-Schreiber affair. I quote from the speech of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification:

To insist on the one hand that the committee hold these hearings and then not take them to their logical conclusion is irresponsible.

Members should recall that the Prime Minister asked Professor Johnston to finalize his recommendations on the terms of reference for the public inquiry once the committee has completed its work.

The parliamentary secretary has basically said in his argument that the public inquiry should not proceed until the committee has tabled its final report to the House.

The Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics has adopted a motion, followed up by another motion, saying that this is the matter we shall deal with. Effectively, it has put a roadblock in front of me. I cannot bring a draft report of the Mulroney-Schreiber hearings before the House because of this matter. The government is saying on one hand that it does not want a public inquiry until it gets the final report, but in committee government members have prohibited the chair from arranging to have the report come before the committee and therefore, I am unable to report to the House. The committee is unable to do its job.

The Speaker himself issued a warrant to hold Mr. Schreiber from extradition until these proceedings were done. It was that important. I also issued a summons for Mr. Schreiber's attendance before committee. When Mr. Schreiber appeared before us on February 25, the last time, at the end of his testimony and the end of the meeting, I specifically noted to him that pursuant to the warrant and the summons issued by the Speaker and myself, he was not being

released and in fact remains under the charge of the Speaker and the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

The standing committee no longer has the authority to come forward to release Mr. Schreiber pursuant to the Speaker's warrant and summons because I cannot get the motion on the floor. The government is prohibiting it. It means that if the Supreme Court rules on Thursday that Mr. Schreiber's appeal for his extradition proceedings fails, then the government, particularly the Attorney General of Canada, will not be able to extradite Mr. Schreiber because the committee and the Speaker still have charge over him pursuant to the warrant issued.

● (1540)

This is no simple matter. Everyone wants to see that report come to the House with our findings and conclusions. Effectively, the conclusion is people are not telling the truth and we have to go to a public inquiry to find the truth. That can be the report quite simply, but the government representatives on that committee, in committee and in debate last Friday, have argued they cannot have a public inquiry and cannot go to Dr. Johnston until there is a final report. However, they turned around in committee and said that they are blocking us from ever have a final report by an item that is not even their authority.

Finally, I simply ask you, Mr. Speaker, to order the committee not to proceed with that order of business until you make your final ruling on this matter.

● (1545)

**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 will be mercifully shorter than the hon. member opposite who was making more of a speech than he was any kind of a point of order. Let me point out a couple of things which I know you are quite familiar with.

Number one, committees are the masters of their own fate and their own agenda. Two, I would point out that the chair of a committee is not allowed to interfere with committee decisions, but merely to adjudicate the committee itself.

What is quite clear, since there has been no report from the committee on the first matter that the hon. member talked about, and that is the desire by the committee to investigate the Liberal fundraising practices, the committee has not produced a report on that matter suggesting that they share the views of the member opposite as chair of that committee. Quite frankly, I would suggest that the chair has no relevance in this matter whatsoever, since he is speaking on his own accord and not on behalf of the committee.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** What about the Standing Orders?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I had the courtesy of not interrupting the member opposite during his long dissertation, and I would ask for the same courtesy to be extended to me, please.

*The Budget*

Three, he talked about ruling a motion out of order, what was overturned by committee members, and somehow feeling that this was an infringement upon his abilities to conduct the meeting accordingly as the chairman. I would point out that in the procedure and House affairs committee, when opposition members decided to enter a motion requesting the committee to investigate the so-called in and out scheme of the Conservative Party, and on the advice of the Law Clerk of the House the chairperson ruled that out of order, the opposition members, in a combined vote, overturned the ruling of the chair. In that particular instance, members opposite felt that that overturning of the chair's ruling was quite appropriate.

Now, on the other hand, we find a chairperson speaking on his own volition, without the support of his committee, standing in this House and saying that the overturning of his ruling is somehow inappropriate.

Since committees are masters of their own fate and they set their own agenda and there has been no dissenting report or other report indicated in this House or reported back to this House, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that your ruling and interpretation of this matter is quite clear: let the committee do its work as the majority members of the committee dictate.

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that to my knowledge the chair of a committee must make sure that the Standing Orders are respected. It is the role and duty of the chair to make sure that all committee discussions be respectful of the Standing Orders of the House.

**The Speaker:** I thank the three members who have made arguments on this matter to the Chair. I will review the matter and come back to the House in due course with a ruling.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and of the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Before question period, the hon. Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities had the floor. He now has three minutes to wrap up his remarks.

The hon. minister.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, that is why we have abolished the federal capital tax and provided a financial incentive to encourage the provinces to eliminate their capital taxes as quickly as possible. That is also the reason we set out a long term plan last fall to reduce the federal corporate income tax rate to 15% by 2012. And that is why we are calling on the provinces to reduce their corporate income taxes. Our goal is to achieve a combined federal-provincial tax rate of 25% by 2012.

We believe in the free market, in competition, and in limited government intervention. But that does not mean we will ignore

specific challenges that some individuals or economic sectors may encounter through no fault of their own.

For example, a year ago, it became clear that Canadian manufacturing and processing companies were having a hard time, due in part to the strength of the Canadian dollar. That is why the 2007 budget set out a temporary accelerated capital cost allowance, to enable manufacturing businesses to fully amortize their investments in machinery and equipment over two years.

Between now and 2009-10, this measure alone represents a benefit of some \$1.3 billion for the manufacturing and processing sector. Last Wednesday, we extended accelerated capital cost allowance treatment by three years, which means an additional billion dollars for those sectors.

Of course, that is not enough for the Bloc Québécois. Nothing is ever enough for the Bloc Québécois. Not enough. That is easy to say when they will never have to account for anything to anyone, never have a budget to balance and never have to guarantee any growth. The Bloc members are very imaginative when it comes to finding ways to spend taxpayers' money. But, in this budget period, one might ask the following: in 18 years, that is, since its inception, how many jobs has the Bloc Québécois created? How many projects has it completed? How many investments has it attracted?

We know the answer to all those questions. The answer is zero. And zero, as a record, is far from brilliant.

I would also very much like to summarize the position of the Liberal Party of Canada on the budget, but that is not easy. It is roughly as follows: the Liberals do not like our budget at all, but they are desperately trying to find a way to support it.

In closing, I hope my hon. colleagues will support our budget.

• (1550)

[English]

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the remarks of the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on the budget. He also has responsibility for Canada Post. We have been raising a number of questions with him in the House but not getting many answers, I will admit.

There is nothing in the budget other than the regular funding for Canada Post and we know it is basically wasting \$600 million to do a review of rural delivery and individual mailbox delivery in rural Canada. I would like to ask the minister, could that money not be spent more productively?

All it is doing is making rural Canadians angry. Canada Post is taking away individual mail delivery. The numbers, for which the minister has responsibility, are saying that there have been 1,300 safety concerns. That is using safety pretty liberally because 800 of those we now know are for ergonomic damage where the courier reaches across and out the window. They are not really to do with safety concerns on the highway at all.

*The Budget*

When will the minister show some leadership, take on Canada Post, and tell it to stop this ridiculous policy of destroying individual mail delivery and using safety as an excuse? Strong direction from the minister would probably do it. He should tell Canada Post to stop wasting that \$600 million while he is at it.

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Malpeque, I hope, was here when this House put forward a directive and told Canada Post to henceforth ensure that rural mail delivery continues. That is exactly what Canada Post is doing. It is evaluating every individual rural mail box there is to ensure that it complies with safety and security, but at the same time respecting the directive that this House of Commons put forward last year.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if we look at the situation in the manufacturing and forestry industries, and specifically the situation in the forestry industry, we can see that it is the single-industry towns and cities experiencing major crises after a plant shut-down that would have something to gain from the insufficient amounts of money from the federal government.

At the same time, the federal government and the minister are bragging that the government will give greater leeway when it comes to amortization—but to whom? To businesses that have shut down.

Since the businesses have shut down in single-industry towns, since the businesses no longer exist and since the government only wants to give training to workers who have lost their jobs, could the minister tell me what kinds of jobs these workers will be able to find in their own regions, after they have been trained in another field, after losing their jobs?

• (1555)

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer my colleague's question.

He knows that about four weeks ago, in this House, we passed the bill creating a community development trust. This trust was designed to help the municipalities, the communities, most affected by this worldwide crisis. This crisis is not just being experienced in New Brunswick, Quebec or elsewhere. It is obviously affecting many of our communities.

We created this \$1 billion trust, which is allocated based on each province's demographic weight. For example, Quebec will receive \$217 million, which will enable the Government of Quebec, as well as the federal government—in a spirit of federalism and openness and not in the spirit of centralization for which the Liberals are well known—to help these communities.

I urge my colleague to listen carefully to what his premier has done, together with the federal government, in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, to resolve this problem.

[*English*]

**Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the budget today on behalf of my constituents of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission.

A famous politician in his day said that the budget should be balanced; public debt should be reduced. It is hard to disagree with that. In fact, the individual who made this statement lived about 2,000 years ago. His name was Marcus Tullius Cicero who died in 43 B.C. Of course, we agree with these things, the budget should be balanced and public debt should be reduced.

At the outset let me say that this is a good budget. A good budget must be more than balanced. Frankly, anyone can balance a budget if one has complete control over the revenue side of the equation.

A government budget is different in this way than a household budget where the income side is relatively fixed. One could go and get a different job, send one's kids out to work and that kind of thing, but it is relatively fixed or even in a non-profit agency. Many of us have worked in those and struggled with trying to balance those budgets when the income side is more fixed or even in a corporation.

That is why I am always somewhat amused by the NDP members protestations that they are all for balanced budgets. In fact, I think that is what should scare us as Canadians because anyone can balance a budget if one can control the income side by taxation.

To be a good budget I think it needs to be different in other ways. For example, we must understand the external realities. We need to know what the pressures are and the changes that are coming. I think the government has done a very good job of anticipating those.

We need to be able to assess the social realities as well and we have done that. To be a good budget it needs to accurately and fairly calculate the available resources. A good budget must prudently invest or allocate those resources in a principled way and it needs to have an overall plan.

In fact, on the economic side our government is following our plan which we announced a while ago in “Advantage Canada” and we are following that. Those are the principles that we follow in this budget. Finally, those investments need to be based on priorities and that is what we have done here.

I know that goodness, when it comes to a budget, like beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but the question that is always before me is: is this good for my constituents? Is budget 2008 good for my constituents of Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission. I contend of course that it is. That is why I am supporting it.

It does a number of things that I think that my constituents want. For one thing it pays down the debt. On Fridays I have office hours in Mission. I am not always there because I am often here, but when I am in the riding I am there and I was there this past week.

I recall a constituent, an older gentleman, coming in during my office hours. He wanted to talk to me about finances. I asked, “Do you mean your own finances or government finances?” “No, the government finances”, he said.

*The Budget*

He talked to me about this very issue of paying down the debt. He did not have the numbers exactly right but he had the principle right, that if we are not paying down the debt and we are investing a large amount of money, over \$30 billion a year as it turns out in interest payments on that debt that we hold as Canadians and as the Canadian government, then what could we do with that money? In fact, this government believes in that. We support paying down the debt. That is why we have invested \$37 billion in paying down our national mortgage.

I know some of the parties in the House, primarily the NDP, do not think we should be paying down the debt, but this government does. That saving of about \$2 billion a year, as we pay down on the national mortgage, is passed on to Canadians through the tax back guarantee. In fact, my constituent was very pleased to hear about that.

We believe in reducing taxes. My constituents support that. The budget builds on our proactive fall economic update to lower taxes for people and business. It provides for this year alone \$21 billion of economic stimulus for the Canadian economy and that is a good thing.

• (1600)

In fact, what we have done in reducing taxes is significantly greater than the stimulus package offered by the Americans. Theirs came later. As a share of the economy, ours is larger and it came sooner, and that is a good thing. We are pleased about reducing taxes and my constituents are happy with that as well.

They are also happy about the tax-free savings account. I had a couple of dinners, one on Friday night and one on Saturday. At both events, people came to me and said that they wanted to thank me the tax-free savings account. They had just heard about it during the week and they were pleased about it. It is important to them. In fact, it is important for Canada. It is the most important personal finance initiative for decades in Canada.

It will provide Canadians with an initiative to save up to \$5,000 each year for Canadians over 18, and in my opinion that is always a good thing. I know I heard an NDP member ask, "Who has \$5,000?" If a person has \$50, why not invest it in one of these, or \$100 or \$150?

This will provide that kind of incentive for Canadians at all income levels to start to think about the value of saving on a regular basis. I encourage all Canadians to participate in this. As we do, we will see our investments grow and grow tax-free. We will have the ability to withdraw and take that money out without it affecting our tax situations and without it affecting, for example, our ability to collect the guaranteed income supplements in our later years, and that is a good thing.

Another thing that is very important to my constituents is the whole notion of infrastructure, particularly a public transit infrastructure. I am in a suburban community of Vancouver. I often have meetings in Vancouver, so I make that commute there. Sometimes I take the train if it is available in the hours that I need. When I have to go by vehicle, it gives me a new appreciation for thousands of my constituents who day after day have to make that

trip into greater Vancouver to work. They are concerned about what the government is doing about public transit.

Members will recall that in budget 2006 we put in place \$1.3 billion in support for public transit, and the public transit tax credit. In budget 2008, we have allocated \$500 million for a public transit capital trust. That will support projects such as the Evergreen line, which was mentioned in the budget document and in the budget speech from the minister. This is an important project. The line does not run right into my riding, but it will be the closest to my riding than we have ever had before. It will allow people to get from my riding to there and get through the northeast sector and into Vancouver, all with public transit.

I and the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam have been advocating for this for a number of years, and we believe this is very important.

When I speak to my municipalities, they are interested and concerned about their ability to make investments in infrastructure. I know they are very pleased about the announcement in the budget of the permanent gas tax fund. This would be long term funding for infrastructure. They would be able to plan and know it would be coming. There will be \$2 billion in 2009-10 and more in later years. It is a permanent measure that comes year after year, allowing mayors and councils and their administrators to plan for this, and that is important to them as well.

There are many other good announcements in the budget such as the national crime prevention initiatives, support for Canadian students, funding for policing. All of these are important to my constituents.

One item not announced in the speech, but it is in that document, which I know my constituents will be happy about, is the fact that eventually we will go to a 10 year passport. We do thousands of passports in a year in my office. I know they have been talking to me about the possibility of having a 10 year passport, so I am very pleased about that.

• (1605)

I am very pleased to support the budget on behalf of my constituents. I encourage all members of the House to do the same.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's speech. The whole issue of the savings account is an intriguing one. On the surface it sounds quite attractive to encourage people to save more until we bore down into it. We know the debt level in Canada is very high because people do not have enough money in their pockets.

In trying to encourage people to save, it is better for people to put money into their RRSPs initially. It is better to allow people to have money in their pocket, particularly for the poor and the middle class. Therefore, it makes a lot more sense to reduce taxes for people in the lowest income tax bracket, allowing them to have more money in their pocket.

*The Budget*

We know, for example, the GST cuts do not help people who are poor. They are spending money on rent and food, both of which are GST exempt. They have no money left over. They certainly do not have money to put into a savings account.

How much money would someone have to make, after they paid off their taxes, after they put money into an RRSP, to put \$5,000 into a savings account such as this? I would venture to say that amount of money has to be very high.

I really lament the fact that the government never took the opportunity to put money into the hands of Canadians by lowering personal income taxes, particularly for the poor and the middle class.

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague heard me say that setting up this straw man and asking how much would it take in income to be able to put \$5,000 seems to be a false argument. People can put whatever amount up to \$5,000 into that.

I am curious why the member ignores the fact that many Canadians frankly do not earn enough to pay income tax. Simply reducing the bottom tax rate is not going to help them. That is why reducing the GST by two points makes a difference in their lives. Maybe it is a small difference, but it is a difference nonetheless because many of them only pay that tax.

• (1610)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member noted that there was money in the budget for the Evergreen SkyTrain line. I believe it is \$67 million of the \$500 million that was announced for public transit. Unfortunately, \$67 million will only build one-half a kilometre of the necessary 11 kilometres of SkyTrain line. At that rate, that half a kilometre will not even get it out of my constituency on its way to Port Moody or Coquitlam. At that rate, and the \$67 million is over two years, it would take 44 years for the SkyTrain line to make it to its intended goal of the 11 kilometre route.

How is this any kind of a significant contribution to dealing with the public transit needs of the Lower Mainland and the tri-cities if what the federal government is contributing does not even get it out of Burnaby?

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, even for someone from the NDP, I would think \$67 million is a pretty large amount. Frankly, this is \$67 million more than the province had before the budget. It is not the federal government's responsibility to fund this complete line. It is a provincial project and the federal government will make a contribution to that. We have announced some of that in the budget. There may be more to come, but it is more than it had before the budget.

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to wax eloquent on the great things that were in the budget for fisheries and oceans. He talked about a lot of things, but did not touch fisheries and oceans at all.

The only new initiative is \$10 million over two years to buy out harbours. Why?

**Mr. Randy Kamp:** Mr. Speaker, there were certainly more things than that in the budget. I could have waxed eloquent about all of

those if I would have had the time, but I wanted to represent my constituents in this.

For example, there were \$22 million over two years to strengthen the aquaculture sector. I think that would be of importance to the member for Egmont. There were \$720 million to replace one of the icebreakers along with the other things we mentioned.

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Hull—Aylmer.

I am very happy to rise again to reply to the budget. I thought a year ago it would be my last time to talk about the budget as the government was gearing up for an election campaign. It appears to still be gearing up for one, but just cannot seem to bring itself to get in the position where it actually will go to the people for a mandate.

For the past two decades, I have had the honour of representing the people of Egmont from the western quarter of Prince Edward Island. I have really enjoyed representing them and their views. It is a rural riding for the most part. Summerside takes in about half of the voting population of my riding. The rest is rural. I live in the rural part of Egmont in the little village of Tyne Valley.

I am proud to have represented this rural riding and to champion rural issues over the time I have spent in the House.

Our party has a tradition of investing in the economy of Atlantic Canada, something which I really do not see in the budget. When I was in the Atlantic caucus, we spearheaded a caucus initiative called, "Catching Tomorrow's Wave", which resulted in the prime minister at the time, Mr. Chrétien, announcing the Atlantic investments partnership. That partnership was not only strengthened by the minister of finance at the time, the right hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, but when he became prime minister, he budgeted for that initiative for a further five years to the tune of \$706 million.

We do not really seem to be seeing the results of the initiative, which began under the previous Liberal government. In fact, when we take out the R and D funds, the community funds, which were to offset the R and D, are non-existent. We have been unable to identify any project approvals in the innovative communities initiatives fund.

The money is there, but why is ACOA not approving projects throughout Atlantic Canada and helping to develop the economy? Its role is to help community and regional development. Because the majority of the ridings are represented by Liberal MPs, the government does not feel that the region should benefit with these investments. This is the great failing when Atlantic MPs do not champion the region, when they, for crass political purposes, neglect to invest dollars in industry and the economy of the region that needs it the most.

When we look through the budget we do not see the words Atlantic Canada. We see the Pacific region, the automotive industry, forestry, money and investments for almost every region such as the north, which is all great stuff. However, when it comes to the Atlantic, the Conservatives cannot seem to not only utter the name, they cannot seem to print the name Atlantic Canada.

*The Budget*

We have an Atlantic gateway that people mumble about, but they never put any resources toward it. They talk about the Pacific gateway. We had a chance for the Commonwealth Games and we failed to get enough federal dollars invested. They do not seem to have any problem investing in the Olympics in Vancouver, but when it comes to the Commonwealth Games in Halifax, we do not seem to be in the ball game at all.

Another item I touched on in statements by members today was the network of centres of excellence. This program is jointly funded by a number of research councils and Industry Canada. The goal of the program is to develop Canada's economy in areas of health, energy and natural resources. It has developed a number of world-class centres that specialize in commercializing technologies in the 21st century. These technologies produce cutting edge solutions to some of the challenges faced by our society.

•(1615)

However, it becomes clear that the government is investing in these centres of excellence in all the regions of the country except Atlantic Canada. Of the past 18 centres of excellence that were approved and created by the government, only one was established in Atlantic Canada. How can a government that claims to care about the region defend a record such as that? It cannot. And it certainly cannot claim a lack of qualified proposals from the region.

In my home province is an organization that is a national leader in wind energy. We have seen federal governments, whether Liberal or Conservative, invest heavily in the energy sector in the oil sands in Alberta, but when it comes to investing in the wind energy sector, which is the only energy source in Prince Edward Island, we find the government very reticent toward putting a penny into developing that energy source.

The Wind Energy Institute of Canada, in North Cape, P.E.I., was the Atlantic wind test site for the past 30 years, a federal government initiative built on provincial property. This centre is a key component of the province of P.E.I.'s green energy strategy. Although we are not blessed with many energy resources and do not have the luxury of massive gas and oil reserves, we do have abundant wind energy and a great desire by the province—and by the federal government, when we were in power—to develop that particular industry. Developing and investing in this industry will allow our province to take a large step closer to self-sustainability.

This institute is a priority of the provincial government, as I said. The province realizes that investing in this institute will help P.E.I. increase its position as a global leader in wind energy and technology, with a focus on clean, renewable energy sources in both the industrialized and the developing worlds. The Wind Energy Institute of Canada represents a golden opportunity for P.E.I. to shine on the global stage.

However, does the Tory government want to be partner in this initiative? No, it does not. Does the Tory government share the enthusiasm of the P.E.I. government for the centre? No, it does not.

Does the Tory government want to help P.E.I. develop its globally recognized centre of wind energy and research? Apparently not. Does the Tory government want to help develop a centre of

excellence for Atlantic Canada in wind energy? It has not to this point. Time is rapidly running out.

The numbers speak for themselves. Eleven new centres were announced last month, but not a single one for Atlantic Canada. This lack of faith in the potential of Atlantic Canada is not unique to Industry Canada. One only needs to examine the activity, or the lack thereof, of the Minister of ACOA to see that the government does not care about the region.

The government has cut funding to P.E.I. each year it has been in power. As I say, on the innovative community projects we see very little investment. The money is basically going back to general revenue.

We have heard from the Minister of ACOA, during the past election campaign and as recently as a few days ago, that ACOA funding was as solid as a rock in the north Atlantic, but that rock is eroding pretty fast. I do not think it is made of granite. The particular rock we are talking about is probably made of shale, like the ground of Prince Edward Island.

However, the government continues to cut investment in the region and it continues to ignore ACOA. There is not one mention of ACOA in this budget. That is not a very strong statement of support at all.

I could go on, but in the few minutes I have left I am going to touch on the idea of a Crown corporation for the EI program and for setting the rates.

As for setting the rates, I really do not think that we need a Crown corporation set up with 12 members running it to set rates. I think the government could set the rates with a stroke of a pen. The rates have been high, I agree. They should be lower. They have been lowered. I think when we took power in 1993 we were running a \$5 billion deficit in the EI account over the previous three years. The year after, 1994, we were running a surplus, and we have been ever since, and those rates have been going down.

It does not take a rocket scientist to know what is coming in from the EI account and what is going out. If there is a great desire to lower the rates dramatically, it could be done easily. This seems to me to be the thin edge of the wedge. Eventually the members of Parliament are going to be cut out of the running of this program and cut out of making any changes to this program to benefit areas of high unemployment.

•(1620)

I hope that enough people can get together to beat this budget.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, Manufacturing and Forestry Industries; the hon. member for Outremont, The Environment; the hon. member for Malpeque, Canadian Wheat Board.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

*The Budget*

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed most of the speech by my colleague from Atlantic Canada, but I think we should correct the record on a few things.

I have to be brief as I have only a few minutes to correct just a few things the member said in respect to P.E.I. It has been given \$25 million in per capita funding for infrastructure. ACOA invested in the beef plant in P.E.I. so we can go ahead and innovate new products in beef. In aquaculture, there was \$22 million. As the parliamentary secretary pointed out, there were investments in agriculture so we can keep our beef sector growing and vibrant. We are also investing an amount of money in our universities and research. As the member well knows, we have a very dynamic university community in Atlantic Canada.

What about the \$300 million for nuclear? New Brunswick Power in that province is one of the organizations that is looking very thoroughly at the ATR reactor.

The member clearly has his facts wrong on this one. I would like to have him clarify this, please.

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac enjoyed my speech so much, but I would like him to compare the amount of money that was spent in his riding through the SCIF program to the amount of money that has been spent through the innovative communities program these past two years.

I think he will have to admit that the government of the day spent invested an awful lot of money in the smaller communities in his riding, and not only in the smaller communities in his riding, but at the border, with \$1 million put into the entry into Maine. We did not quibble. It was good not only for his riding but for Atlantic Canada to have this improved border accessibility. The facilities were antiquated. We did not hesitate to invest money there.

When it comes to the beef plant, before the federal government would put a penny into the meat plant every provincial government in maritime Canada had to come up with \$2 million each. I do not think the Conservatives really thought that the three maritime provinces would get together and come up with \$2 million each for a beef plant on Prince Edward Island. I think they were counting on the fact that Nova Scotia and New Brunswick would not take their hard-earned money and put it into a plant in P.E.I., but the Conservatives were proved wrong because they are missing out on the new spirit of cooperation in maritime Canada.

The three premiers are getting together, along with the premier of Newfoundland, and we are working as a cooperative unit. We are working as a region. I would really appreciate it if the federal government would enter into that new spirit and start investing in the centres of excellence and research and development that other parts of this country are enjoying. If so, I think we will see that Atlantic Canada will prosper just as well as other areas.

• (1625)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like the member opposite, I certainly enjoyed the speech of my colleague. I am not rising to in any way correct the speech, but rather to ask him to embellish it. As is typically the case with this member, he always brings to the fore in one on one discussions or to this House, and by

extension to Canadians at large, that unique and special Atlantic perspective. The member has contributed so much over the years in bringing forward that Atlantic perspective.

He is absolutely correct: at some point the government will come to understand that we have to wean ourselves off reliance on fossil fuels and look beyond fossil fuels. He has touched on wind energy. With respect to solar, we are lagging behind. The member opposite, as a member of the natural resources committee, knows that we need to do more with respect to advancing solar and wind.

I would like to ask the member who made the artful speech what he would see as an appropriate level of funding. What would be the appropriate trigger or signal from the federal government that it is actually serious about promoting a wind energy industry there?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Egmont has been left with 25 seconds.

**Hon. Joe McGuire:** Mr. Speaker, what the proposal was asking for in regard to the centre of excellence for wind energy was the development of wind technologies for the north and for people who are off the grid, technologies for people with little access to conventional sources of energy. That is what the project was all about.

The centre was asking for a total of \$15 million over the five year period, plus the province was going to come in with \$4 million. To the little province of P.E.I., it was a major investment that was going to benefit people outside of Prince Edward Island the most, people in developing countries and the north.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have tabled a watered-down budget that lacks originality and fails to meet the needs of Canadians, namely the growing needs of seniors.

One of Canada's biggest successes is its retirement income system for seniors. Who are the architects of this success? The Liberal governments of course. The old age security program, the Canada pension plan, and the guaranteed income supplement are all Liberal accomplishments. And it was Liberals who established the new horizons program.

The Liberal government implemented a number of initiatives for seniors: the creation of a national seniors secretariat; the expansion of the residential rehabilitation assistance program; the creation of a compassionate care benefit; the creation of a home care fund and a tax credit allowing family caregivers to claim medical and disability related expenses. And let us not forget the health agreement to transfer \$41.3 billion to the provinces for all Canadians, but especially seniors.

*The Budget*

The Conservatives claim to have the interests of seniors at heart, but they have abolished the secretary of state for seniors position. Is that what it means to pay attention to seniors? No.

Under the Liberal government, there were fewer seniors living in poverty. The number of people 65 and older with low incomes went from 11% in 1993 to 5.6% in 2004. Those are positive results.

Canada's population aged 65 and older is growing. According to Statistics Canada's 2007 yearbook, this segment of the population reached 4.3 million in 2006. It is now 2008 and this population is not shrinking. It represents 13% of the Canadian population and it is predicted to reach 27% by 2056. Furthermore, the fastest growth will be in the segment of the population 80 and over.

In 2006, the Quebec polling firm Ipsos Descarie conducted a poll in collaboration with the Chambre des notaires du Québec and the Quebec seniors council. The poll used different selection criteria, in particular age, with respondents having to be 55 or older. Nonetheless, the results were quite interesting and the findings can apply to Canada's population.

This poll paints a portrait of Quebec seniors. Who are they? They are mostly urban dwellers and a high percentage own their own homes. Only 8% live in a seniors residence. According to Statistics Canada, 93% of seniors lived in private households in 2001, but this percentage tends to decrease after the age of 85.

Although a high proportion of seniors live with a spouse, many women seniors live alone. Seniors in rental accommodation tend to live alone.

A Quebec humorist, Yvon Deschamps, said that it was better to be rich and healthy than poor and sick. How wise he was. The Quebec poll indicated that those with the lowest incomes tended to worry more about their health or their financial situation or the fact that they were aging alone. Health and one's financial situation are the main concerns but low-income individuals tend to worry more about those two issues.

Today, most Canadian seniors are in better shape financially than their parents. The creation of the Canada pension plan—by the Liberals—has made it possible for many workers to contribute and to draw pension benefits. According to Statistics Canada:

Seniors are now getting a smaller proportion of their total income from government transfers such as Old Age Security benefits, the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Spouse's Allowance than in the early 1980s. Still 97% of seniors received income from one or more of these sources in 2005, and these sources accounted for 32% of senior women's income.

● (1630)

There are fewer poor seniors today than there were 25 years ago, but there are still too many. Not everyone has contributed to public and private pension plans, and not everyone has access to such plans. I am thinking of self-employed workers, seasonal workers and especially women, who are often forgotten.

The Confédération des syndicats nationaux or CSN states that 60% of workers work for a company that does not have a pension plan. Government of Quebec data indicate that in 2004, the average total income of women aged 65 or over was \$19,600, while for men it was \$31,500.

Too many seniors, especially women, are living in poverty. They have to make do with low fixed incomes and deal with steady increases in the cost of rent, energy, drug insurance premiums, communications and transportation.

Finding affordable housing is often a major problem for seniors. Affordable social housing is often allocated to poor families, and seniors tend to be forgotten.

The National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation has called on the government to continue implementing heating subsidies for seniors and low-income families. It is also asking the federal government and housing associations to provide appropriate, affordable housing for seniors in need. In addition, the CSN has asked Quebec to pressure the federal government to shoulder its responsibilities for social housing.

Government of Quebec data reveal that nearly half of all seniors receive the guaranteed income supplement, which is a serious indicator of poverty among seniors. In addition, one owner in seven spends 30% or more of his or her income on housing, while nearly half of all renters do.

The Ipsos-Décarie poll reveals that 4% of respondents aged 65 or over say that they are not retired but work part time. If we add the respondents who say that they are retired but work full time or part time, that represents 9% of individuals aged 65 or over, or nearly one person in 10. This is a large group of potential workers.

Not everyone works because of financial considerations. "Pensioners holding jobs say they do so primarily to fill their spare time or because they enjoy their job too much to leave it." How can we retain these potential workers? What other accommodations can we make in terms of taxes and our labour laws to allow young retirees who can work and older retirees who wish to work part-time to do so?

Seniors are generally happy and devote a large part of their time to leisure activities. The more active you are the more likely you will be happy and healthy. We have to promote the creation and adaptation of sports equipment and facilities. We should also think about extending the child fitness tax credit to seniors.

Many seniors do volunteer work. According to Statistics Canada, women between the ages of 65 and 74 spend more time on unpaid work than men. According to Ipsos-Décarie, the highest proportion of volunteers is found in the 60 to 69 age category.

*The Budget*

Ipsos-Décarie also found that one respondent out of five was an informal caregiver, of whom 22% were between the ages of 60 and 69. On average, respondents spent 7.1 hours of their time each week as informal caregivers and one in four caregivers spent even more than 15 hours per week in that role.

As I am being told that my time is running out, I will end with a few proposals for future discussion with respect to helping seniors.

We should fund the development of a national strategy for informal caregivers; establish a department for seniors; develop a national strategy for older workers; expand the new horizons program; invest more in social housing and affordable housing for seniors; increase amounts paid to widows by the government; increase the period of compassionate leave; provide subsidies to help recipients of the guaranteed income supplement to cover rising heating costs; increase the guaranteed income supplement; invest in public transportation by offering free travel to seniors who use it in off-peak hours and on week-ends, as well as making accommodations required for reduced mobility.

●(1635)

I thank my colleagues for their patience.

The Liberals will have more empathy and compassion for Canada's seniors, the—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** We have to move on to questions and comments.

The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

[English]

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise again to ask a couple of questions arising from the member's speech. He talked a lot about seniors. I had a hard time imagining him talking about the government not doing anything for seniors when we have talked about pension splitting, reducing the rates and increasing the age credit.

I was talking with a tax preparer on the weekend. I was told of the tremendous number of benefits that seniors are getting this year in taxes back because of the policies that this government has undertaken.

Not only that but the GIS is going up. In my rural riding where there are many seniors who still want to work in the harvest industry, they can still work for that six week period and not have their GIS clawed back.

The Minister of Human Resources has expanded the new horizons program, not only operational but capital amounts now as part of this next round of funding.

We have the Secretary of State for Seniors who has set up the national seniors committee and who was in my riding a week ago. We shared a tremendous round table.

I must say to this member that I am not sure where he has been for the last two years. I do not think there has been any government that has done anything more for seniors in the past number of years than this government.

●(1640)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments made by my hon. Conservative Party colleague. I would point out that most of the programs he talked about are for seniors who have money, not for seniors who are struggling. This is about giving more tax credits, but one must have income to benefit from tax credits. Those are the people my colleague was talking about.

I ran out of time earlier, so I will take advantage of my colleague's very interesting question to continue.

There are many changes the government could make, such as creating a financial recognition program for volunteer organizations that help seniors prepare their annual tax returns.

The government could support the development and adaptation of sports facilities and equipment.

The government could apply the child fitness tax credit to seniors.

The government could break down the isolation many seniors experience by offering courses at reduced cost and by implementing measures to help seniors who belong to ethnic communities.

The government could help seniors stay in their homes longer by paying for respite care and by using the Canada summer jobs program to promote the creation of groups that help seniors.

The government could set up a tax deduction program—my friend would like that—such as a tax credit to encourage and recognize volunteer work.

The government could foster a better relationship with seniors by simplifying its interactions with them.

Finally, perhaps the time has come to reconsider the retroactivity of the guaranteed income supplement.

[English]

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment my colleague for his excellent speech. I want to ask him a question. Why would the Conservative government burn through the \$13.1 billion surplus that it had when it came into government and drain that down to a \$1.4 billion surplus and put our country on the knife-edge of a deficit? Why would the government do that?

What most Canadians do not know is that this Prime Minister has a certain ideology about these issues. He believes and what he wants to do and is effectively doing is actually making the central government here in Ottawa a small runt of a government, while having powerful provincial governments. He believes that Canada is really just the sum of its parts.

I would argue that we are not the sum of our parts, that we are greater than the sum of our parts, that our provinces together make us greater than individual provinces. I would argue that Canadians from British Columbia to Newfoundland can have the same benefits, regardless of where they go.

*The Budget*

Why on earth, from my colleague's perspective, has the government eviscerated the power of the federal government and made us much less than what we are as a nation? Is that not a crime against Canada, Canadians and our history?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer has only 30 seconds left.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx:** Mr. Speaker, 30 seconds is not much time.

I thank my eloquent colleague for his question. The question is quite simple and the answer is even simpler. The Conservative government wants to eliminate as much surplus money as it can, because it in no way wants to help the people who need it most.

This government is not interested in helping the seniors who built this country. It is not interested in helping the least fortunate. This would mean, for example, programs for the homeless. This is just another way for the Conservatives to justify the fact that they have no money to put towards these kinds of important programs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to have the opportunity to say a few words on budget 2008. I will be splitting my time with the member for Leeds—Grenville.

Last week another balanced budget was presented by the Minister of Finance, the third in three years. Three out of three is not a bad batting average.

The budget was, again, full of tax savings for all Canadians: an initiative to pay down the debt with a \$10.2 billion payment; assistance for our youth; incentive for our seniors; and a continuation of putting more hard-earned cash back into the pockets of hard-working, ordinary Canadians.

People from coast to coast have applauded our budget. I will quote the minister of finance in Newfoundland and Labrador, the hon. Tom Marshall, who said, "I am pleased to see the initiatives with respect to police officers. The fact that the gas tax is made permanent, that was good".

That and many other comments across the country have given us hope that we are on the right track on this side of the House.

There are some positive highlights for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. As I just touched on by the minister of finance, the gas tax for municipalities was made permanent. Cities and towns can now make long term plans. Many communities in my own riding of Avalon can take advantage of this situation now.

There will be 2,500 new police officers for Canada. Again, in Newfoundland and Labrador there are \$6 million earmarked for this initiative that will put more RCMP officers on the streets of our province.

Very important for Newfoundland and Labrador there will be an additional ferry for Marine Atlantic for the important connection between the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. This is the Trans-Canada that connects our two provinces. It is an area that we need to work on and we have been doing so with the help of the hon. Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the member for St. John's East.

This will also benefit people in my riding in the area of Argentia, another gateway in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the summer run between Argentia and Nova Scotia, because of problems at times on the Argentia-North Sydney run and problems between Port aux Basques and North Sydney, we end up sometimes having to take the ferry from the Argentia run. Hopefully with this new additional ferry, that will not happen.

There is a new Coast Guard ship to be stationed in Newfoundland and Labrador. In the budget there is a commitment of \$720 million to build a new one for Canada's north.

There is major funding in the aquaculture industry. Our government is stepping up to the plate to review it. Some people involved in this industry have been very positive since last week's budget. In Newfoundland and Labrador, \$22 million will be spent over the next two years.

We were in my province with the Minister of the ACOA, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Minister of Veterans Affairs on the weekend to make the tremendous announcement with Cooke Aquaculture on the south coast of Newfoundland and Labrador as it continues to develop the aquaculture industry in my province.

The tax-free savings account is a very positive feature in the budget. I was home on the weekend travelling throughout my riding and many constituents mentioned the tax-free savings account, which is financial assistance for everyday living. It is tax-free, whether people withdraw it in 2 years, 5 years, 10 years or 20 years. Whatever gains they make, interest they receive in capitals gains, it is tax-free. It is in their pockets, another opportunity to build financial security for hard-working Canadians.

Reducing the tax burden of many individuals and families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada has been a hallmark of this government.

We see new incentives for seniors. On the issue of seniors over the past couple of years, the new secretary who has been put in place is taking the concerns and working on them.

There are \$350 million for the new consolidated Canada student grant program. An extra 100,000 students in Canada will be able to avail themselves of this opportunity.

Another important aspect of the budget is \$122 million over the next two years to ensure the federal correctional system achieves better public safety results. Within Newfoundland and Labrador there is much discussion about a new federal-provincial prison. No federal prisoners can be housed in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are sent to the mainland. This creates some problems for family and neighbours who want to visit inmates and it is a cost prohibitive situation in my province.

*The Budget*

•(1645)

Back in 1988, the creation of a prison was announced for the community of Harbour Grace in Newfoundland and Labrador. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are still looking for that to be fulfilled.

Seeing this \$122 million in the budget being earmarked over the next two years gives us hope. I am sure the minister of justice for Newfoundland and Labrador and the people who are involved in the justice system are looking forward to the continuing discussions on that and to see if we can come to some conclusion on addressing that situation.

There is \$10 million for small craft harbours for the divestiture of delinquent wharfs and pieces of infrastructure relating to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans throughout the province. By addressing the divestiture concerns, we are freeing up money for the construction and certainly repairs to be made to existing structures that are being used by the people involved in the fishing industry in the province. That is a good news announcement for the people of the province.

As the chair for the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the committee has been advocating for more money in the small craft harbours budget. We realize that this is a step in the right direction. We look forward to advocating again and, down the road, to having more money put into the small craft harbours budget. Addressing the divestiture concerns is something that I am sure many people within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador found as welcome news.

Also, over the past couple of years we have seen some major funds put into municipal infrastructure and the building Canada fund is addressing many of those concerns. Over the next couple of years, we look forward to being able to avail ourselves of that throughout the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and, indeed, throughout the riding of Avalon.

Throughout the riding of Avalon, which I have the privilege to represent in the House of Commons, there are 227 different communities ranging in size from thousands of people down to 100 people. Many of their concerns encompass municipal infrastructure, so we look forward to being able to avail ourselves of that fund. We have been doing so. As a matter of fact, when we were in the Avalon riding this week, we partnered with the municipality of Harbour Grace, the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as a contribution from the federal government, we announced a \$1 million project for the town of Harbour Grace to address some its water and sewer concerns.

Small craft harbours is definitely a major concern within the riding of Avalon. Last year we were very successful in obtaining over \$7 million to address the concerns. Just to give members an idea, in my riding of Avalon I have 68 harbour authorities, so there is a necessity and certainly a need.

I say to people that the wharfs in my riding are like Highway 401 in Ontario. It is the place where commerce happens in the communities. It is a very important piece of infrastructure that provides not only the opportunity for fishers to have safe landing facilities but, more important, for people to be able to earn a living.

We look forward to working with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and continuing to locate and certainly allocate money for this very important piece of infrastructure in the riding of Avalon.

I continually meet with harbour authorities throughout the riding and tell them that this is a priority for me as their member but also for the Government of Canada to address these concerns.

Another situation that we find many times throughout the riding of Avalon is that we depend on the ACOA funding, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. We have had tremendous support from the Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency over the past couple of years. Many projects within my riding have been assisted through funding from ACOA and other agencies, and we certainly look forward to continuing with that. We had the Minister of ACOA in Newfoundland and Labrador this past weekend for some announcements. He also travelled around and looked at some projects that are in the works. We certainly look forward to availing ourselves of the money in the budget to address some of these concerns.

As always, through Services Canada we receive excellent cooperation from the minister and his staff in addressing some of the concerns in the Avalon riding.

When I look at budget 2008, I look at a very positive budget for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in many ways. I look at a budget that addresses many of the concerns that we have raised in the past year with the minister.

•(1650)

The minister met with the Atlantic caucus and we put forward some of the highlights and some of the concerns of Atlantic Canada that we wanted addressed. The budget certainly looked at many of those.

We are off to another good start. This is our third budget and it certainly is a very positive budget for Newfoundland and Labrador and for Canada as a whole.

•(1655)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my colleague's heart and in his soul, is he slightly perturbed or concerned about the fact that his government has pushed our country to the brink of a deficit? Is he at all concerned that in this orgy of spending that has taken place over the past three budgets, the government has restricted and impeded its ability to work with the provinces to deal with urgent situations as they come up? I will give him one example.

Right now there is a crisis of overcrowding in our emergency rooms across the country. At the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, the fire marshal said that the overcrowding was absolutely outrageous and that it had to stop. This is not a one off deal. This is going on across the country. Our emergency rooms need an urgent infusion of cash.

Does my colleague agree with this evisceration of the spending powers of the federal government or does he approve of the diminishment of the federal government in our federation?

*The Budget*

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** Mr. Speaker, what I approve of is that we have addressed health care in our three budgets. We have addressed waiting times throughout the country. We have put money into health care to address the concerns raised by Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

What concerns me is that the government presents a budget and the opposition members raise their concerns and talk about the faults in the budget but their biggest concern is whether they will sit on their hands, walk out or vote against the budget. Those are the three issues they must face and those are the questions that Canadians are asking.

If we are so wrong on this side of the House with budget 2008, if we are so out of the loop, as we hear from the opposite side, why do those members sit on their hands, walk out of the House or not show up for a vote? Why do they not vote against us? It is one or the other. They cannot condemn the government and condemn the initiatives that we have put forward in the budget this year, as in past years, and then continue to allow us to stay here. It is one way or the other: if they disagree with us they have the opportunity to take care of us through a vote, or they can agree with us. The options are very clear.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague from Avalon, who is also a colleague of mine on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, and who in fact chairs that committee.

I imagine that he may, like me, be very disappointed in the direction taken by the Conservative budget this year with respect to small craft infrastructures and harbours. There is nothing in this budget to indicate that the government is concerned about this issue or that it will do anything about the catastrophe people fear lies ahead.

I would like the member to share his thoughts on this, leaving rhetoric aside and responding with much greater sensitivity by referring to the riding that he represents.

I happen to know that in his riding, there are indeed small craft harbours and wharves that are crucial for fishing. Since that is also the case in my riding, we are extremely disappointed by the fact that there is nothing in the way of heavy investments in small craft harbours. Furthermore, that was the subject of a committee report, which was tabled the day before the Christmas break, in which we unanimously denounced the situation.

Is he satisfied with the response from Canada's Minister of Finance?

[English]

**Mr. Fabian Manning:** Mr. Speaker, I have served with that member on the fisheries committee for more than a couple of years.

I would like to see more money in any part of the budget going into the small craft harbours and other things. However, we have many issues that need to be addressed so we are limited to what we can put into a particular part of the budget. I guess that is the situation here.

I know the Minister of Fisheries has been working hard on getting the budget increased. Last year we made an additional \$20 million to the small craft harbour budget permanent so it will be there forever.

Many harbours in my riding of Avalon need to be addressed through further funding. I look forward to working with the Minister of Fisheries and the people on the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to address those concerns.

• (1700)

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to stand this afternoon in support of a budget introduced a week ago. I am particularly pleased with this budget for a number of reasons because, amid a budget that talks about responsible spending and sustainable spending, my riding of Leeds—Grenville fares very well.

I am particularly pleased that many of the issues people have spoken to me about over the past year have been addressed in this budget, some directly and some indirectly. The important news in the budget is the new tax-free savings account that will allow anyone over the age of 18 to save up to \$5,000 a year and have any gains that they make be treated tax free.

People can use the money for upcoming large purchases such as buying a car or purchasing or repairing a home. The money can be withdrawn at any time tax free and replaced if the cash later becomes available. This is a terrific and innovative way to encourage and help people to save. We are all aware that Canadians' debt has been growing and with this one unique idea the finance minister will help us become a nation of savers instead of a nation of debtors.

For Leeds—Grenville, there is even more good news in this budget. One of the items with which I am most pleased is the commitment of \$2 million over two years to support the Canadian Biosphere Reserve Association. I have a major biosphere reserve in my riding, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. The biosphere reserve is located roughly between Brockville, Gananoque and Westport. It encompasses many protected natural areas, including the St. Lawrence Islands National Park and Charleston Lake Provincial Park. There are also recreation areas and historic sites: the St. Lawrence Parks Commission lands, the Rideau Canal National Historic site, land trust holdings, lands of the Cataraqui and Rideau Valley Conservation Authorities, provincially designated areas of natural and scientific interest and the Queen's University biological station.

The biosphere reserve recently expanded to include all of south Frontenac township, including spectacular Frontenac Provincial Park. As well, urban and rural zones are important cultural areas of biosphere reserves. With over 500 biosphere reserves worldwide, ours is one of four in Ontario of the thirteen that are in Canada.

The Frontenac Arch is an area where the junction of five ecoregions creates the highest biodiversity in Canada, acre for acre, and features the beautiful Thousand Islands. Combined with human development, the result is a very high number of species at risk as well. It is located on a narrow natural corridor running along the Frontenac Arch between two of the largest natural areas in eastern North America: the Adirondack and Algonquin Park areas. As I said, it features the Thousand Islands. This is the narrowest part as it crosses the St. Lawrence River.

*The Budget*

The biosphere reserve operates with members of the community who have been volunteering their services for a number of years. This money will help them achieve their goals on a national scale. It is a shot in the arm that they need and I am pleased that the environment minister, during a visit to Leeds—Grenville last fall, heard their voices and encouraged the finance minister to include this money in the budget.

I have continued to be a champion and advocate of the Canadian Biosphere Reserve network with both the environment minister and the finance minister, and I do applaud them for their insight.

Agriculture is also a major industry in Leeds—Grenville and I was also pleased to see in the budget funds to assist our beleaguered hog and beef industries. Farmers will see additional support through better access to \$3.3 billion to cope with extraordinary pressures in the livestock sector and \$50 million to help the hog sector adjust to a new market reality.

Geri Kamenz, who is the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and who happens to live in my riding, said that he was very happy that the government took action. He was very happy saying that the federal government loan guarantees were “exactly what the farmers have asked for”.

These are important issues in my riding. Over the past few months I have met with many farm organizations and individual farmers who asked us to help them out. I and others passed that request along to the agriculture minister and the finance minister and, once again I am pleased to note that those farmers' voices were heard.

The budget also earmarks \$12 million over two years to enhance environmental law enforcement in Canada's national parks. I am fortunate to have a number of Parks Canada assets in my riding, including the St. Lawrence Islands National Park, Fort Wellington, the site of the Battle of the Windmill and a major portion of the Rideau Canal. Just down the road from my riding in Kingston is Fort Henry and Bellevue House, the home of our first prime minister.

• (1705)

These are all important assets for Canada and Canadians. They provide a link to our past, as well as employment and recreation for my constituents. Some of these assets will be in the spotlight in four more years when Canada and the United States celebrate the 200th anniversary of the War of 1812 as they figured prominently in one way or another in that period of our history. These assets deserve to be protected to the best of our ability and the funding commitment in this year's budget will help that cause.

In addition, I have two border crossings in my riding: one near Ivy Lea in the Thousand Islands and the other at Johnstown. There are issues that have arisen at these two crossings, especially since the terrible incident of 9/11 that affected recreational travellers and commercial enterprises.

I am pleased to see that solutions are being provided in this budget with a number of initiatives including \$75 million over the next two years to address operational issues at Canadian border crossings and \$14 million to expand the joint Canada-United States NEXUS program for low-risk travellers. The Thousand Islands bridge has been identified as the location for the expansion of the

NEXUS program and hopefully some of this money will be put to good use there.

Canada will soon introduce a new electronic passport, and the government announced plans to extend its validity to 10 years. This is something that I have heard time and time again from my constituents and something that I am sure they are applauding. This is great news for those who are using our border crossings. As I said, it really addresses a concern of my constituents.

The budget provides further assistance for Canada's manufacturing and processing sector by extending the accelerated capital cost allowance, treatment for investment in machinery and equipment for three more years.

It removes disincentives for seniors to work by raising the current guaranteed income supplement earned income exemption to \$3,500 from \$500.

Students were not left out in this budget. They are going to see the Canada student grant program with a \$350 million investment in 2009-2010, rising to \$430 million in 2012-2013. As well, the registered education savings plan can remain open for 35 years instead of just 25 years, and the maximum contribution period will be extended by 10 more years.

There is also encouraging news for the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes corridor. First, the government is providing \$15 million over 2 years to establish a permanent facility to enhance the security of the Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Seaway area.

Highway H<sub>2</sub>O, as it is called, is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2009, as it faces new challenges and opportunities including more containerization of goods, and we all know that is the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The Great Lakes—St. Lawrence Seaway system is a deep-draft waterway extending 3,700 kilometres from the Atlantic Ocean to the head of the Great Lakes in the heart of North America. Ranked as one of the outstanding engineering feats of the 20th century, the St. Lawrence Seaway includes 13 Canadian and 2 U.S. locks.

Recently, our government and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec signed a memorandum of understanding on the continental gateway and trade corridor which will see billions of dollars invested in transportation infrastructure.

As well, our government also recently released the binational Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway study which discusses financial and infrastructure issues on this important trade route. In this budget, the government recognizes the importance of this trade corridor which runs right through my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

As well, the budget sets aside \$24 million over 2 years to establish infrastructure for cruise ships on the St. Lawrence.

*The Budget*

Other budget highlights for residents in Leeds—Grenville include: making the gas tax refund a federal government infrastructure grant to municipalities a permanent measure, providing \$90 million to extend to 2012 the targeted initiative for older workers, dedicating \$282 million over this and the next 2 years to expand the veterans independence program to support the survivors of veterans, reducing the availability of contraband tobacco products through new tax compliance and enforcement measures, setting aside \$400 million for police officer recruitment, and facilitating compliance by waiving fees for firearms licence renewal until May 2009.

Along with this good news for Leeds—Grenville, the budget addresses the auto industry, the vulnerable, the north, the environment and our international commitments. It is important to note that with previous budget announcements combined with this new budget, the government is injecting \$21 billion of stimulus into the Canadian economy.

• (1710)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the hon. member for Leeds—Grenville. I know that he is in a very important community for eastern Ontario, particularly for tourism.

I know that this is an area of the province where we have a lot of U.S. visitors coming across. In the past this has been an area that has enjoyed tremendous growth, but in recent years, we have had some challenges, particularly in eastern Ontario. I wonder if he could comment on some of the good measures that we see for the economy of eastern Ontario in general, but particularly for tourism.

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Simcoe North, who is a champion of the tourism industry and he understands it very well.

My riding happens to rely on the tourism industry a great deal. This government has been making significant investments in that industry through the eastern Ontario development program. Recently, funds were put into the 1000 Islands/St. Lawrence Seaway marketing partnership through that program.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was at an event where the Government of Canada contributed \$100,000 to the new art gallery in Brockville. There has been money toward a new anchor attraction study for Brockville.

The member also talks about people coming over from the United States and actions that this government has taken, specifically in terms of border crossings. I am happy to see in this budget that money is going to be put forward to expand the NEXUS program, so that it too would be available for low risk travellers crossing at the two border crossings in my riding.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today as we continue the debate on the second budget presented by this Conservative minority government.

Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Halifax West.

The author of this budget expended an awful lot of energy last week suggesting that investors look outside of Ontario when considering their options in Canada. Frankly, I was shocked to hear

the finance minister slam my home province in this way. We can be certain that investors around the world furrowed their brows to hear Canada's finance minister suggest that Ontario's economy is tenuous or unstable.

Those of us in Ontario are well aware of the Minister of Finance's limited credibility. After all, he is the guy who left Ontario with a \$5 billion deficit. So, we have little confidence in his ability to manage the nation's coffers.

Ontario, through no efforts from this government, is a vibrant and diverse economy. It cannot be ignored and should not be dismissed. In fact, my constituency of Kitchener Centre, which is in the heart of Waterloo region, is one of those bright lights within the province.

BMO, the Conference Board of Canada and the Royal Bank have all predicted that Waterloo region will sport one of Canada's 10 fastest growing economies beginning in 2009. In spite of deep losses that we have had due to the manufacturing crisis, Waterloo region has low unemployment rates and a strong, healthy housing industry.

The unemployment rate in the Kitchener metropolitan area was 5.3% in January. That is half a percentage lower than it was a year ago. There were 256,100 people working in the area in January, which is 3,200 more than were employed the year earlier. Statistics Canada says that 14,300 people were unemployed. That is down from the previous year when that number was 15,400. The percentage of workers who are employed in the region has remained stable at 67% for the last two years. That number is four percentage points higher than the national average, which itself is at an all-time high.

Instead of dismissing Waterloo region, Canada's finance minister should be heralding our success.

That being said, we cannot ignore the devastating impact that the crisis in manufacturing has had in Kitchener Centre. The loss of good, well-paying jobs has had a significant impact, even on a diversified economy such as ours.

However, this Conservative government has turned a blind eye to the manufacturing industry. In fact, on a visit last spring, the Prime Minister himself suggested to the Canadian Auto Workers that those out of work should seek employment in Alberta. That is unbelievable.

I think it would be generous to describe the latest Conservative budget as bland at best. It does very little, good or bad. In fact, its greatest failing lies in what is missing from this budget.

Homelessness persists as a problem coast to coast to coast in this country. Some estimates suggest that there are upward of 200,000 people experiencing homelessness in Canada. Further, about 700,000 households are believed to be spending more than half of their income on shelter, leaving them exposed to the possibility of being homeless.

*The Budget*

Waterloo region has displayed considerable leadership on addressing the needs of the homeless population in the community that I represent. At this time, in Waterloo region, there are more than 4,800 people who use emergency shelters each and every year.

The regional municipality of Waterloo recently completed a housing strategy that provides direction in allocating federal, provincial and local resources to address homelessness locally. It is thorough and it is comprehensive. The strategy looks forward to long term solutions. It looks to this federal government for a long term financial commitment to this important issue.

The current homelessness partnering strategy has not had funding allocated beyond the year 2009.

● (1715)

When I was reading through Waterloo region's report, one of the remarks from a service provider really struck a chord with me. It read, "We as a society somehow think vulnerable populations don't deserve the same quality of life. We need to be careful about keeping our humanity".

Everyone has a role to play in ending homelessness. I implore the government to accept its role.

While the Conservative government thinks short term on homelessness, its environmental policies are so long term that they are rendered irrelevant and ineffective. Climate change, the biggest ecological threat facing humanity, has become an issue of health, security, prosperity and survival for our planet. At this critical time, Canada cannot be a laggard. Canada must dedicate attention, resources and commitment to the climate change crisis. Canada must commit to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, compared to the 1990 levels, by the year 2020.

There is nothing particularly offensive in the document that was presented by the Minister of Finance. The only things that are remarkable about the budget are how it misses the mark on so many issues that are of great importance to Canadians. The budget would have been more effective if the Conservatives had not already spent the cupboard bare with their previous budgets and fall economic and fiscal update, leaving a razor thin surplus to protect Canada's economy should it continue to falter.

It is a significant concern that the Conservative's projected surpluses of \$2.3 billion for 2008-09 and \$1.3 billion for the next year are well below the minimum \$3 billion contingency fund that the Liberals consider a bare minimum to cushion against unanticipated economic shocks.

Do I need to remind the other side of the House that the government inherited the largest surplus in Canadian history a short two years ago. Two years of reckless spending and haphazard economic planning have left a minimal economic cushion. We are quite simply one SARS crisis away from deficit. That is bad enough. Worse still is the fact that we as a nation have nothing to show for this spending binge.

The government needs to demonstrate that it takes our nation's finances and our national issues seriously. Certainly we are entering a time where fiscal restraint is encouraged, however, we never should let a slowing economy become an excuse to abandon those in

greatest need. Let us not let politics get in the way of fundamental humanity.

● (1720)

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the comments from the hon. friend across the way and I will ask her a couple of questions.

The fact that she said it was our second budget, it was our third, so I am a little bit worried about the financial acumen on that side of the House. However, she said that we turned a blind eye to the manufacturing industry.

First, what I find interesting about that comment is back in 1997-98, when the Liberals started running these huge surpluses, why did they not get out in front and be proactive for those industries by reducing taxes and giving them breaks like the accelerated capital cost allowance so they would be in a better position today than they are? They could have been out in front of that.

Second, how can the member say that a surplus represents that people are overtaxed? How can she say that giving money back to people is blowing the surplus?

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend has to appreciate that when we took over from a former Conservative government, we had a \$42 billion deficit that we had to wrestle to the ground. Once we had done that and had our financial house in order, we invested in a lot of things like green technology. We lowered corporate taxes. We actually brought to lower and middle income Canadians the largest tax reductions in the history of Canada.

However, we had a plan and our plan was not retail politics. Our plan looked at the long term fiscal viability not only of our country, but how we could help those in need so when we had good economic times, we did not leave anybody behind. The kind of retail politics we see with the current government is it picks winners and creates losers. Quite frankly, Canadians deserve better than that.

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague. I heard her say that there was nothing offensive in this budget. There was nothing for child care. There was nothing for affordable housing, not even a tax incentive to help build rental housing. There were no new financing instruments to combat climate change. Yet there were \$14.8 billion in corporate tax cuts that the member's side of the House supported.

How can she answer this basic contradiction of robbing the cupboard bare and leaving people behind while still supporting the budget?

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I believe my hon. friend may be misconstruing the fact that we have decided not to succumb to the schoolyard bully. We have said that we will not have the government fall on the budget. It does not mean that we support it.

*The Budget*

I remind the hon. member that when the Liberals were a minority government, we took quite seriously the need to work with other parties. We worked with the NDP because we had an intersecting concern about homelessness, the environment and child care. All those things were for naught because the leader of the NDP and his party decided that it was an opportune time politically to cause the fall of the Liberal minority government. With that, because the Conservative government is driven by ideology, there have been no new child care spaces developed. The government ignored the will of Parliament with the clean air act.

The member should look in her own caucus when she wonders why all the great programming and the thrust of the minority Liberal government did not come to fruition. It was because NDP members decided that they would support their Conservative partners.

• (1725)

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, after hearing the Liberal member speak, I have never heard so much condemnation of so much good news. There has been a reduction in taxes of over \$200 billion over five years. That never happened under a Liberal government.

The hon. member of all people is now castigating this budget. Why would she and her Liberal Party either vote against it or sit on their duffs when this matter comes forward for debate in the House?

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I reiterate that we will not succumb to a schoolyard bully. There are many things before Parliament that need to be discussed. There are many things missing from this budget. Again, the budget picks winners and creates losers, and for that reason it is not supportable.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in debate on this year's budget.

I am afraid it is another budget that fails to offer very much for Nova Scotians or for Atlantic Canadians in general, for my region, and it fails to offer very much to Canadians who might be concerned about the economy.

We are watching what is happening in the U.S. We see the lowest consumer confidence levels in many years. We see financial institutions not matching the lowering of the interest rates by the federal reserve bank in the U.S. Therefore, there is a tightening of credit with banks. Financial institutions are less willing to lend. Consumers are less able to get access to credit to buy homes or to buy cars. We can expect less spending on a variety of things. We should be concerned about that in Canada. The U.S. is our biggest customer, so to speak. It is our biggest market by far and the vast majority of our goods, our exports are sold to the United States.

Canadians are concerned about that, but they see so little in this budget that deals with it, largely because of the situation in which the actions of the past two years have left the government.

There is very little in the budget. It fails to offer very much for Canadians who are concerned about the environment and in so many other areas, as many other members have spoken of today.

The *Halifax Chronicle Herald* describes the 2008 budget as the most remarkable for the being the least memorable. It is a rather unremarkable budget in that regard. It has very little good news for

our region. It is no wonder, given how much the government has squandered in the last two budgets.

At least this year's budget is a little better than the previous two, considering how bad they were. In 2006 the government destroyed the national child care program because it did not fit the right wing ideology of the Conservatives. It was the same thing in relation to the EnerGuide program, which they then resurrected under a new name, but it was a feeble imitation of it.

We see over and over again where the Conservatives do not like a program because it was started by the Liberal government. They may somehow recognize that there was validity to it and that it had benefits because they then come back with something similar, some shadow of that program afterwards, like they did with EnerGuide, as they have done now in relation to the millennium scholarship program. However, they are so ideologically driven that they cannot seem to accept that if it was done by a Liberal government, that it could be any good. That is entirely unreasonable.

In the 2007 budget things got much worse for Nova Scotia. I mentioned the 2006 budget, which was bad. The 2007 budget was considerably worse. In that budget, as Nova Scotians know, the Prime Minister betrayed Nova Scotians and he refused to honour his word to live up to the Atlantic accord, to fulfill the Atlantic accord. He killed it, as members well know.

Let us look at this year's budget, which I can only call lacklustre. Again we see the anti-Atlantic bias of the government. Nova Scotia's Finance Minister Michael Baker, who is a Progressive Conservative, told reporters last week that he was relieved the federal budget did not appear to hurt the province the way last year's budget did. Imagine that coming from supposedly a fellow Conservative. Although in this case, as many Progressive Conservatives in Nova Scotia point out, they are Progressive Conservatives, not the same party as the government across the way.

We have heard from Danny Williams in Newfoundland. He makes the same point very clearly. He talks about the kinds of negative things the government has done for our country, for our social programs, et cetera.

Mr. Baker was relieved that this budget did not hurt the province as much as last year's did. However, he did note that it was not much help either. The budget is not doing very much to assist Nova Scotia, and he is concerned about that. Because of the situation the government has left itself in, he is concerned it is not doing very much to get the economy going at a time when we are likely to have possible slowdowns.

Many commentators pointed out, including the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* Steve Maher among others, that the regional development agency, ACOA, was not even mentioned in the budget. I suppose that is what we get when we have a part time minister for ACOA. The Prime Minister did not think that ACOA was important enough to have one minister whose attention would be focused on that job. I am sad to say that this says a lot about the Prime Minister and the government.

*The Budget*

•(1730)

The news gets worse for ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, because there are also reports that ACOA will get less funding. The reports are based on the government's own spending estimates. The main estimates for 2008-09 show that ACOA's budget will be down 25% compared to the last Liberal budget.

Conservative spin doctors are already trying to explain away these cuts and to shift the blame away from themselves. If the government would invest as much in regional development as it does in its spin doctors and spin control, the region would be a lot better off.

•(1735)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** And polling.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** And polling, as my hon. colleague from Malpeque said.

Many people in Halifax West and other Nova Scotia ridings tell me that they have a deep fear that things are going to get a lot worse because of the ideological bent of the government. That is one of the reasons they are certainly determined that the Conservatives not get a majority. We hear that a lot.

Many Nova Scotians get upset when they read headlines about the Conservatives betraying war widows, for example, or when they read editorials which describe this as a pothole budget. Of course, they are referring to the finance minister's raid on current and future surpluses to cut the GST. People are appalled when they read about the pork-barrel express, this railroad announcement that got thrown in apparently at the last moment. His own department could not even explain it or give details of it, but it benefits his riding. That is disappointing.

Last year we had a similar situation when there was a company next door to his riding that benefited from a particular measure in the budget, I understand. It is disturbing to see that kind of thing two years in a row. It seems to be part of a pattern.

In fact, I believe that media reports this morning noted that after three Conservative government budgets, the Government of Canada has effectively been made much less capable of offering new social programs or meaningful tax cuts for the foreseeable future. Who was saying that? The Prime Minister's pal and mentor, Tom Flanagan. His own Conservative right-wing guru is admitting this. It is remarkable.

The finance minister is already trying to cover himself for the reckless, drunken sailor kinds of spending that they have done over the past few years, and he is already warning Canadians to be prepared for a slowing economy in the next two years and rising unemployment. It reminds me of Kim Campbell in the 1993 election, who was talking about no new jobs until 2000, that for seven years there would be no new jobs. He is already trying to say, "It is not really our fault, but the economy is going to get bad. The fact that we have already reduced our ability to deal with that is too bad".

It is too bad that he did not consider the possibility of a slowdown, of economic problems in this country, of the effect of the rising dollar on our manufacturing sector, particularly the automobile sector, when he made these decisions to squander the tremendous surpluses that he inherited. The government was left in the best

situation of any government coming into office in this country's history. It registered a \$13 billion surplus after only a month and a half in office, at the end of March 2006, and here it is two years later on the knife's edge in relation to a possible deficit.

Clearly, if there is a real slowdown in this country, we could be in a situation where we have a deficit again, something that Canadians certainly do not want. Perhaps the Conservatives do not understand what it was like in the mid-1990s, what the process was like and the sacrifices that Canadians made, the tough decisions that the Liberal government of the day made to get our finances back in order, to strengthen our situation fiscally so that our economy could get going and produce the kinds of jobs that it did produce, in fact, two million jobs by the year 2000, contrary completely to what Kim Campbell was talking about.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of my colleague from Nova Scotia, in particular his reference to ACOA's budget. What he stated is, of course, patently false.

He would know as a member of the previous government that it was under his administration in 2005 that 30% of the ACOA budget was actually cut. That has been the only time in recent history when the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency has undergone cuts of that nature. In fact, those cuts are still being felt by the department that I now lead.

Our budget has remained constant. The Conservative government has kept ACOA fully funded. What has happened in fact is that some of the responsibilities that were once under the ACOA budget have been transferred to the Department of Transport. That may account for some of the things that he is referring to.

As far as actually removing money from the budget, he would have to admit, and one only has to look at the Treasury Board to know, that what he has said is completely false, untrue and inflammatory. In fact, what he is trying to do is cast aspersions over the strong fiscal record of the Conservative government.

I only have to point to the \$38 billion deficit that was inherited by the Conservative government in 1984 upon coming into office, which was ratcheted and racked up under the government of Pierre Trudeau, one of the member's great heroes, I am sure.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** My goodness, we are back in 1984?

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, we could go back to John A. Macdonald and talk about the great railroad scandal, or we could talk about the sponsorship scandal, which is a more recent vintage. The sponsorship scandal and the \$40 million still unaccounted for in that particular sad epic is something he might want to reference in his response, but we will just leave it at that.

We can talk about ACOA for the time being and the fact that it was his government that took 30% out of that agency during the Liberals' time in office.

*The Budget*

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see the hon. Minister of National Defence taking part in this debate, but I think he should check his facts.

I think it is reasonable to rely on the estimates. The estimates clearly show a reduction under the Conservatives in the budget of ACOA. I know he is anxious to defend it and does not want to take responsibility for it. Perhaps he was too busy when he was foreign affairs minister travelling the world and visiting Condoleezza Rice.

• (1740)

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** I am too busy cleaning up the messes from your party.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I know he does not want to heckle and wants to listen to what I have to say but it is amazing that he wants to talk about the—

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** We are looking for that sponsorship money.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, I know he does not like the idea of heckling and I am sure he will settle down.

When he talks about the strong fiscal record of his government, surely he knows what has happened over the past few years. When we look at the fact that the second year from now this budget projects a surplus of only \$1.3 billion, he knows full well that in fiscal terms that is running on a knife's edge. That is highly irresponsible and he knows it.

He wants to go back to 1984; he wants to go back to Sir John A.; he wants to talk about ancient history when he knows full well that in 1993 the Conservative government left a \$42 billion deficit that had to be cleaned up by the Liberal Party. He knows we did the job and Canadians made sacrifices, but now the Conservatives have squandered the strong fiscal situation that they inherited, and they have put our country in jeopardy. That is the truth.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to interfere in any way with this spat the Liberal-Conservative alliance is having over the budget numbers, but I have to say that while it was disappointing there was no reference to ACOA in the budget address, it was even more disappointing and far more significant when one saw the estimates that were tabled on Thursday. It was very clear. The member for Halifax West is right in saying that the \$38 million has been removed from the budget and there is not a single reference to it being transferred somewhere else. We are talking about the ACOA budget.

I wonder if the member could indicate, please, whether he has been able to get any further information that would explain away the \$38 million reduction that is clearly shown in the estimates for ACOA for next year.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Halifax West has the floor for 20 seconds. The rule of thumb for the next 20 seconds will be that he is the only one I want to hear.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** I appreciate that very much, Mr. Speaker, although I am sure members have their thoughts and we will hear them.

Since I now have less than 20 seconds, I can answer very briefly. The answer is no, unfortunately, we have not been able to find any

other explanation for this than the fact that the estimates show this reduction.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to participate in the budget debate.

I want to split my time with the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

I would like to talk about something that is absent in the budget and that is any action on housing and homelessness. I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will not rule me out of order for addressing something that is clearly not in the budget. I plan on speaking on the problems with this budget and I see this as one of the fundamental problems with the budget.

We have a crisis in housing and homelessness in Canada. It is not just me or New Democrats who say that. Last fall the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, Mr. Miloon Kothari, visited Canada and met with people across Canada in many communities. In his preliminary findings he said the following:

Everywhere that I visited in Canada, I met people who are homeless and living in inadequate and insecure housing conditions. On this mission I heard of hundreds of people who have died as a direct result of Canada's nation wide housing crisis.

In its most recent periodic review of Canada's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the United Nations used strong language to label housing, homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency:

Everything I witnessed on this mission confirms the deep and devastating impact of this national crisis on the lives of women, youth, children and men.

He went on to say:

Canada is one of the richest countries in the world, which makes the prevalence of this crisis all the more striking.

That is not a New Democrat speaking. That is a United Nations representative who was here in Canada doing a report on the housing crisis, and that is his term, "housing crisis".

That same analysis has been echoed by report after report here at home and by community after community. In fact on my desk in my office I have a stack of reports, which is now at least a foot high, that have been issued in the last five months on housing in Canada. All of them report on the crisis that exists here in Canada.

Those reports are from organizations like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the big city mayors, women's organizations in the three northern territories, the Citywide Housing Coalition in Vancouver, the Burnaby Task Force on Homelessness, and many other organizations in almost every community across the country. They all recognize that there is a crisis and that it is not being addressed. They all recognize that the federal government has a role to play in finding the solution to that crisis.

The Canadian cooperative housing association said today that four million Canadians live in inadequate, unaffordable, insecure housing, or are without housing. That number is phenomenal, but represents the extent of the crisis we are facing.

Yet we have a budget that does nothing to address this kind of crisis. Absolutely nothing in the budget will alleviate these conditions or ensure that something is done to address the crisis.

*The Budget*

I should clarify that there is one measure in the budget and we hear it constantly from the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. He points out that there is \$110 million for the Canadian Mental Health Commission to do five pilot projects in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal and Moncton to deal with mental health issues.

We know that some of these are likely to deal with mental health and housing issues, but not all of them. There is some money for pilot projects, but we do not need more studies. We do not need more pilot projects. I am not saying that these pilot projects are not important, but when it comes to housing, what we need is a program that actually builds homes for people in need in Canada, not another study and not another pilot project.

In this budget what do we get? We get this pilot project money, but we do not get a national housing program. There is nothing here to establish ongoing funding that would address this crisis in Canada.

We do not even get a commitment to renew some of the current programs that exist for housing in Canada. There is no commitment to renew the residential rehabilitation assistance program, RRAP.

There is nothing to indicate a renewal of the homelessness partnership strategy which is a key program we had to fight tooth and nail for earlier in Parliament. The member for London—Fanshawe led organizations all across Canada to push the Conservatives to finally commit to do something for homelessness, when they were not about to renew the former SCPI program and they finally relented and renewed this program.

• (1745)

There is nothing in this budget that would renew the affordable housing program. Those three programs all expire in fiscal year 2008. When doing a budget that looks forward, one would think that if it were intended to renew these programs, it would have appeared in this budget, to ensure that the organizations that depend on this and the people who depend on these programs could do some planning around what was available in the future.

We are going to be back in the same position of having to fight tooth and nail to see these programs restored or to see the commitment continued, like we had to last time. Organizations are not going to be able to do the kind of planning they need to do. People working in this area are going to be in danger of losing their jobs and people who are homeless will not know if there is something coming down the pike to ensure they have a place to live.

There is that commitment. It should have been there. There is no program in this budget that actually will build homes for Canadians. That is a huge failing of the budget. Earlier, a Liberal member said there was nothing offensive about this budget. The fact that this national housing crisis is ignored in the budget is absolutely offensive. That Liberals can vote for or ignore a budget like this when it contains an offensive provision like this is outrageous.

Why is it outrageous? Why is it so offensive? Because we have so-called surpluses. I think it is a bit of a misnomer to talk about a surplus when we have the kind of housing deficit we have in Canada, when we have thousands and thousands of Canadians who

are without homes to live in. How can we talk about a government surplus of money over programming when that kind of deficit exists?

How can we even consider giving further corporate tax cuts of \$14.6 billion in the last little while from the government alone? There are commitments for corporate tax cuts that extend years into the future. It would be so nice if we could commit to a national housing program that extends years in the future, but we cannot even make a commitment beyond this fiscal year. That is absolutely outrageous.

Why we can do it for corporate tax cuts and not for a national housing program is absolutely beyond me. I think it basically comes down to a lack of political will. We can do it. We can say that the military gets increased funding and has long term funding for years, for the same reason, which is so military planning can happen. If we can do it for military planning and military spending, we should be able to do it for our housing spending to address this housing and homelessness crisis in Canada.

It is unbelievable that the government could brag about reducing the fiscal capacity of government by \$200 billion over the next five years when the kinds of needs represented by homelessness exist in Canada. We know that the health and security of Canadians are at risk when they are homeless. There is absolutely no excuse for gutting the fiscal capacity of government when that kind of need exists in this country.

How the Liberals can support this is absolutely beyond me, but it is no wonder since back in the 1990s they were the people who cut the last national housing program that existed in Canada, a program that came about in the 1970s when the NDP was in a balance of power situation with a Liberal minority. We managed to impose that national program on unwilling Liberals at that time. I guess it is no wonder that the Liberals can deal away a national housing program or any concern about the homeless in Canada in this budget.

The Liberals also gutted CMHC. It was one of the most creative housing agencies in the world years ago. It has been absolutely gutted. The Liberals commercialized its mandate, saying that CMHC should worry more about mortgage insurance than it should about housing development. It has done that and it has done it in spades. It makes billions of dollars every year, but none of it goes back into housing development.

The NDP has a plan. We believe that a national housing program has to be long term. We have called for a 10 year national housing program that would actually build homes in Canada. We have talked about 200,000 new and affordable social housing units. We have talked about renovating another 100,000 existing affordable units and also 40,000 rent subsidies.

We have put forward a national housing bill of rights that would establish the right to housing for all Canadians. To ensure that right is put forward and enacted, we have put in a mechanism for coming up with that kind of national program. We believe that is fundamental. It is one reason why we are voting against this budget.

*The Budget*

● (1750)

We also believe that we have the capacity in Canada to address the homelessness crisis. We will not let Conservatives or Liberals tell us that it cannot be done.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Burnaby—Douglas for sharing his time. I am most eager to participate in this budget debate on behalf of my constituents in London—Fanshawe.

I thought I would take a slightly different approach. Instead of just listing the sins and misguided budget decisions of the present and previous governments, and there are many, I want to offer some solutions, because these misguided decisions are hurting our communities.

I am speaking of decisions like no funding for affordable housing despite the homelessness crisis, a sham of a child care policy, and the absence of adequate funding for students and families caught in the trap of unmanageable student debt. There are no programs to end violence against women and children, and no concern for the struggles facing first nations, just a re-announcement of previous funding promises.

There is no long term support for cities and infrastructure in this budget despite our \$153 billion infrastructure deficit. This budget offers a one-time \$500 million, enough for one bridge somewhere, and a privatization scheme that will take infrastructure out of the control of the public.

There is nothing in this budget that effectively addresses the needs of farmers and farm families. I was speaking to farm activists just this past month at the Covent Garden Market. They are the people who feed our communities with safe, quality products. They are losing their farms. They are angry with the Conservative government and tired of the empty excuses they have heard year after year. They requested that I pass that message along.

There has also been a failure to put forward an anti-poverty strategy and no real even remotely adequate plan to address the manufacturing crisis and job losses. In London alone, 5,000 families have been affected by job loss. What will the government and the finance minister say to these families? Tepid recycled ideas and pocket change offer no hope.

There is nothing for veterans or seniors in this budget, just a contemptuous announcement on the veterans independence program that disqualifies 70% of veterans' widows. To add to the offensiveness of this treatment is the job opportunity the Minister of Finance has provided to seniors. They can forget about retirement. They can keep on working in those years when they have earned their rest, working because they cannot afford to retire.

I must also mention a glaring omission in budget 2008. Women are relegated to a very brief paragraph. We did not even make the index. As members know, women have been losing ground in their fight for equality. Programs have been cut and funding denied. The Conservative government continues to ignore the importance of funding women's equality. Status of Women, which is seriously underfunded, was not given any additional money, and funding to most equality-seeking groups is still prohibited.

In budget after budget, women have been waiting for measures to advance their equality. Women in Canada are still not safe in their homes or in public places. One in four Canadian women is a victim of sexual violence. Women still only earn 70% of what men make. Poverty is the reality for single, widowed or divorced women over 65 and more than 40% of unattached women under 65. This budget does not address their needs.

In short, all we have seen is a number of misguided budget policies that desperately need remedy. However, instead of just focusing exclusively on what has been done to Canadians, I would like to suggest a number of strategies the government could employ that would actually make a positive difference in the life of every person in this country, every man, woman and child who has the right to expect good leadership, economic fairness and security from government.

The unvarnished truth is that only a small and select group benefits from the policies we see entrenched in the budgets of former and current governments that are presented in the House. That select group is, of course, the banking and oil producing sector of the economy, the big banks and the big polluters.

I have a remedy for the government's unbalanced approach to the economy, because balance is what is needed if we are ever to address the needs of our communities and do the work that will secure the jobs, which in turn will secure the future of our families.

We know that the tax policies of the Conservatives are essentially the same as those of the Liberals, but I believe they can change. It is, after all, a new year, a time of hope and resolve to do better. New beginnings are possible. Surely it must be possible for the Conservatives to experience an epiphany, a conversion, and abandon this horrific budget and start afresh with a document that would truly serve Canadians.

One thing I would like to suggest is genuine investment in our cities, the engines of our economy. As we know, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has issued a warning to the government. It is essentially the same warning issued to the previous Liberal government: there is a serious infrastructure deficit in Canada that will precipitate the collapse of Canada's municipal infrastructure.

● (1755)

It is a crisis, but there are remedies and the FCM has done the hard work to investigate and bring forward remedies. It presented a workable plan to the government to address the \$123 billion infrastructure deficit. Of course, it is essential to use some of the federal surplus to reinvest in our cities instead of in corporate tax cuts to big banks and big polluters.

*The Budget*

As members may recall, in my city of London there was a serious water main break in November of last year, which caused businesses to suffer a power outage, lost wages and a huge million-dollar cleanup, all financed by municipal taxpayers. Since the November break, there have been four more serious water main breaches. This is unacceptable, particularly when the FCM has shared practical solutions with government.

What the FCM does not need are one-time, inadequate offerings like what has been proposed for Vancouver, Montreal and Peterborough. Measures such as sharing an additional one cent of the gas tax would certainly facilitate a real solution.

Also missing from this budget and previous budgets is help for women and their families. We have heard in the Standing Committee on the Status of Women that the tax measures of the government do not help lower- and middle-income families. Non-refundable tax credits are of absolutely no value to families without a taxable income.

Single parents, both male and female, have disproportionately low incomes and are left out of the so-called tax largesse of this government. People with disabilities, older Canadians and impoverished veterans are all overlooked by inaccessible tax credits. In fact, the only groups to truly benefit from budget 2008 are profitable corporations and the top one-fifth of high income earners.

If this government truly wished to make a difference for Canadians, it would address the job crisis. In Ontario, working families are struggling in the grip of a manufacturing jobs crisis. Between November 2002 and now, Canada lost more than 300,000 manufacturing jobs. In London, we lost good jobs at Siemens, Beta Brands, Vytex and in the auto sector. The pitiful efforts in this budget will not help them.

Manufacturing jobs pay 28% higher wages than the average and come with decent pension and benefit packages. Working families are losing livelihoods and the government has no real long term strategies for the automotive or manufacturing sector, no long term R and D or skills training strategy, and no blueprint to seize the massive opportunities of the 21st century green economy.

Laid-off workers lucky enough to find another job suffer an average decline of 25% in annual earnings. That is \$10,000 each year and it is devastating. All the tax cuts to big oil and big banks will not help the workers at Siemens, Vytex or Beta Brands or their families.

New Democrats know it is essential to take a different approach and build on the initiatives we have put forward in this House, such as: eliminating ATM fees; extending veterans' benefits through our veterans first motion; adopting the NDP seniors charter; bringing forward a national prescription drug benefit program; reinstating the federal minimum wage at \$10 an hour; reducing credit card interest rates; adopting the solutions in our fairness for women action plan; passing the NDP leader's environmental bill; passing our post-secondary education act to reduce tuition fees and provide new and stable federal funding for needs based grants for college and university students; and passing our child care act.

Farm families, first nations, seniors, cities, the environment, veterans, students, young families, workers, the disabled and victims

of violence all should have been included in this budget. Sadly, they have been abandoned.

The FCM, civil society, community organizations, my NDP colleagues and I have offered some workable solutions. The NDP has many more real solutions to move this country ahead. It is time for these solutions. It is time.

● (1800)

**Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be quick because I want to make a point of clarification. Obviously the member is ignoring the fact that, under the building Canada fund program, this Conservative government has put about \$33 billion into fixing the infrastructure of this country. I am not going to apologize for the previous Liberal government's 13 years of doing nothing, but the member who just spoke should know that this is the largest infrastructure investment in the history of this country. As well, the gas tax now has been extended forever to the municipalities.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many times 33 divides into 153, but I would say that it is very clear, by the government's own admission, that it is simply not enough. Falling back on the excuse that previous governments neglected infrastructure is not cutting it either.

Municipalities all across this nation have made it very clear. We are facing the collapse of our infrastructure. They need \$153 billion now. If it is not invested now, this is going to escalate in the future. The government has done very little to help. It is abandoning its obligations to towns, cities and communities across Canada.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for London—Fanshawe for her comments, especially on the issue of women's equality. I would like her to elaborate on what she sees as the shortfalls on these issues of research and advocacy for women's equality.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, what the government has done for women across the country is absolutely despicable and unacceptable. Status of Women Canada used to fund research advocacy and lobbying on behalf of women across the nation. Those groups could bring forward the information that government needed in order to have policy. They could advocate on behalf of those who could not advocate for themselves, such as disabled women, low income women and aboriginal women. All of that has been cut. Where on earth will they get the information they need for decent policy decisions?

Very clearly, there is no decent policy from the government.

*The Budget*

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke of municipalities. I would like to point out that the budget specifically makes the gas tax transfer for cities permanent. That was a great measure that was in the budget.

• (1805)

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** It was a great Liberal measure.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** Yes, the members opposite are clapping for the government, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite was a member of the Ontario government that suffered from the downloading cuts of the previous federal Liberal government and she knows that the municipal deficit was created by federal Liberal cuts right here in Ottawa.

I want to make one thing clear for the member. The budget has a very clear benefit for her riding. Electro-Motive is a manufacturer of locomotives and it builds new, green technology locomotives. There is a new capital cost allowance that will specifically benefit Electro-Motive in her riding.

I would like her to stand up and say that she will vote against a budget that specifically benefits unionized workers in her riding. I think that is shameful.

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen:** Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to answer the question because I was, indeed, a member in Ontario from 1990 to 1995. The cuts that crippled Ontario began with the Conservative government of Mr. Mulroney and they continued under the Liberal government.

Those cuts to transfers caused an horrific kind of downloading that the people of Ontario simply could not tolerate. In one short period the cost of just the EI cuts caused the welfare budget to go from \$1 billion a year to \$6 billion a year.

We are talking about a number of issues. The member for Peterborough has forgotten that the infrastructure money that has been promised is not adequate. The number we are working with here is \$153 billion.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

It is great that in this 39th Parliament we have brought forward our third budget, led by a minister who is doing a great job in finance. It was a privilege for me to serve as the chair of the finance committee and deal very closely with the budget. The committee had an opportunity to impact the budget in a significant way. I would now like to discuss that.

I want to say how pleased I am to see so many of the opposition members who have indicated that they will support this budget. That shows the confidence that they have, not only in the minister but in our Prime Minister and this government.

I want to talk about the prebudget consultations which originated under Standing Order 83.1. This allows the finance committee to go across Canada to talk with ordinary Canadians and ask them for their input on what they see as proper things to put in a budget. We listened closely to over 400 different organizations and individuals. At least 200 organizations and individuals gave presentations

directly to the committee as it travelled from coast to coast to coast and we listened to their concerns.

We were pressured this year because of the prorogation of the House and therefore we had to accelerate the timelines somewhat. The timetable was intense but we were able to hear the 200 witnesses. Some people have said that we simply went through the motions and that the finance minister was not listening. They know that recommendations were made but they wonder whether the finance minister heard them.

I would like the House to understand exactly what the minister did hear and what he recommended. The committee members were not always unanimous in our recommendations but we did try to lower the political temperature in the committee so that the committee could come forward with issues that were important to Canadians.

Of the 37 recommendations that the committee put forward to the House, we see 22 of them in the budget that were actually fulfilled. That is a very good count. It shows the importance that the minister places in the work that is being done at the committee stage on behalf of all Canadians.

I want to talk about some of the specific recommendations, such as the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers, understanding the pressures they are under and the opportunity they now have to compete in our increasingly competitive global atmosphere. This is a recommendation that the committee unanimously recommended wholeheartedly and it is great to see it in the budget.

We heard a lot of talk about the millennium scholarship fund coming to an end and many people have asked the government what it would do with it. I have had students in my office telling me that they had some serious problems with the millennium scholarship fund because it was not actually delivering where it should.

The committee recommended that fund be changed and increased by \$350 million, which is exactly what happened in the budget. The new program will increase the amount of money that 245,000 students will receive and that amount will escalate to \$430 million by 2012.

The committee studied recommendations for seniors and their opportunities in this budget. Most people understand that some of our seniors are having a difficult time with inflation. We believe that seniors should have the opportunity to stay in their own homes. Seniors are asking what the government is doing to assist them.

Seniors from across Canada made presentations to the committee and said that they wanted to be able to participate in the workplace but that they did not want their GIS to be clawed back. They said that there should be no negative incentive. The budget addresses that issue by increasing the amount earned from \$500 to \$3,500 before there is any clawback in GIS.

Those are good news stories from the lower end, the beginning of the workplace, from students right to our seniors.

What is the government doing with the people in-between? The budget contains some significant things concerning our loan programs and giving our citizens the opportunity to look after themselves and save for future years.

*The Budget*

•(1810)

I also want to impress upon this House how pleased I am with one of the committee's unanimous recommendations, which is on the road to excellence of the Canadian Olympic committee. We wanted to ensure that was in the budget so we, as Canadians, would have the opportunity to show ourselves as the best in the world. Our Olympics do a tremendous job for this country. The Olympic committee presented, very forcefully and very effectively at the committee, and hats off to it.

I want to quote what one past Olympian had to say about our budget. He said, "Our Canadian athletes are striving to be among the world's best, and these funds will definitely bolster their quest for excellence.

It is great to see that happening.

When we have heard so much about this budget being so partisan, so idealistic and so very right wing in its focus, it is amazing to hear the Premier of the Province of Manitoba, Mr. Gary Doer, a New Democrat, which I see as an extreme left position, saying how impressed he is. In fact, he said, "We're pleased that the capital depreciation for manufacturing equipment has been extended a year. That's an advantage that our manufacturers will have in the future".

It is really good news when we see those kinds of things come forward.

When I go home to my riding and speak to individuals, one of the things they are most proud of in this budget, and which I am most proud of, is the tax-free savings account which gives a couple the opportunity to put up to \$10,000 into a savings account that can grow tax free. Over a period of years, that will be significant.

I do not think many Canadians realize this but, according to the OECD countries, Canadians' household savings rate has dropped from 13% in 1992 to 2.5% just 15 years later, as of 2007 statistics. We have had a significant decrease in the amount of savings that each household has, which puts us in a position where, if there were a downturn in the economy, our ordinary citizens could potentially get themselves into some serious trouble. We are seeing enough trouble with our largest trading partner, the United States, and what is happening south of the border. This savings account will certainly give an opportunity for the people of Canada to do a much better job saving money.

I have many forestry and manufacturing communities in my riding. In fact, I do not think there is a community in my riding that is not impacted by the forest sector. Those communities are going through a terribly difficult time. It is sort of the perfect storm in forestry and manufacturing but it is great to see what we have done in this budget with regard to that. The perfect storm is the slow down in the demand for their products south of the border and also the rise of our Canadian dollar against the American dollar which puts them at a real disadvantage because it has moved so fast in such a short period of time.

We also know that the mountain pine beetle has a significant impact on the forest sector, particularly in my riding.

The perfect storm has come and it has rested on this industry. It is great to see that we put, in this budget and prior to this budget, \$1

billion in a community trust fund to help those communities. The Alberta portion of that will be over \$100 million in that trust. It is great to see not only that fund there to support the industry, but also the accelerated capital cost allowance.

•(1815)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 6:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Call in the members.

•(1840)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 44*)

**YEAS**

Members

Dion  
Ignatieff  
McCallum  
Redman — 7

Goodale  
Jennings  
Proulx

**NAYS**

Members

Abbott  
Albrecht  
Allison  
Anders  
André  
Asselin  
Bachand  
Batters  
Bellavance  
Bernier  
Bezan  
Black  
Blais  
Bonsant

Ablonczy  
Allen  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Angus  
Atamanenko  
Baird  
Bell (Vancouver Island North)  
Benoit  
Bevington  
Bigras  
Blackburn  
Blaney  
Bouchard

Boucher  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Barrie)  
Brunelle  
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)  
Cardin  
Carrier  
Charlton  
Chow  
Clement  
Comuzzi  
Crowder  
Cummins  
Davies  
DeBellefeuille  
Demers  
Devolin  
Doyle  
Dykstra  
Epp  
Fast  
Fitzpatrick  
Fletcher  
Gagnon  
Gallant  
Godin  
Goodyear  
Gravel  
Guay  
Guimond  
Harper  
Harvey  
Hearn  
Hill  
Jaffer  
Julian  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Khan  
Kotto  
Laforest  
Lake  
Lavallée  
Lebel  
Lemieux  
Lévesque  
Lunn  
Lussier  
MacKenzie  
Manning  
Marston  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
McDonough  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Merrifield  
Mills  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Mulcair  
Nash  
Norlock  
Obhrai  
Ouellet  
Paradis  
Petit  
Plamondon  
Prentice  
Priddy  
Reid  
Ritz  
Savoie  
Schellenberger  
Siksay  
Smith  
Sorenson  
St-Hilaire  
Stoffer  
Strahl  
Thi Lac  
Basques)  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Tilson  
Trost  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott

Bourgeois  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Bruinooog  
Calkins  
Cannon (Pontiac)  
Carrie  
Casson  
Chong  
Christopherson  
Comartin  
Crête  
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)  
Davidson  
Day  
Del Mastro  
Deschamps  
Dewar  
Duceppe  
Emerson  
Faille  
Finley  
Flaherty  
Freeman  
Galipeau  
Gaudet  
Goldring  
Gourde  
Grewal  
Guergis  
Hanger  
Harris  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hinton  
Jean  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Laframboise  
Lauzon  
Layton  
Lemay  
Lessard  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Malo  
Mark  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Masse  
Mayes  
Ménard (Hochelaga)  
Menzies  
Miller  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Mourani  
Nadeau  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Oda  
Paquette  
Perron  
Picard  
Poilievre  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Richardson  
Roy  
Scheer  
Shikey  
Skelton  
Solberg  
St-Cyr  
Stanton  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les  
Thompson (Wild Rose)  
Toews  
Tweed  
Van Loan  
Verner

Vincent  
Warawa  
Wasylycia-Leis  
Williams

Wallace  
Warkentin  
Watson  
Yelich — 202

### Routine Proceedings

#### PAIRED

Members

Barbot

Pallister — 2

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment lost.

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Government Business No. 6.

The member for Vancouver East is rising on a point of order.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I see that a number of Liberal members just came in. It is very interesting that they missed the vote on their own amendment, but we would be prepared to give unanimous consent to have them recorded as voting for their own amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent that they be recorded as voting for their motion.

• (1845)

**The Speaker:** We would have to do the vote over again if that is the case.

Is there consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** I sense there is no consent.

The question is on the motion.

• (1855)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 45)

#### YEAS

Members

Abbott  
Albrecht  
Allen  
Ambrose  
Anderson  
Asselin  
Bagnell  
Baird  
Bell (North Vancouver)  
Benoit

Ablonczy  
Alghabra  
Allison  
Anders  
André  
Bachand  
Bains  
Batters  
Bellavance  
Bernier





*Adjournment Proceedings*

•(1905)

[*Translation*]

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to see that the issue of the manufacturing and forestry sectors is attracting so much interest and that so many members are here for these adjournment proceedings.

On February 5, 2008, I had a question for this government, for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, on the appropriateness of adding the measures announced to help the manufacturing and forestry industries. At that time, the Prime Minister had decided that the vote on the \$1 billion trust would no longer be linked to the budget. We managed to get him to reverse that decision and we hoped that the government would inject some new money in order to help the manufacturing and forestry sectors deal with the crisis.

The budget has been presented since then, but we note that the Minister of Finance unfortunately did not listen to our demands, for which he is being severely judged in Quebec. The three parties of the National Assembly, including the premier and the Quebec finance minister, as well as the leader of the opposition and the leader of the third party, have all denounced the situation and called the budget inadequate for the manufacturing and forestry sectors, as well as for older workers. This budget does not meet the needs of Quebecers.

Today, I am raising this issue again, because the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Finance now number among those who are unhappy with the budget. In fact, today, they agreed to support a motion calling on the committee to examine the issue of the manufacturing and forestry industries in the coming days and try to report by March 31, so that the government can take additional steps to help the industries.

It is scandalous that the government plans to use the \$10 billion surplus to pay down the debt, when that money could be used to help our economy. Instead of spending \$10 billion to reduce the debt, the government could have spent only \$3 billion on that and used the remaining \$7 billion to help the manufacturing and forestry industries and older workers.

I hope that the government will change its mind, because it has until March 31 to decide how it will allocate the surplus. It changed its mind about the trust fund, so why not in this case?

I am encouraged by Conservative support for the motion I introduced today. I hope that the government will act accordingly and that, as early as tomorrow, we will have news confirming that the Conservative government has recognized that allocating the \$10 billion to debt reduction was unacceptable and that a significant portion of that money needs to be spent to revive the manufacturing and forestry industries.

We are going to go to bat again tomorrow, at the next meeting of the committee, and I hope that the position the Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Finance took today will reflect the government's desire to provide additional funding.

Companies in the forestry sector, including paper manufacturers, and in the manufacturing sector are continuing to close their doors.

In regions such as Beauce, which had an outstanding reputation in the manufacturing sector, jobs are disappearing left and right. The industry grew and developed when the dollar was worth 65¢, but now that the dollar is at par, the industry is in serious difficulty. Moreover, the same problem is occurring throughout Quebec and Ontario and across Canada.

Will the government take steps to correct the situation, and will it allocate additional money in the short term? That is my question for the government.

•(1910)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government fully understands the very real needs of workers and communities that are feeling the impact of economic challenges.

While the Canadian economy remains strong, we are mindful of the challenges before us: global uncertainty, volatile markets and the difficulties confronting some of our traditional industries such as manufacturing and forestry. This is exactly why we have aggressively moved to support Canada's and Quebec's traditional industries.

Budget 2008 continues to build on the significant pre-emptive steps taken in the 2007 fall economic update and during winter 2008 to lower taxes for people and businesses, pay down debt, and provide targeted support to struggling communities.

To date, we have introduced \$9 billion in tax relief, mostly broad-based for manufacturers and processors, and that will be by 2012-13.

We are also providing \$1 billion for the community development trust to help provinces like Quebec assist in one-industry towns facing major downturns, communities plagued by chronic high unemployment, or regions hits by layoffs across a range of sectors such as manufacturing and forestry.

In budget 2007, we brought in a \$1.3 billion temporary accelerated capital cost allowance for investments in machinery and equipment. In budget 2008, we extended that measure three years on a declining basis, which will provide the manufacturing and processing sectors with an additional \$1 billion in tax relief.

University of Manitoba economics professor John McCallum, has applauded this initiative, noting, "Anything that is an incentive to invest in assets that make manufacturers and others more competitive is a good thing. This budget does that—".

We are further supporting Canada's job creators by increasing the capital cost allowance rate 10% for buildings used in manufacturing and processing and to 55% for computers. Budget 2008 additionally provides greater accessibility to the enhanced scientific research and experimental development tax incentive program and additional funding to improve the administration of this program.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

In budget 2008 we are also extending the targeted initiative for older workers to 2012, providing \$90 million to a federal-provincial employment program that provides employment activities for unemployed older workers in vulnerable communities in order to encourage workforce participation.

We are also bringing forward numerous measures to specifically assist the forestry sector, such as: providing \$10 million over two years to Natural Resources Canada to promote the forestry sector in international markets, investing \$127.5 million in the forest industry long term competitiveness initiative to support innovation and assist the forestry sector to shift toward higher value products to tap into new markets, establishing a \$25 million forest communities program that will assist 11 forest-based communities to make informed decision making on the forest land base, concluding a softwood lumber agreement, and restoring access to the U.S. market resulting in over \$5 billion in duty deposits returned to Canadian producers.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, then how do we explain the position of the Canadian manufacturers and exporters, the Quebec federation of chambers of commerce and all the unions and workers? Last Friday, 150 laid-off workers went to the Minister of Labour's constituency office with signs saying, "You are a member from Quebec. Not Alberta." People want a chance to work in their own communities. People are saying that they do not want to go to Alberta. A 55-year-old who has spent his life raising a family in his region does not want to move to that province.

Today, the government is refusing to implement an income security program for older workers. These people have done everything they can to find jobs, but have not been successful. How are these people supposed to understand that the government is putting \$10 billion in surplus towards the debt, when it cannot find \$50 million, for the current year for all of Canada, to help ensure these workers have sufficient funds to get them through to retirement?

Should the government not go back to the drawing board, as the Standing Committee on Finance recommended today?

• (1915)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Menzies:** Mr. Speaker, again, we do recognize the need of workers and communities dependent upon traditional industries, such as manufacturing and forestry, as they face global economic turbulence and are feeling the impact of challenges. However, it is important to remember the Canadian economy, especially Quebec's, remains vibrant outside of the traditional industries.

In 2007, Quebec showed solid economic vigour, with job growth at 2.4%, far above the national average, which also represented the province's best showing in over five years.

Quoting from an article in the February 9 issue of the *National Post*, one can begin to get the sense of the evolving Quebec economy:

Notice the transformation of Quebec. It's manufacturing sector may be withering away but big gains in other areas like construction, transportation, warehousing and accommodation have spurred a tumble in its jobless rate to a 33-year low of 6.8% in January. That is a tremendous drop from the peak of 9.7% in August, 2003.

Claude Picher in *La Presse* has noted this transformation in his recent article "La légende des McJobs", making very similar observations. This new job growth is good for Quebec and all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, to put this evening's debate into context, this discussion follows up on a question I asked the Minister of the Environment on November 26, 2007. It is now March. I would like to suggest that this is an indication of how important this issue is to the Conservative government. This is probably the most important issue the current government will face, since it is our duty to future generations to try to do something concrete to curb global warming caused by the increased amount of greenhouse gases we are emitting.

The question was asked in November at the height of the Bali conference where, unfortunately, the Conservative government embarrassed us on the world stage. Instead of being a leader on the environment, the Conservatives decided to point the finger at other countries who are not only signatories, but are respecting their obligations under the Kyoto protocol. I am referring to India and China. The fact is that when the protocol was signed, it was always understood that emerging economies would have a little more time to adapt. This was considered fair by all signatories, including Canada.

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that China emits one-fifth the greenhouse gases per capita that Canada does. Nonetheless, we know that on average, Quebecers emit half the greenhouse gases that other Canadians do. And in some parts of Canada, 10 to 20 times more greenhouse gases are emitted per capita. There is nothing to be pleased about here and no reason to hide behind China and India.

The Bali conference was the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A similar conference had been held in Montreal. We must stand up to the Conservative government. Just this evening, we saw another example of exactly how badly the so-called official opposition, the Liberal Party, is doing its job. Later this week, during the opposition days, each party will have a chance to express its concerns about the most important issues facing our society.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

It is a shame that we cannot put forward a non-confidence motion against the official Liberal opposition, because its representatives had a lot to say about the Kyoto accord, but the party did not do a thing. They no longer stand for anything. They did not take a stand on the budget, which ignored this serious issue, except for a brief mention of carbon sequestration, which is a solution few support.

Canada has a legal obligation under the Kyoto accord. The Conservatives claim that respect for the law is one of their government's greatest priorities, but they are contravening the international law that Canada has signed. Perhaps the Conservative government should refrain from lecturing people on failing to comply with the law, seeing as this country's own obligations as a state have been flouted by the government's failure to comply with the Kyoto accord.

I invite anyone interested in this issue to listen carefully to the minister's statements in the House, and to read the record. He has demonstrated a complete failure to understand his file. No doubt his assistant, who will read us a text prepared by the Prime Minister's Office, will look as though he understands it, but the Conservatives have no inkling.

• (1920)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Outremont for his question and assure him that contrary to what has been asserted, this government has a track record of leadership on the environment.

It is under this government that Canada will for the first time ever be regulating the big polluters to require them to reduce in absolute terms their greenhouse gases. We have a plan and a national goal to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020. That is an absolute reduction of 20% in 12 years.

Our plan will also see us reduce emissions by 60% to 70% by 2050. It is not going to be easy to achieve those reductions. It will be difficult. This government is committed to reducing emissions and improving the environment for both present and future generations of Canadians.

Our goals in our national plan are further espoused by a number of key principles that were set out by the Prime Minister. Any long term post-2012 climate change agreement must include the major emitting countries like China, India and the United States. It must be fair and economically realistic without placing unfair burdens on any one country. It must be long term and flexible. It must have a balanced approach that preserves economic growth and protects the environment.

Set out clearly, we need all major emitters on board and that is absolutely essential to fight global warming.

It is this message which we brought to the most recent United Nations climate change meeting held in Bali, Indonesia last December. As the conference began, Canada and the United Nations worked cooperatively on three main goals.

First, the world must come together and agree to launch negotiations for a post-2012 agreement.

Second, there must be an agreement on what the building blocks should be for the framework.

Third, there must be an end date of the negotiations by 2009.

Canada was successful in achieving those goals. We are committed to the United Nations process. We are committed to a new international framework driven by science. We are committed to action in our turning the corner plan.

Our government is proud of the principled position we have taken on the environment. We are proud of what we have helped to achieve at the Bali meeting. We will continue to work with our international partners in the lead-up to the 2009 build-up of the international climate change framework built on good and sound principles.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, that is garbage and nonsense. The only thing the Conservatives did in Bali was embarrass us.

Contrary to what the hon. member just said, there are no binding targets. There are intensity targets. That means that if the amount of greenhouse gases emitted to produce a barrel of oil is at level 10, for example, then a polluter can indeed say that the intensity of greenhouse gases has been reduced when the amount emitted drops to level 8. Nonetheless, if they triple the number of barrels, they are still increasing the quantity of greenhouse gases considerably.

That is the Conservatives' real plan. It is directly related to oil production from the oil sands. The way oil is being mined there right now will cause the worst environmental crisis in the history of Canada for generations to come. That is the Conservative philosophy: take as much as possible today and let future generations fend for themselves with the problems we are leaving them. That is what the Conservatives are doing.

• (1925)

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa:** Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. The Bali conference launched a formal negotiation process to develop a post-2012 climate change agreement by 2009. That includes all major emitters, including China and India. It is called the Bali action plan. The action plan, which will have a clear agenda and work plan, will be based on four building blocks: mitigation, adaptation, technology and financing.

The Bali conference was a positive start to what will become an intense and challenging two years of negotiations. Negotiations will continue along both tracks over 2009 with the goal of coming together with a new global agreement at the COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2009.

Guided by our domestic climate change plan and the Prime Minister's principles, Canada will actively participate in this process over the next two years. The planet cannot be let down. We must succeed for the sake of our children and our children's children. Canada is committed to playing—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Malpeque.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

## CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the debate tonight was caused by the minister's lack of an answer to a question I raised on February 4. The question was what involvement, directly or indirectly, the minister and/or the Prime Minister had in the firing of the Canadian Wheat Board's vice-president of farmer relations and public affairs, Deanna Allan. I did not get any answers then. Maybe the parliamentary secretary will be a little more forthcoming and a little more honest tonight.

This firing is on top of many other undemocratic acts fostered by the Prime Minister's ideological attack on the Canadian Wheat Board. It is shameful the kind of undemocratic actions that the Prime Minister is taking toward the Canadian Wheat Board.

It is important to put the Wheat Board into perspective on what it is not. The government goes to great lengths to try and leave the impression that the Canadian Wheat Board is some entity out there, a crown corporation or whatever, when it really is not. It is run by an elected board of directors of farmers, who has challenged the Prime Minister, and we know he does not like to be challenged.

I will explain what the Wheat Board is not. Judge Hansen, in her judgment on July 31, 2007, said this as background:

The CWB is a corporation without share capital...The CWB is not an agent of Her Majesty the Queen, nor is it a crown corporation.

I lay that out so people understand what the Canadian Wheat Board is not. Therefore, why is the government trying to treat it like it is an entity of government? It operates under government legislation and is managed by a board of directors elected by producers.

As I indicated, this was not the first firing. The CEO was fired for taking his direction from the elected board of directors and for standing up to the Prime Minister. There were three directors fired and new directors were appointed basically for their ideological dislike for the board. In fact, the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food had rejected one of those directors, but the Prime Minister showed contempt for that decision as well.

All along there have been gag orders placed on the board. The government has tried to manipulate the election of directors. The government struck 16,000 farmers off the voters list in the middle of an election. Never before in Canada have we seen such undemocratic activities by a government against a segment of the population. In this case, it is grain producers, elected directors to the board, and the Prime Minister does not like them at all.

The history on this goes back a long way. It goes back to when the current Prime Minister was crusading against the Canadian Wheat Board since his days as chairman of the National Citizens' Coalition. His beliefs are held just as deeply today.

After the Federal Court ruling on his government's attempt to circumvent the law and make changes to barley marketing by changing the regulations, he was rejected by the courts. The Prime Minister came out of his party's caucus meeting and said that he was going to get the Wheat Board one way or another. It is undemocratic.

● (1930)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to talk about democracy but we saw an interesting display of it a bit earlier here when the Liberals refused to come in and even vote on their own amendment to the budget. We brought in the budget over a week ago and I do not think we have had one question from them about the budget in that whole time. They are supposed to be the official opposition. It is interesting to note that the member is now showing some enthusiasm for this issue but certainly had no enthusiasm for being here earlier and dealing with his own amendment to the budget.

The Liberals continue to misunderstand Canadians and they continue to misunderstand particularly western Canadian farmers.

With regard to this specific question, other than the president, the hiring, firing and dismissal of persons working for the Canadian Wheat Board is the sole responsibility of the Canadian Wheat Board and the board of directors. In this situation, the Canadian Wheat Board has stated that the dismissal of Deanna Allen was a decision made by the board of directors, and that is what it was. The member wanted a direct and honest answer and that is a direct and honest answer as to the situation regarding her firing.

Last spring, 62% of barley farmers voted for marketing freedom and that percentage is certainly a lot higher now than it was then. The member is insistent that he will try to stop western Canadian farmers from getting marketing choice. As the minister said in here a couple of weeks ago, the hobby horse that the member for Malpeque is riding is heading for the glue factory because the western Canadian agriculture industry wants freedom and this government has an obligation to bring that freedom to these farmers. They demand it and they deserve it.

It has been very interesting over the last year to note that the percentage of western Canadian farmers has grown exponentially in support of marketing choice. As the market has become better, farmers want more choice and more ability to access that market.

The government also has a mandate to follow through on its election promise to bring marketing choice to western Canada. The member for Malpeque does not seem to ever consider imposing a marketing board on his own constituents but he certainly wants to continue to impose one on western Canadian farmers.

This government is listening to our farmers and we are listening to industry players because we know a healthy value chain is good for farmers and it is good for the Canadian economy.

The entire value chain has stood united in calling for barley marketing freedom. It is not just farmers, although probably three-quarters or more of them now want marketing choice, but it is also the maltsters and the brewers. Everybody except the Canadian Wheat Board, the member and members of his party opposite want marketing choice.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

The minister has brought forward legislation and we will move toward marketing freedom. I would ask the member opposite if he would not join with me in supporting that legislation because it is good legislation for western Canadian farmers. If he knows anything about western Canada, if he is interested in actually gaining support out in western Canada, I would think he would be willing to stand and vote with us. Every one of the groups, from farmer to handler to malster to brewer, has been calling for marketing freedom.

Why does the opposition insist on standing in the way of a healthy and a vibrant industry?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, we believe in a healthy, vibrant industry but we also believe in empowering the farm community through the Canadian Wheat Board where it can maximize returns back to primary producers and gain maximum resources out of the marketplace.

Of course, as the member said, the maltsters and the brewers want to get rid of the single desk selling under the board. It is to their advantage to do so because they can get into negative competition with farmers and drive prices down. The grain companies will be the ones to gain.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary to join with us and with the farmer elected members of the board of directors and demand that the government follow the law, that it hold a fair plebiscite on the question and determine where farmers are at. I would even propose that the standing committee go out to those communities and hear from farmers if this legislation still comes forward.

●(1935)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, that is just another example of how that member is completely out of touch with western Canada. We already had a plebiscite a year ago and two-thirds of producers indicated that they wanted choice. Today the number is probably 75% to 80% more. The reason they want choice is to maximize the benefits of their industry. They know full well that if they would have had access to the market this year they would have done far better than they have so far under the Canadian Wheat Board.

We know that a significant majority of producers have been looking forward to making their own marketing decisions as of the past August 1. They were disappointed with the Federal Court decision that maintained the single desk of the Canadian Wheat Board. Producers were also disappointed that the Federal Court of Appeal refused to overturn that decision.

Today this government once again showed strong leadership and introduced legislation that would bring marketing freedom to the western barley producers that they deserve. It is time that the opposition did the right thing, put its ideological ideas aside and voted for freedom.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.)

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