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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, December 3, 2008

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Halifax.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

OPPOSITION COALITION PROPOSAL

Mr. Tim Uppal (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to read a quote from one of the separatist coalition's biggest supporters, "Sovereignists have no interest in people looking at Ottawa as a stable serious government. The image projected must be that of a weak government". These are the words of Jacques Parizeau, the man who almost tore our great country apart. Yesterday he said that the separatist coalition would be "good for a sovereign Quebec", not good for Canada, not good for the Québécois people who like everyone else expects the House to make Canada work.

The people of Canada are outraged, people like Greg Douglas in my riding who has collected over 50,000 signatures in a petition against this separatist coalition.

The Leader of the Opposition is so desperate for power that he has made a formal alliance with the people who want to make Canada fail. If he truly believes in the separatist pact, he should show the courage of his convictions and take it to the people.

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PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982. The 2008 theme is "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Dignity and justice for all of us".

Approximately 10% of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with disabilities. In Canada it is one in seven people. On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, as well as during the year-long celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, let us use dignity and justice for all as a rallying call, as these principles are far from being realized for everyone.

I invite all hon. members and all Canadians to make a renewed commitment to these principles of dignity and justice and to ensure implementation of the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GALA AWARD CEREMONY

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Mirabel chamber of commerce and industry held its first ever Gala Innov on November 21. I would like to commend the organizing committee, in particular its general manager, Lysanne O'Sullivan, and Alain Dugas, vice president and general manager, operations, commercial aircraft, Bombardier Aerospace. Mr. Dugas acted as the honorary chairman of the event, as well.

I would like to pay tribute to some of the organizations and companies honoured at the gala. Outstanding commendations went to Bombardier Aerospace and the Institut de formation aérospatiale. Gold awards went to: Intermiel; Parc régional du Bois-de-Belle-Rivière; Lefebvre, Lefebvre et Théorêt, notaries; Gestion Sicola; Gérald Paquette, electrician and employees—two gold medals—; Emballage AT; Centre Kubota des Laurentides.

My congratulations as well to all the other Mirabel associations and businesses that were nominated for this gala to recognize dynamism and excellence.

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[*English*]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

Statements by Members

Saturday will mark the 19th anniversary of the massacre at the École Polytechnique in Montreal. Sadly, in the years since the massacre, we have made very little progress toward ending gender violence. Half of Canadian women experience abuse and violence in their homes, communities, workplaces and schools during their lifetime. Across the world women are overwhelmingly the victims of war, and rape is used as a weapon to break and shame women.

We must ensure that no woman, no matter where she lives, the colour of her skin or race suffers violence simply because she is a woman. Each of us has the power and responsibility to end violence against women and to create communities where women can build their lives without the threat of violence.

December 6 is not just a day to remember, it is a day to take action and to finally end violence against women.

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OPPOSITION COALITION PROPOSAL

Hon. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal, socialist, separatist coalition is trying to impose a radical agenda on Canadians.

This is not middle-of-the-road liberalism, but an alliance of extremes. It includes NDP out of touch economic policies, as if the answer to a global economic crisis is tax hikes.

This coalition has full support from the leader of the separatist movement's most hard-line factions, Jacques Parizeau. He says the coalition is "good for a sovereign Quebec".

We have not seen this kind of clear insight into the separatist agenda since Mr. Parizeau gave his opinions on that particular night 13 years ago when a plan to break up Canada was foiled.

Today we must stop another scheme of danger for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast. If the Leader of the Opposition truly believes in his separatist coalition pact, he should show the courage of his convictions and take it to the people.

* * *

●(1405)

CLUSTER MUNITIONS

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canada will sign the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This is the most significant treaty of its kind since the ban on anti-personal land mines that was signed exactly 11 years ago today. The treaty, led by Canadians and NGOs from across the globe, is now saving more than 17,000 lives a year.

While our government has been a laggard on this issue, it has finally come to the table to address this tragic situation. However, it still has not articulated a plan of action to fulfill our commitments to the treaty.

Canadian and international humanitarian mine action organizations have been bravely clearing land mines and cluster bombs to provide safety, security and prosperity to communities affected by these terrible weapons for many years. Cluster munitions are indiscriminate, they primarily kill civilians and destroy a nation's ability to get back on its feet after being war ravaged.

We in the Liberal Party call upon the Conservative government to present a plan of action that will back up our signature to remove the scourge of cluster munitions from our world forever.

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LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a decade ago he was brought to Ottawa to save Canada. Now, due to political expediency and his impending demise as leader of the Liberal Party, he has made it his mission to destroy Canada and the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

Not only has he made a pact with the secessionists—whose sole goal is to weaken Canada—but he has also turned his back on the remains of his reputation as a defender of Canadian unity.

[English]

Why does the leader of the Liberal Party no longer believe in Canadian unity and a proud and strong Quebec within a united and vibrant Canada?

The leader of the Liberal Party does not believe that Canada should come before the entitlement of a party that won only one in four votes. The separatist Liberals should not try to impose their anti-Canada agenda on this country.

If he truly believes in his separatist pact, he should show the courage of his convictions and take it to the people.

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[Translation]

ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Ottawa Landmine Treaty was signed eleven years ago today. Although its implementation made possible the destruction of 42 million mines, there are another 160 million still stockpiled around the world.

When the treaty was signed, a \$100 million fund was created, the Canadian Landmine Fund. Five years on, another \$72 million was added, and the fund terminated in March 2008. As well, funding for treaty enforcement has decreased by \$33 million over the 2006 level.

However, last week at the Geneva conference of signatories to the Ottawa treaty, the first serious violations of the treaty were reported: 15 countries had not carried out demining within the deadlines set and 3 had not destroyed their stockpiles of mines.

The Bloc Québécois calls upon the government to bring pressure to bear on the signatory states to renew their commitment to this treaty.

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has decided to cling to power at any cost.

Even if it means recording telephone conversations unbeknownst to those involved, because the Conservatives are willing to do anything to hold onto power.

Even if it means saying that a deal with the Bloc Québécois is only valid if it was the Conservatives' idea, because they are willing to do anything to hold onto power.

Even if it means leaving town so that they do not have to face the Canadian Parliament, because the Conservatives are willing to do anything to hold onto power.

Even if it means lying to Canadians about their national flag, because the Conservatives are willing to do anything to hold onto power.

The Conservatives have had six weeks to come up with a plan and save jobs and the economy, but they have done nothing. Yet it took them only six days to draw up petitions, organize protests, create websites and launch a media blitz to save the only job that matters to them—the prime minister's.

* * *

OPPOSITION PARTIES

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Papineau and all members of his party need to take off their rose-coloured glasses and stop believing that the Bloc has disavowed its ideology. Are we the only ones who can see that the Bloc is doing whatever it can to advance its cause: Quebec separation?

The fact that Jacques Parizeau approves of and applauds the coalition is proof that the Liberal Party and the NDP have fallen into a trap. How can the Liberal Party leader possibly believe that he is fighting for Canada when, once again, he will be the one handing ammunition to the Parizeaus, Landrys and Marois of this world? Is that really what he wants?

The opposition parties have acted utterly irresponsibly in dragging us into this unstable situation. This proves that they do not merit the confidence of Canadians.

* * *

• (1410)

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Bergeron of Lévis wrote to me today to condemn the political situation. She said:

This attempt to overthrow the government looks to me like a coup d'état. People I have talked to feel the same way. We simply refuse to allow a coalition to take (and steal) power without having been elected by the people.

The separatist coalition is playing a very dangerous game. Making separatist leaders Jacques Parizeau and Pauline Marois happy just to slake a thirst for power is totally irresponsible and can only result in instability.

Statements by Members

Canada needs a responsible, experienced government with just one pair of hands on the wheel.

That is the kind of leadership our Prime Minister and the Conservative government have to offer.

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[English]

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is International Day of Persons with Disabilities, a celebration of the new UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and a recommitment to inclusion through its theme, "Dignity and Justice for All".

Celebrations are taking place across Canada hosted by Independent Living Canada, along with People First, all of this following on the heels of the 50th anniversary of the Canadian Association for Community Living. But our celebrations are marred by the Conservative Party's foot dragging on ratification of the UN convention and the Conservatives' failure to address disproportionate poverty and unemployment among Canadians with disabilities.

The Conservative government has no plan and no will to address the economic crisis that puts the most vulnerable in our society at even greater risk. How can we have confidence in a government that denies those living with disabilities the means to help themselves in a time of economic crisis, condemning them to further impoverishment and hardship?

Now is the time to end exclusion, and stand up for the rights of all people.

* * *

[Translation]

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this coalition is having disastrous consequences for Canada. The coalition is dividing Canadians as we stand on the brink of an economic crisis. We do not need a constitutional crisis on top of everything else. When Jacques Parizeau is happy, I start to worry. It is not surprising that the Liberals are again adding fuel to the sovereigntist fire, but it is completely absurd that the NDP is in on this strategy.

Why is the opposition trying to divide the country when our government corrected the fiscal imbalance and recognized the Quebec nation, thereby showing Quebecers that they are an integral part of Canada? Once again, francophones in Canada will find themselves isolated, and once again, they can thank the Liberals.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada recently released a report card ranking 17 industrialized nations on their environmental performance. Canada ranks 15th.

Oral Questions

Canada's performance in terms of waste generation, water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions earns it a "D" for "disastrous". Canada could lead the industrialized nations in environmental performance if it wanted to. To date, though, the Conservative government has shown no desire to do so.

It should have followed the example of Quebec, which has the lowest per capita rate of greenhouse gas emissions of all the provinces and territories, and adopted a territorial approach to improve Canada's performance. But this government preferred to support big oil.

This government did not take action when action was needed, and that is why it no longer has the confidence of either this House or the people.

* * *

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal-led coalition has a plan to support jobs through more infrastructure, more job training, more social housing, and support for struggling industries to make them competitive in the 21st century. It is a fiscally responsible plan. We will have a dollar figure when we know if the Conservatives are hiding a deficit of \$5 billion or \$15 billion. There will be no structural deficits and we will eliminate the existing Conservative deficit by year four.

What does the Prime Minister not understand about Canada's need for more infrastructure, more training and more social housing? Why has he failed to provide any plan to protect the savings and pensions and jobs of Canadians? Why, in his own words, does he use every legal means at his disposal to protect his own job while not even lifting his little finger to save the jobs of ordinary Canadians?

* * *

• (1415)

OPPOSITION COALITION PROPOSAL

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I first ran for a seat in the House of Commons in 1997 to stand up for Canada and fight for national unity.

However, the separatist contract signed by the opposition parties this week threatens to wipe out all of the progress we have made on the Canadian unity issue.

Yesterday, Jacques Parizeau, a prominent leader of the separatist movement, endorsed the separatist contract between the Liberals and separatists. Let me read what Jacques Parizeau said just a few short years ago: "The image projected needs to be one of a weak, disoriented federal government which will be even more so in the future. That is perfect".

He is right about one thing. This separatist contract would weaken Canada's economy, would weaken Canada's democracy and put the unity of our country in the hands of separatists.

The actions of the Liberal-separatist coalition will have real consequences for all of Canada. When will the Liberals come to their senses and do what is right?

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the enormity of the economic crisis facing Canada is unprecedented. Every day brings more bad news. Yesterday, 250 jobs were lost at Magna Powertrain in Cape Breton.

The OECD predicts that hundreds of thousands jobs will be lost next year in Canada. Why did the Prime Minister refuse to take action to stimulate our economy and get it back on track?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government is taking action by preparing the upcoming budget and additional measures for our economy. The Liberal Party leader proposes to help the economy by signing a pact with the Quebec sovereignists to govern the country. This is not a plan to improve the economy; it is a plan to destroy this country, which is why he should withdraw his proposal.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is such nonsense that I will not even reply to it, and the Prime Minister knows it.

He shirked his responsibilities—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, this is absolute foolishness, and we will not respond to absolute foolishness.

He shirked his responsibilities towards the economy and our workers. He is hiding behind his abysmal record. He is hiding from Parliament.

Why did he fail in his duty to bring in a plan to get our economy back on track?

[English]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the leader of the Liberal Party received an unqualified endorsement from his plan from Jacques Parizeau. Let me tell members, in Mr. Parizeau's own words, why he supports the kind of arrangement the leader of the Liberal Party is proposing: "A weaker government in Ottawa is eminently satisfying. The image must be one of a weak, disoriented government, which will become weaker and more disoriented in the future. This is perfect".

The leader of the Liberal Party is not working with us to prepare the budget and to strengthen this economy, but to weaken this country.

• (1420)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a weak government is a government that does not have the confidence of this House and wants to govern. Never mind, there is an alternative: better public transit for our cities and our communities; cleaner water; clean energy; help for our manufacturing sector, our auto sector, our forestry sector and their workers; and a plan to create jobs.

Why does the Prime Minister care more about his own job than allowing Parliament to save the jobs of Canadians?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the Liberal Party wants to save the jobs of Canadians, he can put on the table specific proposals that will save those jobs. He can reach across the aisle and work with this government, which will be pleased to work with him on saving this economy, but he must walk away from this deal with Jacques Parizeau and the separatists which can do nothing but weaken this country, which is Mr. Parizeau's very objective.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister ignores the truth. Just for the record, the Bloc Québécois has supported the Conservative government at least 140 times, including 14 confidence votes, so let us not be distracted by the red herrings and stick to the real issue, and that is the economy, abject Conservative economic failure.

Beyond all the same old stuff, why is there nothing new for Canadians, for infrastructure, for housing, for manufacturing, for forestry and autos, and for training? Why do the Conservatives have no new plan right now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be very clear about what the leader of the Liberal Party is proposing. He is proposing to govern with the Bloc Québécois and to give it a veto over all important decisions, over all financial policies in every sector of this country. That is the price he is prepared to pay to become prime minister. That can do nothing but weaken the Canadian economy, weaken our democracy, and weaken our country.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just like the flags yesterday, what the Prime Minister has just said is absolutely false.

The Conservatives cannot face the truth. Their own Parliamentary Budget Officer says they are wrong. They are in deficit. It is their deficit. They created it all by themselves. Their previous budgets have not succeeded and now they are all worn out.

Canada is in a recession with no margin left to protect Canadians and no new stimulus. Why can the government not get the point that its economic statement was offensive and that this country needs a different, better plan right now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Liberal Party sat down with the leader of the separatist party on national television. Those pictures are all there. They will show those flags put way off to the side where they are out of the camera angles.

If the Liberal Party continues down this path, those images will never be forgotten by the Canadian people. If the Liberals want to help the Canadian economy, they should sit down with us in front of the flag and do it now.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is confirmed in a letter: in 2004, the Prime Minister was prepared to go to the Governor General, with the support of the Bloc Québécois. The willingness of the former Reform members to associate with separatists, as they would say, is not recent. In fact, the very day of the November 2000 election, a detailed proposal for a coalition was sent to the Bloc Québécois on behalf of the leader of the Canadian Alliance.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he, in 2004, and the leader of the Canadian Alliance, in 2000, were prepared to govern with the Bloc? How—

• (1425)

The Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seriously, the leader of the Bloc Québécois has not mentioned this fact for eight years for the sole reason that the former leader of the Canadian Alliance never saw this letter before this evening.

The facts are that, on October 7, 2008, the leader of the Bloc told his own voters that he would never be part of such a coalition with the federalists. If he is about to do so, he should be prepared to face his own voters and obtain a democratic mandate.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the 2000 proposal, supported by the current Minister of International Trade, they were even prepared to discuss the contents of the throne speech with the leader of the Bloc Québécois in order to form, as they put it, a “new government of consensus”.

Will the Minister of International Trade admit that after the 2000 election he was ready to form a coalition government with the separatists—as they say—of the Bloc Québécois, and as the proposal made by his personal attorney, Mr. Chipeur, confirms?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before last night, I had never seen this document, I had never heard of this document and I never authorized this document. It is a complete fabrication.

[*English*]

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, my DNA would never allow me to do a deal, a coalition, with socialists and my heart would never allow me to do a deal with separatists.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of International Trade, as leader of the Canadian Alliance, not only proposed getting together with the separatists to form a coalition government, but he also went so far as to agree to discuss the content of an eventual throne speech.

How can the Conservatives today maintain that the current coalition is illegitimate when they themselves did not hesitate to suggest the exact same thing in 2000 and 2004?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and honoured to repeat that I had not seen or heard of this document until last night. I never authorized this document and I have never, ever discussed this document.

[*English*]

As I have said before, it would be bad enough, it would be going against my very DNA to do a coalition deal with socialists. It would absolutely go against my heart and the hearts of Canadians to do a deal with separatists. No coalition with separatists.

Oral Questions

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the deal proposed in 2000 was practically a program to govern that included democratic reform, respect for the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, tax cuts for families and business subsidies.

Given the content of this document, should the Prime Minister not reconsider and acknowledge that the current coalition is not only legitimate but that it is perfectly democratic?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the members of the Bloc Québécois know, I sat in the National Assembly for almost 10 years. I witnessed many debates there and I heard the deep contempt that many of the PQ members had for Canada.

Today, I look at the Leader of the Opposition, who comes from the same city as I do, who represents a longstanding tradition—because people know that both my grandparents sat here in this House—and I urge him to continue that longstanding tradition.

• (1430)

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nations around the world are getting serious about the economic crisis that is facing them. They are bringing forward bold and aggressive actions to deal with the economic crisis.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Jack, you're a traitor.

Hon. Jack Layton: Canada's manufacturing sector, its automotive sector and its forestry sector are in crisis, and yet the government brings forward no plan to deal with these issues. There is no plan to create the technologies for a green economic future. There is no plan to deal with a broken EI system that is leaving people out in the cold.

Why does the Prime Minister care more about saving his own job than the jobs of Canadians who are being thrown out of work?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bold plan of the leader of the NDP is that the day the election is over he starts meeting with the separatists to plot a coalition to overturn the results of the election without any proposals to help any of the ordinary people he is talking about. This is a sellout of the interests of all of the people who voted for his party.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Actually, Mr. Speaker, I remember being invited by this former leader of the opposition to come to a meeting with him and the leader of the Bloc Québécois to talk about exactly these sorts of things in 2004.

So, the fact is that the first priority of the House right now must be the economy. We are in a global crisis. Canadian families are counting on us to do something for them and for their families. What we have instead is a Prime Minister who is desperately clinging to his own job and standing against the democratic process.

Will he honour his commitment and let us vote?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the NDP wants to help this economy, he would immediately pass the elements in the economic and fiscal update that help the manufacturing and automobile sectors, that help the credit markets, that help pensioners and RRIF holders. And the leader of the NDP would walk away from a deal with the separatists,

whom Jacques Parizeau says he will use to weaken our economy and weaken our country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has not introduced any plan for the economy and we cannot vote for proposals like that.

The Prime Minister prefers to cling to power, go back on his word and put a lock on the door, instead of letting the members work on economic renewal. The only thing that matters is saving his own job, not the jobs of Canadians. We must save peoples' jobs.

Why will the Prime Minister not step aside to make room for a team that has a plan?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the New Democratic Party does not have a plan for the economy; he has a plan to govern this country with Quebec sovereignists. It is as simple as that. It is not a plan for the economy. They have no plan for the economy.

The leader of that party can work with the government on additional measures for the economy if he wants, but he must reject this plan aimed at subverting our country, Canada.

• (1435)

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised Canadians an economic plan this fall, he failed. He promised to make Parliament work, he failed. His exam is Monday night's vote.

Why is this petulant Prime Minister pulling the fire alarm just to avoid his leadership test? Why does he want to shut down this Parliament during an economic crisis? Why is he more interested in protecting his own job than saving Canadian jobs?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, why is the member opposite and his party all members of the new socialist coalition, the new separatist coalition? Why are they opposed to helping pensioners in the fall economic update, help that is needed before the end of December? Why are they opposed to helping seniors aged 71 and older with RRIFs in this country, relief that is needed now in 2008? Why are they opposed to the powers that the government would have to extend further credit to small business in this country, including the auto sector? Why is the new separatist coalition opposed to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is just more politics and no economic plan.

Yesterday in Nova Scotia, 260 jobs were lost at the Magna plant in North Sydney, 46 jobs were lost at Fundy Gypsum in Windsor, there were major layoffs at both Bowater and Minas Basin Pulp and Power, and the lobster fishery is in trouble.

Oral Questions

Canadians sent us here to Parliament to work hard and protect Canadian jobs.

Why is the Prime Minister shutting this Parliament down before the job is done? Why is he walking off his job, having done nothing to save the jobs of Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): I will tell the House why, Mr. Speaker. The new separatist coalition is opposed to helping pensioners, seniors and small businesses. It is on the Liberal website. It quotes the Liberal leader. Here is what he says about one of his new coalition partners:

[The NDP leader's] plan for the economy will raise taxes on businesses, further weakening our stock markets, eroding our savings and killing Canadian jobs...[The NDP] plan is paid for with monopoly money and is a job killer.

That is why the new separatist coalition will not support jobs—

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition parties are working to save Canadian jobs, the Conservatives are busy organizing sham protests to save their own hides. In my riding, Wabush Mines has just announced that it will lay off 160 of its workers. IOC Mines has shelved a \$500 million expansion, and its temporary and contract workers are being hit hard. All this just weeks after the Prime Minister said we had strong economic fundamentals.

Why do the Conservatives care more about saving their own jobs than the jobs of real Canadians?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times in this House, we understand that these are very difficult times, which is why we are putting money into the community development trust. This will help those people who are suffering at this point in time.

However, I find it ironic that the member is only interested in listening to his constituents when it is for the purposes of sustaining the separatist coalition and when it comes to actually listening for the purposes, on a topic as fundamental as giving the separatists a veto on national—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Labrador.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is absolutely right, I stand up for my constituents. We have done more in three days to help the economy than the Conservatives have done in three years. Our plan will boost the economy, save Canadian jobs and provide recovery to industries across the country. What is their plan? It is to make work for Conservative backroom organizers.

The job losses mount. People are not working. The 143 Conservatives on those benches have a job, but the Conservatives are not working for Canadians.

Will the Prime Minister stop the spin?

•(1440)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try again. The member for Labrador is not speaking on behalf of his constituents. He is speaking on behalf of a separatist coalition.

This government is working hard for the citizens of Canada. The coalition is bad for democracy, bad for the economy and bad for Canada. Those members should walk away from it or they should

take it back to Canadians and let Canadians let them know what they really feel.

* * *

[Translation]

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the actions and ideology of the Conservative government have triggered the present political crisis. The government has indeed lost the confidence of the House.

Is the Prime Minister going to face the confidence vote in the House next Monday instead of avoiding it by asking for prorogation?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentions confidence. I have a question for the hon. member and his leader. What agreement did he made to trade off his right to veto on three occasions, on two budgets and a throne speech? What does he have to hide? Let's hear the truth. What did they agree to?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to understand this. The agreement has been released, it is public. But the Minister of Foreign Affairs has just said we have lost our veto power. Yet just a little while ago he said that the separatists have acquired a veto.

Might we know just which it is?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it should be pretty simple for the leader of the Bloc to understand. He has decided not to have a confidence vote in the next two budgets to be introduced. He is the leader, so here is the question. The leaders of the Bloc Québécois and the PQ are going around saying they have won a billion dollars. Is it true that the agreement means a billion dollars for Quebec? Which one is telling the truth? The leader of the Bloc, or Pauline Marois?

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what is true is that the economic statement reduced the amount going to Quebec from \$1 billion to \$450 million.

I would like to ask the Minister of International Trade whether he recalls saying on July 29, 2000, that he was not opposed to a coalition with the Quebec separatist party, after the election, in order to ensure that the Conservatives' ideas could be advanced. This was a statement he made to journalists, some—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I have properly understood the response by the leader of the Bloc, he has just denied what the leader of the Parti québécois has said about obtaining \$1 billion. Everyone knows about this.

Will the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Bloc Québécois tell us today precisely and exactly what the agreement contains, giving us the whole truth, and concealing nothing?

Oral Questions

Because we, on the Conservative side, we Quebec Conservatives, want to know whether he has or has not defended the interests of Quebec.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the question is for me—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: If they could stop yelling.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1445)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has the floor, and we need some order in the House so that we can hear him.

Order, please.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, he has asked me some questions, so I will answer them. He is practising asking questions for when he finds himself on this side.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Everything is out in the open. We conveyed what the three parties in Quebec's National Assembly were asking for. But I want to get back to the July 2000 article in which the Minister of International Trade said that he was holding talks with Parti québécois officials and their supporters about alliances that could be established with the “evil separatists” in the upcoming election.

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe after question period, outside the House, the member will be able to tell us all whether he and I ever talked about a coalition. The answer is: we never did.

He can give us an answer after question period. Perhaps it a dream for him, but it would have been a nightmare for Canadians and for me.

* * *

[English]

THE PRIME MINISTER

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister who sets the tone of the House. Respect gets respect and disrespect breeds disrespect.

The Prime Minister now fights to stay on to win a battle that never need have been fought in the first place to preside over a Parliament whose dynamics, whose very relationships he has poisoned and destroyed.

Too late, he has broken it. How could this Parliament work with the Prime Minister?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we are still playing for the Canadians.

I will list who the opposition members are playing for? They are playing for Jacques Parizeau, the former premier of Quebec. An

Ottawa Citizen article states that former Premier Jacques Parizeau applauded, without reservation, the Bloc Québécois leader's recent impressive victory in forming a coalition in Ottawa.

Whose side are they on? Will they stand up for Canada or will they stand for the separatist contract?

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we have the biggest economic crisis in decades as a country and as a world, as parliamentarians it was time to come together but the Prime Minister just could not resist. He cannot stop himself. He has this pathological inability to put aside politics. Too bad for him and for all of us.

How does one repair the irreparable? I will help the Prime Minister with his answer. Sorry, but it is over. We cannot trust him any more. We need a new Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the choice for the hon. member and for his party is very simple. If they really believe governing the country in a deal with the separatists is good for the country, then they should take that to the Canadian people and get a mandate for it or they should walk away from it and say it was a mistake.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the members on the other side of the House just gave new meaning to the word “pathetic”.

The Conservatives tricked the Canadian people: no measures, no answers, no economic plan to deal with the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of 1929. Canadians want us to set aside our partisan differences and find ways to help them. They want us to save their jobs, not the Prime Minister's.

We have a legitimate, stable, economical alternative for Canada. Does the Prime Minister realize that he no longer has the confidence of Parliament?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what a separatist coalition economic plan looks like: higher taxes, weakened stock markets, eroding our savings and killing Canadian jobs, all paid for with Monopoly money. Where can people read that? They can read that on the website of the Liberal Party of Canada.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, he should look at the stock market, because we can see how it has been affected by the Conservatives' do-nothing approach.

Canadians have understood from the start that the reason for this crisis is that the Prime Minister cares more about protecting his limousine and his official residence than he does about protecting Canadians' economic interests. The Prime Minister preferred to gamble on democracy, and he lost. He tried to pull a fast one and he got caught. The Prime Minister has an obligation to respect Parliament, the cradle of our democracy.

Oral Questions

Is he willing to answer for his actions, face up to his responsibilities for the future of our economy and not ask that Parliament be suspended?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I twice worked hand in hand with the member for Bourassa to fight two referendums on Quebec's separation from the rest of Canada. I did so with the full confidence of my colleague, but today the choice is clear. His leader has made a pact with the leader of the Bloc Québécois. I would like to know one thing. What is legitimate, what should happen, is that the leaders should renounce this agreement or go to the people of Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

PROPOSED COALITION

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the crisis initiated by the separatist coalition has Canadians very upset. In my home province of British Columbia, the radio open line shows are being swamped with angry Canadians. People are furious at this power grab by the defeated opposition parties.

Even Premier Gordon Campbell is defending our democratically-elected government.

Could the minister give us his response to the remarks of the premier?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for Abbotsford. My own constituency office has never been flooded with so many calls in such a short period of time from people being upset about this.

Premier Campbell has reflected on the fact that he would like the separatist coalition to stand down at least until it has a chance to see the budget. He also politely made reference to the fact that the federal Liberal leader does not "resonate with British Columbians". Not resonate. In the last election, the Liberals barely achieved above fringe party status and the socialists, the NDP, got 17%. They now want to take that separatist coalition to British Columbians and ask for their support.

British Columbians vote a lot of ways but they will not support separatism.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the arrival of the Conservatives, hundreds of thousands of jobs, particularly in the manufacturing and forestry sectors, have been lost because they sat on their hands.

Why is it that they are only prepared to spring into action when their own jobs are in jeopardy?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member of the separatist coalition knows, there is a plan that we are acting on for jobs in the manufacturing sector, through credit and so on, with more than \$3 billion. What is the attitude? The attitude is

negative. The attitude, in fact, of the separatist coalition is to spend \$30 billion and put this country back into permanent debt. It is not even sure where the number came from.

Yesterday, the member for Toronto Centre, a member of the separatist coalition, said that the number was made up but that he did not know who made it up. He said that it came out of thin air.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past few days we have watched the Prime Minister go from denial—"This cannot be happening to me"—to anger—"It's not fair; no, no"—to bargaining—"Can't you stretch it out just a few more years?"—to depression. When is the Prime Minister finally going to accept that the demise of his government is due to the failure of him and his team to deal with the economy in the interests of Canadians?

● (1455)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing this Prime Minister, this team, and this government will never do, and that is accept a separatist government on this side of the House in this country.

We are committed to providing sound, good government to ensure that we respond to the economic crisis. We will not join on board the Jacques Parizeau train, as the member opposite is doing. He should back away from this deal.

It is wrong for Canada, and this party and this government will always stand up for what is right for this great country.

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the media are reporting that, contrary to his testimony before the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, Fred Doucet, former chief of staff to Brian Mulroney, was very aware of the backroom deals going on in the Airbus affair. These revelations explain why the Prime Minister delayed setting up a public inquiry commission at the time. He was plainly trying to cover up the whole affair.

Does the Prime Minister now realize that his lack of transparency has lost him the confidence of the House?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a public inquiry. We expect to receive the results of the inquiry in June, but that has nothing to do with our government.

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is the last person in whom we can have confidence. The Conservative Party has been facing one embarrassment after another. In light of the Schreiber-Mulroney affair, in light of the Cadman affair, in light of his dispute with Elections Canada about the in and out affair, how can the Prime Minister believe that anyone at all would have confidence in him?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, judging from the overwhelmingly negative reaction they have all received to the separatist coalition, they are now trying to change the channel. It is not surprising.

We know from Mr. Parizeau's own words what he wants to achieve: "A weaker government in Ottawa is eminently satisfying. The image must be one of a weak, disoriented government, which will become weaker and more disoriented in the future. This is perfect".

Distractions aside, this government will stand four-square against the separatist coalition. We will stand up for Canada.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives attacked women's equality rights in the economic update because they thought they could get away with it. Their plan to bargain away equal pay for work of equal value was not mentioned during the election, nor was it mentioned in the throne speech.

Given this poor track record, how can Canadian women have any confidence that their equal rights will not be attacked again by the Conservatives?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we find unacceptable is that women would have to wait for 15 years to resolve complaints. In fact, the legislation we are bringing forward is something the David Peterson government brought in.

Mr. Speaker, do you know who supported that? The NDP supported that. Who was it led by? It was led by the member for Toronto Centre. It was he who brought in that legislation in Ontario.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister is spinning, and Canadian women deserve better. Instead of introducing measures to help Canadian women who have lost their jobs, the Conservatives choose to attack women's rights.

When women are already at a disadvantage in the workplace, the Conservatives choose to attack instead of protect. Now the minister's main concern is the protection of his own job.

Why do Conservatives care more about saving their own jobs than the jobs of Canadian women?

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 13 years the Liberals did nothing with respect to pay equity for women. Women waited and waited and received no satisfaction from the Liberals because of the mechanism that they had in place.

What we are doing is putting in place a proactive mechanism that will address the issues of women in a timely fashion. It is something the Ontario government brought in under the member for Toronto Centre, something the Quebec government brought in, and something my own home province of Manitoba brought in back in 1986.

● (1500)

THE ECONOMY

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 8,000 jobs were lost in British Columbia, and that is for October alone. It is more than any other province. Instead of providing desperately needed stimulus packages for the economy, the government chose partisanship games. We needed real action on community infrastructure, forestry, pension protection and help for small business. This is about jobs.

Why do Conservatives care more about saving their own jobs than providing jobs for western Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is this government that is building Canada, and it is that party opposite that wants to join in a coalition government with the separatists. That is simply unconscionable.

I have to say this: does she realize what Jacques Parizeau has said? Former premier Jacques Parizeau applauded without reservation the Bloc Québécois' recent impressive victory in forming a coalition government in Ottawa. If the member opposite is concerned about building, she should join us and build a stronger Canada.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, western Canadians have a long tradition of standing up and standing against anti-democratic figures, even when such figures are from western Canada themselves. Instead of worrying about his job, he should be taking action to create jobs for everyday Canadians.

As a proud Canadian from British Columbia, as a lifelong fighter for democracy, as a duly elected member of this House, I call on the Prime Minister to stop preventing me from exercising my duties in this House of Commons. I demand that the Prime Minister allow me to vote—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only jobs that this deal with the separatists creates are six cabinet jobs for the NDP. If the hon. member wants a vote, let the people of her riding and the people loyal to this country right across this country vote for this country.

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal and separatist coalition is threatening to damage the Canadian economy and Canadian unity. Premiers of the provinces know this and have been calling on the opposition to sit down and take a break.

Can the Minister of Health and Canada's newest member of Parliament from the territories tell the House what the Premier of Yukon has said about this catastrophic event?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Premier Fentie has blasted the backroom deal devised by the separatist coalition. This is what he said: "Canadians did not vote for a Liberal-NDP coalition government supported by the separatist Bloc Québécois". The premier also called the opposition attack on Canada's Prime Minister patently false.

Points of Order

Northerners know that signing a deal with separatists is a recipe for disaster. Northerners and Inuit are not for sale to the separatists.

There is only one Prime Minister in this House who has delivered real results for the north, and one prime minister to lead us through this uncertain time. That is this Conservative Prime Minister.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

DECORUM IN THE CHAMBER

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise this point of order as a result of some of the language used, in particular by the member for Peterborough, during question period. The member used language that was incredibly insulting and offensive to members of this House. It is truly disgusting.

We ask the member for Peterborough to withdraw his language, such as the use of the word “traitor”. That is completely out of order in this House. It is offensive to members. He should withdraw that remark. I would ask him to apologize to all members of this House.

● (1505)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in my opinion I do not owe an apology to that gentleman. They owe an apology to Canadians. They owe an apology to Canadians to whom they said what this party stood for.

Ed Broadbent stood in this House and said that anyone crossing the floor should face the people. That is what he said. They have crossed the floor twice, once to the separatists and now to the Liberals. They are complete sellouts. I will not apologize.

What they are doing is wrong. I will stand for Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, with the unanimous consent of the House, I would like to table the document the leader of the Bloc Québécois and I referred to during question period. That document is entitled “Consensus Leadership for a New Century” and in it, the former president of the Canadian Alliance is proposing an alliance to the Bloc Québécois and the Conservative Party in 2000.

If I had the unanimous consent of the House, I would table that document.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[*English*]

Regarding the point of order of the hon. member for Vancouver East, I will take the matter under advisement. I could not hear the language she was referring to. I will look at the transcript to see what can be seen and get back to the House in due course.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tempers are flaring. Not everyone will have the same opinion regarding how to address the economic situation facing our country. Various concrete measures can be proposed, but we must always show respect for the political functions and for the highest political function here, which is that of our Prime Minister.

During question period, the hon. member for York Centre used the expression “pathological inability” to describe what the Prime Minister said, and I think that those words are unparliamentary. Our government and our Prime Minister are very competently navigating through the crisis that is facing our country at this time. I respectfully ask the hon. member for York Centre to withdraw his comments.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, as I did not get a chance to ask my question, I would like to seek the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: “That the Prime Minister consider, in view of the new evidence in the Mulroney-Schreiber hearings, expanding the timetable and terms of reference of the public inquiry”.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Mississauga South have the unanimous consent of the House to propose his motion?

Some hon. members: No.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I know you have not ruled or felt that it was appropriate to call the member for Peterborough to order for his language, such as “traitor” or “infiltration”, however, I would like to appeal to you, as the Speaker of the House, that my rights as a member have been violated by the member for Peterborough, who continues to shout so loud and with such vulgarity, it is impossible to hear anything at this end of the House. I would like you to bring some order to the House and have him at least show some courtesy and decency in this place.

● (1510)

Mr. Dean Del Mastro: Mr. Speaker, I would humbly argue that in light of what was just mentioned, the only rights to be violated in our country are the rights of each and every Canadian, which that party proposes to trample all over. It has proposed not to put its separatist coalition to the people. Rather it proposes—

The Speaker: The Chair is not in a position any longer to hear the member for Peterborough. When the House is making as much noise as we have had today during question period, I could not hear him. I have had him seated closer to me and have been able to hear him in the past, but that is not the case today. Therefore, I am unable to comment on any of the points of order that have been raised and it appears he is not doing so either.

In the circumstances, as I have indicated to the member for Vancouver East, and I do to the member for Winnipeg North, I will seek to look at the transcripts and the video proceedings of the House and see if I can hear something there. If something was said that was out of order, I am more than happy to deal with it, but I want to look into the matter before I give a ruling on this. That is the reason why I have held the member for Vancouver East's point in order.

Points of Order

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, twice we have asked the member for Peterborough to apologize and he has readily admitted that he will not apologize. He has admitted that he has said the word “traitor”. Please have him withdraw—

The Speaker: I have indicated I will look into the matter. I do not think I need to hear more submissions on that point. I will look into it and come back to the House in due course.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord is also rising on a point of order.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the point of order raised earlier by the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse concerning the potentially unparliamentary language used by the hon. member for York Centre, the House needs to hear your views on the reading of hateful emails or letters from constituents.

At the end of the day yesterday during her speech on Government Motion No.1, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke started to quote passages from emails and letters she had received from constituents. She quoted Mr. and Ms. Whodida who asked, “When is the Prime Minister going to see the separatists for what they are, namely a bunch of whiners who are only interested in bleeding Canada economically to death to their sole benefit?”

An hon. member: Sure.

Mr. Michel Guimond: Someone across the aisle said sure. We will take good note of that.

“Mr. and Mrs. Jackson want us to know that they back the Conservative government. ‘The others are acting like a bunch of baboons and they are idiots’”. These are the words reported in *Hansard*. She also quoted Mr. and Ms. Caleo, who said, “People should organize and do something before this gang of no-goods take charge of our country”.

As if that did not suffice, the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke poured it on even thicker during the time for questions and comments at the urging of the Conservative member for Macleod and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. She quoted Mr. Barry Evans, who wrote, “Regarding the three stooges, is there anything as a person I can do to help?” She also cited Ms. Leedum, “who is very opposed to any coalition. She voted for the Prime Minister. She says that French leader doesn't belong with us.” She quoted a Ms. Hopper who wrote, “I would prefer to have another election than have these egomaniacs govern Canada”. She quoted Ms. Jessop, too, who wrote, “These three stooges' affairs must end”.

In addition to section 18 of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons, which protects us against this kind of language, I would refer you to page 525 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by Marleau and Montpetit, where it says:

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

Words like “whiners”, “baboons”, “idiots”, “no-goods” and “stooges” clearly constitute unparliamentary language. Whether they were used directly or quoted does not change their insulting nature.

Mr. Speaker, if you refuse to ask the hon. member to withdraw her remarks, it would mean you agree that things can be said indirectly that cannot be said directly. All the hon. members of this House receive emails and letters like the ones that were quoted. I ask the hon. member to withdraw her remarks and would like you to rule on whether members are permitted to read excerpts from the emails and letters they receive from constituents.

● (1515)

[*English*]

Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will start by stating the obvious about our new spirit of decorum in the House. During your election, Mr. Speaker, on the first day when this 40th Parliament met, I thought all parties and all 308 members of Parliament committed themselves to greater civility in this chamber, greater decorum—

An hon. member: And you broke it.

Hon. Jay Hill: I hear people hollering, Mr. Speaker. A member just said “And you broke it”. It is not terribly helpful to point the finger.

During that day, when successive members of all parties, with the exception of the Bloc Québécois, allowed their names to stand for the august position of Speaker of this chamber, everyone I thought was in agreement that we should try and move beyond the way in which—

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Including the Prime Minister.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, that is the problem. Everybody is pointing a finger. I thought we were going to move beyond that.

It is no great revelation that all of us perhaps have been guilty in the last couple of days of getting tremendously emotional about the situation facing us as a chamber. It obviously makes your life, Mr. Speaker, extremely difficult once again with all this noise, especially when something is happening at the far end of the chamber, and you cannot hear people even beside you let alone at the far end.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that I privately brought to you a copy of *Hansard* from yesterday and pointed out to you a certain quote that was done directly, not indirectly, in this chamber, where a member referred to the Prime Minister as having told lies. You know that is not allowed. It is unparliamentary language—

Mr. Marcel Proulx: He did.

Hon. Jay Hill: Here again, Mr. Speaker, the member for Hull—Aylmer across the way says “He did”. How is that helpful to us trying to move beyond this?

Hon. Anita Neville: But he did.

Hon. Jay Hill: That is the issue, Mr. Speaker. You have a huge job to do if we are going to get this chamber back under control. All I am suggesting is that all of us need to help you in doing this.

Routine Proceedings

● (1520)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I would like to discuss the same point of order. That is not the question. The question is whether we, as parliamentarians, can read here in this House things that we have received in writing, either by email or in a letter, from a citizen who says something that might offend another party.

I did not have the chance to finish my thought earlier, but I would simply like to say that when the member was reading a letter from a citizen, which said: “that French leader doesn't belong with us”, I would like to know what the Conservative leader thinks of such a designation. What does “that French leader” mean?

Does that mean that we do not have the right to sit in this House because we are francophone?

It is completely unacceptable and cannot be tolerated.

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly comment on the original point of order by my hon. friend from the Bloc Québécois. I respectfully suggest that he is wrong when he says the government House leader has misinterpreted and misunderstood what the point of this whole debate is.

My colleagues on this side of the House feel very passionately about our country. Many of our constituents do as well. During this constitutional crisis we have before us, our members and our constituents have spoken loud and clear.

Personally, I have received at my constituency office and my Hill office hundreds upon hundreds of emails and letters, and I know members opposite in the Liberal Party have received the same. The vast majority of these emails and communiqués are consistent. They are suggesting that they do not want to see a separatist coalition.

When the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke stood in the House and read an email, she was well within her rights to reflect the wishes and the views of her constituents.

I would respectfully suggest for my hon. colleague that this is not a point of order, nor should he try to prevent this, because it is Canadians who are speaking loud and clear.

The Speaker: I think we are getting into a debate here and beyond the point of order.

[Translation]

A point of order has been raised by the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord concerning the words used by a member who gave a speech and read some letters. His argument is that the words used while reading the letters would not be acceptable if the member had used them herself without reading the letters.

I would like to take some time to consider the question and I will come back to the House on it. It is unfortunate that the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is not here to explain the situation. If she would like to say anything, of course she will now have the opportunity. I will come back to the House shortly with a

ruling on this issue. I will give my ruling, and I hope it will satisfy everyone.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***INDIVIDUAL MEMBER'S EXPENDITURES**

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table a document entitled, “Individual Member's Expenditures for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008”.

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*[Translation]***GWICH'IN COMPREHENSIVE LAND CLAIM AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE**

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the Report of the Implementation Committee on the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2005.

* * *

● (1525)

NUNUTSIAVUT GOVERNMENT FINAL AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Mr. John Duncan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2005-07 annual report of the Nunatsiavut Government Final Agreement Implementation Committee.

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*[English]***ARCTIC WATERS POLLUTION PREVENTION ACT**

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-3, An Act to amend the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

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

* * *

CANADA NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS ACT

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism), CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-4, An Act respecting not-for-profit corporations and certain other corporations.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

INDIAN OIL AND GAS ACT

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Indian Oil and Gas Act.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the visit of the Economic and Security Committee, a subcommittee on trans-Atlantic economic relations held in London, United Kingdom, April 23 to 25, 2008.

Pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation to the political committee meeting held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, March 31 to April 4, 2008.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the parliamentary mission to the country that will hold the next presidency of the Council of the European Union; the meeting of the committee on economic affairs and development of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD; and the third part of the 2008 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Paris, Normandy and Strasbourg, France from June 17 to 27, 2008.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, held in Vladivostok, Russian Federation, on May 29, 2008.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-242, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (percentage of insurable earnings payable to claimant).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt for seconding my bill. This bill, introduced in both official languages, is an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act with respect to the percentage of insurable earnings payable to claimant.

This enactment raises the rate of weekly benefits payable to a claimant to 66% of their weekly insurable earnings.

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

* * *

• (1530)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-243, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (change of title) and another Act in consequence

He said: Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt for seconding my bill. This bill, introduced in both official languages, is an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (change of title) and another Act in consequence.

This enactment changes the title of the act, that is the Employment Insurance Act, back to its original version, the Unemployment Insurance Act. The enactment also changes the name from that of the Employment Insurance Account to that of the Unemployment Insurance Account, because workers pay into a system to insure against unemployment, not employment.

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

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the seconder of this bill, the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

[*English*]

This bill would remove the waiting period that precedes the commencement of employment insurance benefits after an interruption of earnings and repeals provisions that refer to that waiting period.

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

* * *

CANADA EVIDENCE ACT

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Canada Evidence Act (interpretation of numerical dates).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have a number of bills to introduce today. I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Canada Evidence Act.

This bill would amend the Canada Evidence Act to direct courts on how to interpret a numeric date that is in dispute. For lack of clarity, court dates have been missed simply due to the date appearing as 010747 or 070147, which can be disputed. It should be consistent across the country and that is the intent and purpose of the bill.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-246, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (child sexual predators).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill was introduced previously by a former colleague of mine, the member for Calgary Northeast, Art Hanger. I am honoured, privileged and pleased to carry on his great work in his effort to ensure that the safety of our children is first and foremost in the minds of all.

The bill would amend the Criminal Code to establish the offence of child sexual predation, carrying a minimum sentence of life imprisonment. Most important, it would cover cases of, not just a simple sexual assault, but cases of sexual assault on a child that involved repeated assaults, multiple victims, repeated offences, more than one offender, an element of confinement or kidnapping, or an offender who is in a position of trust with respect to that child.

The bill also makes related amendments to the Criminal Code, as would be expected, and amends certain other acts in consequence.

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

* * *

• (1535)

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (bail for persons charged with violent offences), the Extradition Act and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this private member's bill amends the Criminal Code. It would repeal section 522(1) of the Criminal Code. It would remove the power of a judge of a supreme or superior court of criminal jurisdiction to grant interim release to a person accused of one of the very serious offences listed in section 469 of the Criminal Code. These sections are under section 469(a): treason; alarming Her Majesty; intimidating Parliament or a legislature; inciting to mutiny; seditious offences; piracy; piratical acts; murder; the offence of being accessory after the fact to high treason or treason or murder; an offence under section 119, bribery of judicial officers; an offence under any sections 4 to 7 of the crimes against humanity and war crimes; and the offence of attempting to commit any offence mentioned in any of the sub-paragraphs.

The bill would also prohibit the interim release of a person accused of an offence under section 264, criminal harassment: sexual assault with a weapon, threats to a third party or causing bodily harm; or aggravated sexual assault if there is either direct evidence or predication.

The bill would provide that an application for the interim release of a person is brought before a justice and, if that justice is satisfied that there is credible or trustworthy evidence of identification of the accused by a witness or witnesses, the application must be refused.

Routine Proceedings

The bill also makes related amendments to the Extradition Act and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

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

* * *

• (1540)

LOUIS RIEL ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act respecting Louis Riel.

He said: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of Manitoba and on behalf of the Métis nation, it gives me great pride to introduce this bill, the purpose of which is to reverse the conviction for high treason of Louis Riel and to formally recognize him and commemorate his role in the advancement of Canadian Confederation and the rights of interest to the Métis people and the people of western Canada.

This bill goes on to recognize that Louis Riel was in fact the founder of the province of Manitoba and that he was elected three times to the House of Commons, but as a result of political pressure was never allowed to take a seat. This bill points out that as a result of the events of the Northwest Territories rebellion in 1885, Louis Riel was wrongfully tried and convicted, and on November 16, 1885, was executed for high treason by the Government of Canada.

This bill does not seek a pardon for Louis Riel. It seeks to exonerate him, and for the House of Commons to recognize that he was executed wrongfully and that he should never have been convicted. We are not seeking a pardon. We are seeking full exoneration.

In introducing this bill, I want to recognize and pay tribute to Yvon Dumont, the former lieutenant governor of the province of Manitoba and president of the Manitoba Métis Federation; Clem Chartier, the president of the Métis National Council; and David Chartrand, the current president of the Manitoba Métis Federation.

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

* * *

FIRST NATION'S CHILDREN'S HEALTH PROTECTION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act to ensure that appropriate health care services are provided to First Nations children in a timely manner.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is based on the premise that a child is a child is a child, no matter where the child lives in Canada and no matter whether the child is First Nation, Inuit, Métis or European in background.

This bill is based on Jordan's principle. Jordan was a first nations child who was unable to move from a hospital to a family home as a result of a disagreement between departments of the Government of Canada as to which department should bear responsibility for the costs of providing health care services. As a result of this disagreement between government bureaucracies, Jordan died in hospital without ever having been able to live in any family home.

Routine Proceedings

Jordan's principle finds great support among first nations, and it is simply a matter of justice that we should not have two tiers in medicine based on whether one is of Inuit, Métis, First Nation or European background or descent.

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

* * *

CANADA WATER EXPORT PROHIBITION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-250, An Act to prohibit the export of water by interbasin transfers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, there are people who say that water is the oil of the 21st century, but I put it to you, and I believe the House of Commons agrees, in fact by consensus to a motion put forward in 2004, that the interbasin transfer of water is environmental folly. It is an affront to nature. It is an affront to the natural order of things. Yet time and time again we see the irresistible temptation in trade agreements with our trading partners that other people want Canada's water.

We in the House of Commons need to recognize that water, in fact, is Canada's most valuable natural resource and that Canada must be committed to preserving water resources within its boundaries, and therefore, that Canada will continue to promote adherence to the Boundary Waters Treaty by Canadian and the United States when managing boundary water matters.

This short bill would protect at least in principle the notion that the interbasin transfer of water should be opposed even when put forward by Conservative governments, as they often do.

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

* * *

● (1545)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (trans fatty acids).

He said: Mr. Speaker, in November 2004 the House of Commons passed a motion put forward by the NDP to ban the use of trans fatty acids for human consumption. The motion was not to reduce the use of trans fatty acids. It was not to regulate the use of trans fatty acids. It was to ban the use of trans fatty acids.

Then the blue ribbon task force made up of representatives from food manufacturers, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the restaurant association and Health Canada concurred with the will of Parliament and after 18 months agreed that trans fats should in fact be banned.

One gram of trans fat increases the risk of heart disease by 10%. Canadians eat over 10 grams a day. Some people eat a lot more than 10 grams per day. We need to ban trans fatty acids before they poison another generation of children and cabinet ministers.

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

The Deputy Speaker: I remind hon. members that when introducing a private member's bill members are supposed to give a brief explanation of the bill and not engage in a long speech.

CURRENCY ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Currency Act and the Royal Canadian Mint Act (abolition of the cent).

He said: Mr. Speaker, 2008 is the 100th birthday of the Canadian penny in its current form. Many Canadians believe that it should be its last birthday. In fact, we believe it should have a birthday party and a funeral at the same time because the penny has no commercial value. It does not circulate any more. They all wind up under my bed. In fact, it costs more to produce a penny than it is worth.

There are 20 billion pennies in circulation in Canada today and every year the minister who is responsible for the mint prints 1.2 billion more pennies, pennies that no one needs and no one wants.

This simple bill calls for the stopping of the production of the penny and the introduction of a rounding formula so that all commercial transactions would be rounded off to the nearest nickel so that we would not have a bunch of pennies in our pockets and under our beds.

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

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CANADA POST CORPORATION ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Canada Post Corporation Act (mail free of postage to members of the Canadian Forces).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a very simple bill that will find broad agreement. In fact, I will ask at the end of my introduction if we could seek unanimous consent to simply pass this bill on what could be one of the final days of this session of Parliament.

Canadians can send a member of Parliament a letter any time free of charge. This bill would amend the Canada Post Corporation Act so that any Canadian could send mail to any member of the Canadian armed forces serving outside Canada at no cost and with no postage charges. It would further allow free postage to any member of the Canadian armed forces who is currently serving outside Canada to any person within Canada.

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

● (1550)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to pass this bill as it stands within the House of Commons today.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre is seeking unanimous consent of the House to read the bill a second time now. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations and I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House to allow me to propose a motion to concur in the first report of the procedure and House affairs committee, regarding the memberships of the standing committees, which was tabled yesterday.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I continue to get petitions in my office around the issue of the rising crime of human trafficking in Canada. There are many signatures of people from all across Canada. They state that the trafficking of women and children across international borders for the purposes of sexual exploitation should be condemned. They state that it is the duty of Parliament to protect the most vulnerable members of society from harm, those being the victims of human trafficking. I respectfully submit this petition.

INTERPROVINCIAL BRIDGE

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present yet another petition from people in the riding I have the honour of representing and beyond, people from the national capital region, concerning the matter of heavy trucks crossing the nation's capital right in the middle of the city and the need for two bridges and to eventually have a ring road around the national capital region. They are concerned that there is a proposal afoot now to build a bridge which would bring trucks into another established community.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to instruct the National Capital Commission to proceed with the detailed assessment of an interprovincial bridge linking the Canotek industrial park to the Gatineau airport, which is option seven of the first phase of the interprovincial crossing environmental assessment.

[*Translation*]

SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table a petition about improving the lot of seasonal farm workers with regard to employment insurance. This is a concern, especially in three areas in our riding: Charlevoix, which is a large area, Côte-de-Beaupré and Île d'Orléans.

The petitioners point out that the employment insurance program does not reflect the demands and realities of today's labour market, that all workers who pay into the program deserve to be treated equitably when they use it and that seasonal workers have specific problems, such as a work season limited by the temperature, irregular work periods and, in some areas, a shortage of good jobs.

Consequently, they call on Parliament to amend the Employment Insurance Act in order to create a special category for seasonal farm workers.

[*English*]

VOLUNTEER SERVICE MEDAL

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Kitchener—Conestoga and the greater Kitchener-Waterloo area. The petitioners are asking the government to introduce a new volunteer service medal to be known as the Governor General's volunteer medal to acknowledge and recognize volunteerism by Canadian troops.

Their petition is as follows: "To the Government of Canada, whereas during a specified period of service to their country, Canadians from September 3, 1939 to March 1, 1947 received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, and during a specified period of service to their country, Canadians from June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1954 received the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal for Korea, we, the undersigned residents of Canada, respectfully call upon the Government of Canada, to recognize by means of the issuance of a new Canadian Volunteer Service Medal to be designated "The Governor General's Volunteer Service Medal" for volunteer service by Canadians in the Regular and Reserve Military Forces and Cadet Corps Support Staff who are not eligible for the aforementioned medals and who have completed 365 days of uninterrupted honourable duty in the service of their country Canada, since March 2, 1947".

It is an honour to present this on behalf of the residents of the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

• (1555)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in beautiful Langley. It reads that there are a number of severe potentially life-threatening conditions which do not qualify for disability programs because they are not necessarily permanent. The current medical employment insurance benefits of 15 weeks do not adequately address the problem.

Residents find themselves losing their homes and livelihoods while trying to fight these severe medical conditions. Precedence has been set within medical EI to compensate new mothers for up to a year. They are calling upon the House of Commons to enact legislation to provide additional medical EI benefits to at least equal maternity EI benefits.

Government Orders

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I have the pleasure to introduce a petition signed by numerous citizens in my riding. The petitioners are seeking the will of Parliament to do all that it can to prevent the terrible scourge of child pornography, particularly as it relates to being spread through use of the Internet, this terrible victimization of families and children.

FLOOD RELIEF

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is quite weighty. It is from citizens in the area of the Severn River, an area in North Simcoe County, that in fact borders my riding with the District of Muskoka. Last fall this region experienced severe flooding because of the heavier than normal runoff from the winter snows. They are seeking the assistance of the Minister of the Environment in this case. They are petitioning the minister to seek all and any measures that would assist to alleviate the flooding should those conditions occur this season or any thereafter.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL STATEMENT

The House resumed from December 2 consideration of the motion, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to implore the House to support the motion taking note of the economic and fiscal statement. In doing so, I acknowledge that the statement does not identify the details of every stimulus expenditure planned, it does not identify every specific stimulus infrastructure project, and it does not identify the limits of new unplanned stimulus spending.

I ask the members of the House to recognize that none of that should be expected in an economic and fiscal statement for two reasons. The first is obvious. An economic and fiscal statement is not a budget.

Many of the details that I have heard some members request will be available in the budget to be presented probably on January 27, a short seven weeks after we complete this debate. In this respect the statement is similar to the Speech from the Throne.

I listened as members opposite criticized the throne speech for lacking details. Then the House approved it anyway, recognizing that it was intended to provide direction with details to follow in legislation.

In the same way, we should take note of the economic and fiscal statement, recognizing that it provides the direction we need with details to follow in the budget.

• (1600)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologize to the hon. member for Kitchener Centre. The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I did not want to interrupt my hon. colleague, but it does sound to me more like a political speech. I would rather just hear the motion and move on. We have obviously been debating this in public. I do not think we need to have this time for introducing motions be turned into a platform for him to start a debate.

The Deputy Speaker: I hope that misunderstanding has been cleared up. We will resume debate.

The hon. member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I am gratified that my remarks at least sound like a speech. That is what they were intended to do and I thank my friend for that.

The second point I want to make is that the statement is an evolution of a plan that our government began with an update a year ago. If there are no surprises, it is because we are already pursuing appropriate measures. If there are no flashy new proposals, it is because the plans we have already made in the last year are coming to fruition. If there are no panicky new responses, it is because we have laid out solid preparedness and panic is unnecessary.

Instead of criticizing the government for failing to introduce new measures for 2009, the members of this House should praise the government for having already put in motion stimulus measures for 2009. For example, as a result of the government's stimulus plan, Canadians and businesses will pay \$31 billion less in taxes in the coming fiscal year alone. This is almost 2% of our gross domestic product. It is a larger percentage of GDP than anything that has been implemented by our neighbour to the south. Even president-elect Obama is only proposing a temporary 1.1% economic stimulus in 2009. In the U.S., Japan, Germany, France, the U.K., Italy and Australia, none of them have proposed anywhere near the 2% of GDP stimulus that our government has arranged.

Government Orders

Some of our tax reductions were planned to come into effect only in 2009 for staged stimulus. These include raising the amount every individual can earn without paying federal income tax from \$9,600 in 2008 to \$10,100 in 2009. Also, effective January 1, 2009, Canadians will be able to benefit from the tax-free savings account, a flexible, general purpose account that will encourage investment. Corporations will also benefit from a reduction in the general corporate income tax rate, which will fall from 19.5% to 19% on January 1, 2009 and will fall further to 15% by 2012.

As another example of fiscal stimulus already planned, available federal funding for infrastructure projects rose by 40% this year and will rise by another 40% next year, hitting a record of \$6 billion in that year alone. This is double the amount spent in 2007-08.

These measures provide permanent, sustainable, structural fiscal stimulus, unlike the temporary stimulus measures taken by some other countries. Taken together, these tax reductions and infrastructure investments represent a substantial fiscal stimulus.

The government could have waited. It could have held off any increase in this past year and not planned ahead for any increase in the next year, and then the government could have announced in this fiscal and economic statement the whole doubling of infrastructure spending, some \$10.5 billion in one year, but while that might have satisfied the thirst of some for sensationalist measures, it would have done no more for the economy than planning ahead has already done.

It is not a coincidence that the U.S. has just determined it has been in a recession for over a year, whereas Canada is only now reaching that point. Does anyone in this House believe that it is just good luck that our success has been noticed around the world? Ordinary Canadians know that it is because of the hard work our government has done.

I understand that some in the media do not like old news. It is natural that newspeople want to report new initiatives, but do some members of this House really believe their own rhetoric? Can they really close their eyes and wish away the 2008 and 2009 stimulus measures the government has already put in place?

● (1605)

It is as if critics are saying, "We know that you've planned ahead. We know that you've had the foresight to arrange in advance all this stimulus. We know that, as a result, our economy has already been buoyed by that and will continue to benefit next year, but we don't care". It is as if critics are saying, "Because you didn't wait until now, we are going to ignore the fact that you've already dealt with the problem".

It is a bit like someone giving his or her spouse a birthday present a month before the birthday because the person knows how much the spouse needs that present, only to be criticized for not having a second present ready when the birthday arrives. How unfair is that?

As it is, with the stimulus plan in place since last year, the Prime Minister has been able to meet with other first ministers already and work with them to identify by next month, just a few short weeks from now, specific infrastructure projects. He has secured their commitment to tackle barriers to these specific projects. This is really amazing planning and foresight. This is careful, considered

planning and foresight that was set out in the throne speech already approved by the House. This is planning and foresight that Canada needs most in uncertain economic times.

Consider the alternatives. If this economic and fiscal statement does not pass, what will happen to our government's carefully laid plans? Will these plans simply be abandoned by whatever government emerges? Will the implementation of these measures at the very least be delayed while a new government scrambles to forage a new consensus? Or will the country be plunged into yet another election mere weeks after the government's carefully laid plans received the support of the largest number of Canadians of any party in the last election?

Every one of these alternatives would inflict further damage upon our economy. The fact that we are even forced to ask these questions means that the members of this House have foisted a higher level of uncertainty and anxiety upon our nation. This is an entirely unnecessary and damaging thing to do to the economy and to our fellow Canadians.

Also, if this statement is defeated, the many needed fiscal measures it proposes will be lost or at least delayed. RRIF withdrawal relief for seniors will be lost or delayed. The \$1.5 billion increased credit capacity for Canada's export sector, most notably in auto-related and other manufacturing, will be lost or delayed. An increased borrowing limit to protect insured depositors will be lost or delayed.

The \$1.5 billion of increased credit and loan guarantees for small and medium-sized companies will be lost or delayed. Eliminating tariffs on imported machinery and equipment to encourage capital investment and increased efficiency will be lost or delayed. I could go on. These measures and others in the statement are all measures the House should neither abandon nor delay.

What will happen if we do take note of this economic and fiscal statement? Will the sky fall in? Of course not. First, all of its beneficial measures will proceed immediately. Second, the work of detailed budget planning will be allowed to proceed unhindered. First ministers will identify priority infrastructure projects by next month. Finance ministers from across the country will be consulted in a week or two. The usual prebudget consultations with stakeholders will occur.

Third, several important new pieces will fall into place to complete the picture. Economic variables have been changing with lightning speed. Remember that long ago era when gasoline prices were hitting \$1.35 per litre? That was just six short weeks ago. Within a week or two we will receive the detailed funding plan that the government has prudently insisted upon from the automotive sector, which affects 10% of our economy. Within a few short weeks the Americans will decide both their economic plan for auto sector and their broader stimulus package.

Government Orders

•(1610)

Because so much of our economic ills are made in the U.S.A., our largest trading partner, its medicine will have a beneficial effect on our economy too. Is it not simple prudence to have this information before finalizing our budget?

Finally, there is some merit to keeping some of our powder dry. If this economic downturn is prolonged, we will be ill-served by using all of our fiscal ammunition now at the outset.

We must also remember that if the waters we are in really are uncharted, they may turn out to be less dangerous than everyone fears. Let us act accordingly.

I am glad the government has withdrawn parts of the statement that the opposition found wanting. This demonstrates a willingness to work together with the opposition, and I sincerely hope this will encourage a mutual effort.

In passing, however, I want to take strong issue with those who describe this flexibility as a sign of weakness or a sign of lack of credibility. In fact, the ability to change course is a sign of strength. My admiration for our Prime Minister has only deepened from this and has never been greater.

If we are to mature in our deliberations, we have to learn to consider the ability to compromise, as our Prime Minister is doing, to be a virtue. It is not too late for my Liberal friends across the aisle to embrace their own strength and to draw back to a compromise also.

I am glad our government has shown flexibility in withdrawing its proposal to eliminate the subsidy to political parties. This demonstrates a willingness to work together with the opposition, and I hope this will encourage a mutual effort.

In passing, however, I want to take strong issue with those who describe eliminating the subsidy as undemocratic. In fact, the subsidy itself is an attack on democracy.

Democracy should be a level playing field where all citizens have equal opportunity to make themselves heard politically. State-funded parties are more associated with totalitarian dictatorships than with democracies.

A subsidy to any party discriminates against those citizens struggling to compete without a similar subsidy and it is therefore elitist and undemocratic. Replacing corporate and union subsidies with government subsidies simply replaces one anti-democratic elitism with another.

I hope the day will come when all Canadian political parties will rise or fall based solely upon their support among citizens and not upon unequal government subsidies.

Democracy also works best when elected parties deliver, as nearly as possible, the leader and the policies they promised to voters. A vote for a party or a candidate is the voter's consent to that party or candidate's policies and leaders. Violating that consent in any significant way is a violation of democracy.

No Liberal supporter voted for a government that would include a coalition with separatists. No NDP supporter voted for a government

that would sign an agreement with a separatist coalition. I do not think a single voter in my riding of Kitchener Centre voted for any government that could be held hostage by a veto of a party that insists Canada does not work and that has no interest in making Canada work.

I have had many friends who once supported the Liberal Party. I can only imagine how they feel about a once strong federalist party being reduced to begging the permission of the separatists to govern. We all know the agenda of the separatists has nothing to do with the economic survival of Canada. The separatists will not even enter this chamber until after we finish singing O Canada.

Many Liberal voters would never have given their consent to this. No party in Canada today obtained the consent of any Canadian to abdicate to the leader of another party. No party in Canada today obtained the consent of any Canadian to govern in a coalition. This would be a government for which no one voted. It would be a government that simply usurped power.

No circumstances in Canada today are so extreme as to justify such a violation of voters' consent. This is a bad time to experiment precipitously with new and uncertain measures.

•(1615)

These are not just my views. Canadians all across our great land are appalled by what the Liberals and the NDP have done in the House. To quote my citizens own Waterloo region *Record*:

The entire coalition will be propped up by the Bloc Quebecois, a party dedicated to destroying Canada. For the proposed 2 1/2-year life of this experiment, this would-be nation killer gets a veto over every single act of government. Ordinary Canadians helplessly watching all this can have no faith that the Bloc will give a damn about them or Canada's well-being.

These are not my words. These are the words of the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre. A deal signed with the separatists can only be bad for Canada. To quote again:

As sincere as the NDP's beliefs may be, their reflexive vilification of business as well as their ingrained penchant for heavy government spending could be disastrous in a recession.

These are not my words. These are not the words of a Conservative leaning newspaper, believe me. These are the views of people in my riding of Kitchener Centre.

The Liberals themselves said during the election that we could not have a coalition with a party, the NDP, whose platform is bad for the economy.

Another quote is:

In its hour of need, Canada is being asked to make do with a guy whose expiry date is set for May. This will hardly bolster the trust of Canadians—or investors both foreign and domestic looking for a safe place to park their cash.

These are not my words. These are the convictions of people in my riding of Kitchener Centre. If the opposition wants to do this, it should have the integrity to take the deal to the voters. However, the better course for ordinary Canadians and the better course for Canada is to let our government govern with the strengthened mandate it gained in the last election.

Government Orders

In a letter to the editor, one of my constituents, Sherri Helmka, put it very succinctly when she said the following, “My message is to all politicians in this country: Put your differences aside and deal with the future uncertainty facing all candidates. In other words, do your job!”.

We can do that by taking note of the fiscal and economic statement as an outline of direction and by waiting a short seven weeks or so from the conclusion of this debate for the government to propose its detailed budget.

Despite the events of this past week, I again invite each member opposite to walk this path through the forest of economic peril with common focus on the needs of ordinary Canadians. It is not too late.

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge this was the member's maiden speech. I congratulate him at least on the form, if not the content.

I want to ask the member a few questions.

First, would he not acknowledge that the subject matter of the debate is not the reference to separatism? I acknowledge that the Conservative Party and government may be looking at desperate times and maybe this is the time for desperate measures on their part, but the subject matter we are looking at is the economy and Canadians, and the member has addressed that.

However, will he not acknowledge that the economic statement last week did not, in and of itself, address that, and that any big, major economic plan to address the financial tsunami now approaching Canadians is off in the future, in 2009 some time without any commitments from the government?

Will he not also acknowledged that this place is about Parliament and Parliament will decide who governs?

• (1620)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the member remembers me from 20 years ago, but I remember him with fondness and appreciation. I am glad to have this opportunity to speak with him across the floor of the House, and I thank him for his kind comments to me.

As to the first part of his question about what this debate is really about, I do not think I can do any better than to once again quote from the Waterloo region *Record*. It states:

At this critical moment in its history, Canada needs a strong, stable government with inspiring leadership that does the right thing. Whatever the Conservatives' failings, it is hard to see the Liberal-NDP, Bloc-sanctioned coalition delivering these essentials.

We need the government's plan.

As to the issue of economic stimulus, in my speech I already referred to a number of matters that were in the statement, which I think—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to denounce the contemptible propaganda of the member for Kitchener Centre. I would point out that every

member of the House of Commons has equal legitimacy, no matter the ideas defended by his or her party, which the voters supported.

I wish to inform the member for Kitchener Centre that I was elected based on what I am now saying in this House and on my rebuttals of his claims during the campaign.

This rhetoric implies that members of the Bloc Québécois have less legitimacy because they defend the idea of a sovereign Quebec. His rhetoric becomes despicable when he states that the separatists desire the death and destruction of Canada. That is not true.

That is an insult to people's intelligence. It also shows contempt for the ability of Canadians to affirm themselves as a nation without Quebec. To desire the sovereignty of Quebec does not in any way mean that we want our neighbour to be strong, rich—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order. I must interrupt the member to give the member for Kitchener Centre enough time to reply.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, first, I do not for a moment begrudge the right of my hon. friend and the other members of his party to be elected and to come to this chamber with the view of promoting the breakup of our country. All citizens have the right to promote their views and that is what they have done.

However, I hope that my hon. friend does not begrudge me the right to stand up in this chamber and promote the view that Canada should remain strong and united. I hope he also does not begrudge me the right to stand up in this chamber and implore my friends in the Liberal Party, especially, who have such a great tradition of federalism to also stand up for a strong and united Canada and not to enter into a coalition with those who propose that Quebec should separate.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen over the last number of days is the collapse of a coalition, the Reform coalition. Now we see Reform unleashed with its deep hatred toward the people of Quebec. I hear it from the Conservative supporters in western Canada who phone my office with their insulting attacks.

This all goes back to the economic statement which was where we started from and which the *Toronto Star* referred to it as “irresponsible”, a based “leader obsessed with destroying opponents”. The “result is needless and irresponsible”.

The *Calgary Herald* today speaking of a lame economic update that was an “obscenity” that was delivered by a “leader who is “plain arrogant”.

The *Globe and Mail* said the “economic update completely missed the mark - it was a narrow, partisan document that failed to give Canadians the true facts”.

My hon. colleague's present leader has lost the credibility of the House. Will he work with us to restore Parliament so we can continue working, work with us who have left our partisan interests at the door, and perhaps find a new leader who will now be the leader of the opposition?

Government Orders

●(1625)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what economic background or qualifications the people who write for the *Toronto Star* have, but I would like to quote Mr. Don Drummond, the TD Bank chief economist, speaking about the stimulus package that the coalition has proposed. He said, “That would be a disaster that would launch us into a structural deficit. Canada’s economy is one of the few in the world in which the domestic side of the economy is still growing. No one can point to Canada and say you are the cause of this international problem. I have seen a lot more failures of short-term stimulus than successes. A lot of them just do not work”.

That is what people across the country are saying about the stimulus program that is being proposed by the coalition. I will take what Mr. Harper and our party have done any day over that.

The Deputy Speaker: I would just remind the hon. member for Kitchener Centre that we do not use proper names. We use ridings or titles when referring to other hon. members.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just want to congratulate my friend from Kitchener Centre. It is obvious, from the degree of professionalism with which he delivered his speech and the passion, that the Kitchener Centre residents made a very wise choice in sending him here.

Throughout the debate we have been talking about the economic features. My colleague mentioned the stimulus package that our government has put in place. I am receiving faxes, emails and phone calls from business leaders in my riding. I want to read one sentence, “Political instability is not what Canada needs during these troubled economic times. The impact on our country could be quite severe as foreign investment could quickly take flight from Canada, resulting in fewer jobs and a weaker economy”.

The residents and the business owners in my riding are very concerned about that.

I have a question for the hon. member for Kitchener Centre. Warren Jestin, the chief economist at Scotiabank, talking about the pre-emptive stimulus package that we put in place, said:

...the Canadian economy already has stimulus built into the books. The GST cut and reductions to corporate and business taxes taken last fall...will...have a greater effect on the economy than a short-term stimulus.

Unlike the U.S., which has tried ad hoc—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I do apologize to the hon. member but I will have to stop him there so that the hon. member for Kitchener Centre has enough time to respond.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I can complete the statement by Mr. Warren Jestin, to which the member referred, because I also noted it.

The GST cut and reductions to corporate and business taxes taken last fall...will... have a greater effect on the economy than a short-term stimulus.

Unlike the U.S., which has tried ad hoc measures such as giving people cheques ... we were following a much more rigorous process.

In fact, the tax cuts that we have already implemented do not just give us relief in 2008. They will give us the same relief and more in

2009, the year after that and the year after that. The Conservative government has given Canadians the gift that just keeps on giving.

The Deputy Speaker: Before we move on to resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, Culture.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the member for Kitchener Centre on his leadership speech and I wish him well in the ensuing campaign.

A week is a long time in politics and just last week opposition members were making conciliatory throne speeches. The Liberals were supporting the throne speech with the Bloc and the NDP planning to vote no. The government’s survival seemed assured only one week ago. The throne speech even passed on division with no standing vote.

How did this situation change so suddenly? The economic and fiscal statement was presented without a stimulus package, which we and the other opposition parties were expecting, and that prompted action to be taken.

The Prime Minister is acting as though he has a majority government, much the same way that Joe Clark did some years ago, and we know what happened there. Clearly, the Prime Minister has not learned from Joe Clark’s disastrous experience. However, unlike Joe Clark, the Prime Minister will not get his election. He has miscalculated terribly and now is about to suffer the consequences of those actions.

A coalition has been formed, not unlike coalitions all over the world. This one will govern and provide stability to the country. In fact, if the PCs had a moderate, personable leader, such as Peter Lougheed or Bill Davis from days gone by, a leader who could actually count, things might be different as we stand here today.

A leader like Bill Davis would have reached out to at least one of the parties and worked out an accord, worked out some sort of arrangement. That is why leaders like Gary Filmon, Bill Davis and David Peterson were successful. Joe Clark, Frank Miller and Stephen Harper are not. We have the spectacle—

●(1630)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would be remiss if I did not remind the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona that we do not refer to our colleagues by their proper name, but instead by their riding or by their title.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I meant the Prime Minister.

We have the spectacle of the PCs raging about the Bloc when the Bloc voted with them for two budgets between 2004 and 2006. The Bloc were honourable members when they were propping up the PCs, but now they are seen as evil. We should give our head a shake on this one.

Conservatives are preaching personal responsibility. Well, they should start owning up to their own mistakes in the House. They should quit blaming the Bloc for their problems. As a matter of fact, the Bloc supported the Conservatives in the 39th Parliament on 14 confidence votes. The Conservatives sure have a short memory given their previous relationship with the Bloc.

The Conservatives were more than happy when the leader of the Bloc and the Bloc propped up the Conservative government to pass critical Conservative measures, including their April 2006 throne speech and both the 2006 and 2007 budgets.

For a party that says that it believes in personal responsibility, we do not see much of that over there. The mantra of the Conservatives is to blame someone else. Now that they find themselves at the brink and are going over the falls, do they blame themselves? No. They look around and try to blame other people.

I have a letter, dated September 9, 2004, addressed to the Governor General, that the Prime Minister signed when he was leader of the opposition. The letter has been distributed quite widely and I am sure we will find a way to distribute it more widely. I am sure all of the people in my riding of Elmwood—Transcona would appreciate a copy of this letter so they could see that on September 9, 2004, the current Prime Minister, the current leader of the Bloc and the current leader of the NDP wrote the following letter to the Governor General of the day. It reads, “Excellency,

“As leaders of the opposition parties, we are well aware that, given the Liberal minority government, you could be asked by the Prime Minister to dissolve the 38th Parliament at any time should the House of Commons fail to support some part of the government’s program”.

• (1635)

Hon. Jim Abbott: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think the House and the people reading *Hansard* or viewing this debate would be well-served if the member were to stay on topic. I am having a little difficulty understanding what this has to do with what we are debating at this point.

The Deputy Speaker: There was a ruling made yesterday about the wide scope of the motion before the House. I will remind all members that when making remarks they should try to keep their remarks as relevant as possible to the motion before the House.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with the economic and fiscal statement. I recognize the diversions of the hon. member. I have been around Houses for a number of years, probably more years than he has been, and I know the tactics that he is alluding to here.

I am dealing with the economic statement and I will continue to deal with the economic statement, as presented to this House last week.

Paragraph two of the letter to the Governor General reads, “We respectfully point out that the opposition parties, who together constitute a majority in the House, have been in close consultation. We believe that, should a request for dissolution arise this should give you cause, as a constitutional practice has determined, to consult the opposition leaders and consider all of your options before exercising your constitutional authority.

Government Orders

“Your attention to this matter is appreciated”.

The leaders were asking the Governor General for a chance to form a government, which is exactly what is happening right now. That points to the hypocrisy of the current Prime Minister, that he would deal with the Bloc in good faith in those, in his view, good times, but now that things have turned against him, he changes the story. Now the Bloc are evil and attempts at coalitions are evil, when they are common throughout the world. It was okay to try to replace the Paul Martin government but now it is not okay to do the same to him when the shoe is on the other foot.

The language that those members are using borders on the ridiculous. They talk about overthrow, seizing power and staging coups but those were the same types of tactics that they were trying to use with the Paul Martin Liberals only two years ago. What short memories those people have. It is just beyond the pale to listen to this every day.

It is time for the Conservatives to look at admitting their defeat, to give up power gracefully and, as our leader has suggested, let nature take its course.

Instead, what they are following a scorched earth policy. They are trying to increase divisions within the country. They are ramping up a campaign against the coalition trying to cause all sorts of divisions within the country. That is not what a prime minister should be doing and not how a prime minister should be acting.

Hopefully, a defeated and a humbled PC Party will be replaced with a leader who has some humility and will be back in this House in the near future and be prepared to even join a future unity government. Over the last few days I have offered the members that opportunity and have suggested that they should be joining the coalition when they—

Mr. Bev Shipley: With the separatists.

Mr. John Baird: Causing great stomach upset.

Mr. Jim Maloway: They clearly will fit into a coalition at this point, but I am talking about a future time, during the life of this Parliament, when they have a new leader, a more moderate leader, a leader who is progressive like the old Progressive Conservative Party used to be. Who knows what sort of combinations and permutations will develop at that time. However, at this point, they are headed for disaster and they have very little time left.

I now want to deal with an infrastructure project in the Elmwood—Transcona constituency. The federal government has made money available for infrastructure projects across the country. As a matter of fact, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, my colleague and neighbour to the north, is in the House. She is very aware and very supportive of the need to avoid the closure of the Disraeli Freeway, which runs from my constituency to downtown. The traffic comes up into my constituency and into her constituency and affects over 100,000 people.

Government Orders

● (1640)

What the city is trying to do is shut down the bridge for rehabilitation for a year and four months, something it would never do in other parts of the city. We question why it would want to do it this way. Residents are outraged that the mayor would do this.

There are currently 5,000-plus people who have signed petitions for the addition of a two-lane span to the structure, which could be built for approximately \$50 billion. That cost was suggested by the City of Winnipeg transit report three years ago. Page 12 of that report suggests that the two lanes are required—they will be required in 20 years anyway—and that they should be cost shared by the three levels of government, approximately \$17 million from each level. Once the two-lane span is built, the existing four-lane span could be closed and rehabilitated.

In spite of the traffic chaos this closure will cause, the mayor has charged ahead and refuses to ask senior governments for financial help. What we have suggested is that the local elected officials get together, agree and request that the federal government and the province of Manitoba make an offer to the city and put the money on the table. The mayor in the past has indicated that if the money was made available, he would certainly be prepared to do this. Regardless of whether the current government or a coalition government is in office, the elected officials at the same level represent all parties and we are united in our efforts to help out.

As I mentioned, the member for Kildonan—St. Paul is supportive; the provincial member for Transcona, Daryl Reid, is supportive; MLA Bonnie Mitchelson of the Conservative Party in Manitoba has been extremely supportive over the last six to eight months; Bidhu Jha from Radisson is supportive; and area city councillors are supportive. Russ Wyatt from Transcona is supportive. Jeff Browaty, who is a well-known Conservative, has been very aggressive on this file and wants to see this job done. My good friend Lillian Thomas from Elmwood has also been doing an excellent job pushing this whole issue at city hall.

We hope that in the next little while we will be able to come up with some sort of a conclusion. I might point out that the Prime Minister announced in June, a \$70 million contribution as part of a three-way cost share project with the city of Saskatoon and the province of Saskatchewan to construct the Saskatoon Circle bridge. As a matter of fact, this announcement stayed on his website for the entire duration of the campaign, .

By the way, the plan is that the bridge in Saskatoon will be six lanes and is only going to carry 20,000 cars a day. The old Disraeli bridge carries 42,000 cars a day and has just four lanes. The federal government had money for a brand new six-lane bridge in Saskatoon for 20,000 cars a day, yet we in Winnipeg have a four-lane structure that is carrying 42,000 cars.

In terms of the costing on the main bridge, which it has been decided will be made into a triple P project, the city has really inflated the cost. We have compared the cost of the new Minneapolis bridge which was built only 500 miles away and the cost for the Saskatoon bridge. If we adjust the Winnipeg structure to the same size as those in Saskatoon and Minneapolis, we find that both of those structures could be built for around \$190 million, yet the city is

suggesting that somehow this triple P project is going to cost about \$300 million to \$350 million.

We have questioned the costing. We have given up the fight about whether it should be a triple P project or conventionally financed. It could proceed on a triple P basis. What we are asking for now is a separate project, merely adding these two lanes to avoid the closure at a cost of around \$50 million. I am hoping that we can work out the details of that, whichever government happens to be in power, in the next few months.

● (1645)

I talked before about the issue of the common securities regulator but I never managed to finish my thoughts on the issue. Historically the provinces have resisted the issue and they are going to resist the issue again,. Whether or not we should have a national regulator is open to question. I think probably we should, but the reality is that the provinces will argue provincial jurisdiction.

If the federal government is able to negotiate with the provinces and have a regulator set up, we would want the regulator to have teeth, not to be the docile organization that many of these organizations are right now. The Ontario securities regulator would really be the main regulatory body. I mentioned that the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, between the years 2002 and 2007, convicted 1,236 white collar criminals. In Ontario there were only two convicted.

Conrad Black was committing his white-collar crimes in Canada and it took the American regulators to put him in jail. It was not the Canadian regulators that did it.

There is hardly much point in setting up a national securities regulator that is simply going to act like the Ontario regulator does right now, which basically ignores and does not prosecute white-collar crime. I would make the observation that sometimes just setting up new structures and new legislation does not produce the wanted results unless there is an enforcement program and people in place who will do the enforcement.

The problem with this organization is that the people who are doing the enforcement are all hired from inside the industry. What we need are retired police investigators running the operation and not people from the securities firms that they are supposed to be regulating. There is not a lot of regulating going on from what we can see.

I have a number of other comments that I want to make, but I know my time is drawing to an end. The economic update that the Conservatives announced last week missed some very important issues. It missed employment insurance issues which we in the NDP caucus are very concerned about. It did not talk about increases in pensions and protection of pensions for our seniors. We would like to see the OAS increased by \$100 a month.

What did the Conservatives talk about? They started out on page 3 of the document saying how terrible things were, how the economy was falling, dropping like a stone, and that we needed immediate action. We were sitting here in anticipation of some action to follow. What did they do? They never offered any of the changes. There was no stimulus package, which is needed to kickstart the economy. Instead, they talked about selling off crown assets. That is a real smart idea. They put it in their books as sales, but they did not identify how much they are going to get at fire-sale prices and what they are going to sell. Are they going to sell the CBC? Are they going to dismantle the Wheat Board and sell off the buildings?

If we are going to be buying assets, now is the time to be buying them at a very depressed price. The worst time for a government to sell off its assets would be during a downturn in the market. What kind of thinking goes on over there on the government side? That is just typical, normal Conservative ideology running its course—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We will have to move on to questions and comments. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation.

• (1650)

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just before I make a comment and ask a question, I would like to express my gratitude to the voters of Kootenay—Columbia who for the sixth time returned me to this chamber, this time with just under 60% of the vote. I really appreciate that. Now I am going to have to work hard to try and secure the other 40% in the upcoming election.

With the member now entering the separatist coalition, I am really curious as to how he is going to feel about the person who has visions of being the finance minister of Canada, the member for Markham—Unionville, who is also going to be in the separatist coalition with him. The member for Markham—Unionville said, “The basic reality is that the NDP does not understand the first thing about economics”. That was just in March of this year. He also said in this House, “The fundamental point about the NDP is that those members do not understand economics, they never understood economics, and they never will understand economics”. That was October last year. Again in October of last year, the member for Markham—Unionville also said, “...delusional, clueless, irresponsible policy...the Neanderthal economic thinking of the New Democratic Party”. He also said, “The vast majority of Canadians want nothing to do with a party of economic Luddites, which is why that party is marginal, why it will remain marginal, and why it is not taken seriously by the people of Canada”.

How will the member feel being in the separatist coalition with that person possibly as his finance minister?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the government and the Prime Minister have clearly changed their minds over a two year period here. When the Conservatives were in opposition back in 2004, the Bloc members were excellent coalition partners and they were actively seeking to overthrow the Liberal Party under Paul Martin. Two years later, they have had a miraculous change in view. Now it is an evil idea.

Government Orders

The Conservatives are making it sound as though we were overthrowing the government. They are making it sound as though there were a military coup in progress.

That is the kind of change the Conservatives have made. That is a very serious change because it really shows how far those people will go to stay in power.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are now saying—and the member for Kitchener just said so again—that the economic statement only lacks details.

I would like my NDP colleague to explain why the majority of democratically elected members in this House do not believe that only details are missing, but that it is devoid of substance. Can my colleague explain that?

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the government clearly is a fiscally conservative government and it is averse to looking at a stimulus package when one is required.

Parties on this side of the House are looking at people's lives and unemployment issues and plants closing. It is just natural that we would want to do something about it. The Conservatives' response is to look at the bottom line, worry about whether the country is in deficit or not, start cutting back on expenditures, and start selling off Crown assets. This is nothing new.

In terms of how unstable the Conservatives really are, they introduced in the economic update a measure to eliminate the \$1.75 per vote taxpayer subsidy and then turned around and withdrew it in 24 hours. They were going to eliminate the right to strike for civil servants until 2011, but a day later they eliminated that.

Talk about a very confused group of people opposite.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member for Elmwood—Transcona to Parliament.

The member's riding is right next to my riding in Winnipeg. I have heard from many of his constituents, business people in particular, who are very much against the separatist coalition, the surprise coalition, that has taken place.

I saw the member campaigning as I was campaigning in the last election. People went out and did a lot of work. That election was very costly.

A short six weeks ago people brought that member to Parliament. They are surprised that suddenly the new member is now part of a separatist coalition and is endorsing it. People are baffled.

We heard from another member on this side of the House who talked about the tax stimulus in Canada.

How does the member for Elmwood—Transcona square that with the fact that businesses are very concerned that this coalition would not support the kind of corporate tax breaks, the kind of stimulus, that is already there? How does the member square that with his constituents?

Government Orders

•(1655)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the member should take the issue up with her leader as to why, immediately after the 2004 election, he could not wait. He was tripping over himself to get over to talk to the Bloc and the leader of the NDP to approach the Governor General, cap in hand, to say that he wanted to take over the government, that Paul Martin did not have a majority government and that he would be there to lead a coalition with the Bloc and the NDP. If the NDP leader had not walked away and not pursued the whole issue, we would have seen a coalition two years ago of the current government and the Bloc.

Therefore, I do not know what she is talking about. If she needs a copy of the letter, I would be happy to give her a copy so she can take it up with the Prime Minister.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona on his speech this afternoon. I know his constituents will be looking forward to hearing more from him in the future.

One thing that disappoints us most on this side of the House is when we were looking for economic stimulus, we were also looking for measures that were going to improve the lives of Canadians. We know we have a crisis in housing, in homelessness and in affordable housing.

We know one of the possibilities for stimulating our economy at this time would be to institute both an affordable housing strategy and an anti-homelessness strategy that would build homes for Canadians. A national housing program has been missing for almost a decade, a program that would build homes for Canadians who need affordable homes or who need homes, period.

What would the member for Elmwood—Transcona propose along those lines?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer that question. The coalition clearly will be looking at putting a lot of stimulus money into housing. The agreements are made public. We have very narrowly defined agreements whereby we will deal with the economy. Part of that will be putting unprecedented amounts of money into housing and dealing with the homeless issue among other serious problems that we are dealing with right now.

Once the government deals with the issue of whether it is staying or when it is going to go and when the coalition gets operating after Monday, as the member points out, we are going to see a lot of good things happen in the country.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the hon. member this. There was a blog posting by the member for Toronto Centre, which states:

[The NDP leader's] positioning is not principled. It is aimed at advancing his own political ambitions, even if, time and again, that means real setbacks for the people he claims to be helping. Thankfully, there are many...who see through this tactic, and know how short-sighted and counterproductive this approach really is.

Is this not really what the member's leader has done in signing a coalition with the leader of the Liberal Party supported by the separatists?

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, our leader clearly understands that the economy is in very serious shape and getting worse by the

day, not getting better and that we cannot dither as the government would do. We need stimulus now. People are unemployed. We need changes to the EI system. We need all kinds of activity going on, not simply retrenchment.

That is what we get when we have a Conservative government. Retrenchment and balancing the budget are more important than stimulus to the Conservatives.

•(1700)

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we in Canada are living in a period of unprecedented challenges to the very foundations of our democracy and parliamentary institutions. The Prime Minister has by his actions and rhetoric undermined our national traditions of fairness, dialogue and unity.

He has used tactics and strategies that are beyond confrontational. Discourse and challenge are part of our parliamentary system, but the Prime Minister has gone beyond that. He has tried to undermine the sustainability of the opposition parties. He has adopted a style of governance not before seen in Canadian history and he has nurtured a rancorous style of governing that is completely inconsistent with our Canadian values.

Canada is in a period of significant economic and political uncertainty. Across the world, nations and their citizens are contending with unprecedented economic challenges. As a result, unique political challenges require bold and innovative solutions. We are at a profoundly significant turning point in our nation's history. People in nations around the globe are looking to their governments for assistance, direction and assurance that in times of uncertainty and need, their voices will be heard.

I understand the Prime Minister has a particular historic interest in the Punic Wars. This may account for the actions he has taken in recent weeks, but we must all remember that the Punic Wars were the largest in the history of the ancient world and lasted over 100 years. They were costly and were in essence about only one issue, power between Rome and Carthage, and their goal was unchallenged dominance. Is this what the goal of the Prime Minister is, unchallenged dominance? He needs to remember that we are living in a democratic society, not in the ancient world.

We have only to look at the recent presidential election in the United States to understand the desire of people to have a better future for a change. The election of president-elect Barack Obama was about change, as we have so often heard. It was about choosing a government that was prepared to be activist when times called for it and supportive when the people needs such assistance.

The finance minister and the Conservative government had a unique opportunity last week to embrace the goodwill of the opposition in this Parliament when the fiscal update was delivered. For weeks, opposition members posed questions and made statements in the House reflecting the voices of their constituents, calling for real, meaningful action with respect to our economy. Simply put, the Prime Minister had every opportunity, as he had promised, to take the high road and to bring a greater measure of civility to the way in which his government operated in the House.

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Instead, he chose to bring forward an unseemly partisan document that was more a political testament than an instrument to address the business of Canadians.

The fiscal update was a political document that contained almost no financial measures, but rather sought to undermine the fiscal viability of the opposition parties. This is hardly a demonstration of parliamentary civility and it is certainly inconsistent with Canadians values.

In addition to this measure, there was also the attempt to remove the right to strike for three years for public servants, which was a red herring simply because the collective agreements did not expire for three more years. Add to this was the undermining of the pay equity process, which was a clear assault on equal pay for equal work within the public sector.

From these attempts to its cancellation of the court challenges program, the government has consistently taken the wrong course. Despite all the rhetoric from the Prime Minister and his government members, the reality is the current situation is absolutely of his own making.

It is still somewhat incomprehensible to any rational person that the government could be so oblivious to the needs of Canadians while pursuing its own narrow political agenda. Canada is not about that. *Time Magazine*, in describing Canada, once published this statement, "Canada is one of the planet's most comfortable and caring societies". This is the kind of country we should strive to build, and it is for this reason that we on this side of the House have chosen to act.

The decisions taken by the opposition parties subsequent to the delivery of the fiscal update are the actions of those who recognize that our country is in need of help during this troubled time. Action had to be taken.

It was Winston Churchill who once said, "It is not enough that we do our best: sometimes we have to do what's required".

What is required is directly relational to what is going on in our economy outside the walls of this Parliament. It was reported yesterday that the November employment report would likely show upwards of 40,000 lost jobs in Canada. Behind that statistic are thousands of families that will now have to determine not how they will celebrate Christmas, but how they will simply meet their bills and put food on their tables.

The automotive sector is facing unprecedented pressure. As the United States government prepares to directly assist them during this time, there is little but indirect and uncertain assurances from the government. Words will not save auto industry jobs in Canada, only action will.

We hear of the loss of jobs within the arts community, from ballet companies in British Columbia to festivals right in the nation's capital. Manufacturing jobs in a variety of industries are being lost almost every day, as employers struggle to contend with new economic realities.

● (1705)

The truth is Canadians and the business community are under pressure. In countries like the United Kingdom and a variety of European nations stimulus packages have already been launched with more to follow.

However, in Canada the government maintains Canadians must wait for the budget originally slated for February, or March, and now, under pressure, moved to the end of January. Clearly even this decision demonstrates the government is not prepared to act.

In the absence of clear and meaningful action, the opposition parties have done what is required of them. The agreement announced on Monday to create a coalition government was a decision taken not out of opportunity but rather of necessity.

I would also point out that the Prime Minister's position is entirely inconsistent with what he maintained only four years ago when he wrote to the Governor General stating, "We respectfully point out that the opposition parties, who together constitute a majority in the House, have been in close consultation. We believe that, should a request for dissolution arise this should give you cause, as constitutional practice has determined, to consult the opposition leaders and consider all of your options before exercising your constitutional authority".

The "we" the Prime Minister was referring to was his party, the New Democratic party and the Bloc Québécois.

In resorting to the creation of a coalition government, the opposition parties have acted in a manner that is completely consistent with history and operation of a parliamentary democracy.

We have also clearly demonstrated the fact that no election is required. We are prepared to govern.

I would point out that constitutional experts have said that the Governor General's primary responsibility is to determine, with or without a vote, whether the current government retains the confidence of the House.

Based on the documents signed on Monday, based on the public comments of members of the opposition and in the view of the conduct of the government, it is quite clear the government does not in fact enjoy the confidence of the House of Commons.

Constitutional experts further agree that should the government lose the confidence of the House of Commons in a vote, either on a confidence motion or a financial matter, that it would be inconsistent with constitutional practice for the Governor General to grant a request for dissolution.

This is based on the fact that an election took place in the country less than two months ago and therefore constitutional practice would dictate that the Governor General would invite the Leader of the Opposition to form a government if he had the confidence of the House.

Clearly, in this instance, the Leader of the Opposition, the leader of the Liberal Party, has the support of the majority of the members of the House to form a government.

Government Orders

This is standard constitutional practice within our parliamentary system. The decision of the Prime Minister and the members of the government does not change the fact that under our system the eventuality I have just laid out is fully consistent with our laws, our precedents and our parliamentary traditions.

In the past four years I have contested three elections. I can assure the House that, like the Canadian people, I do not want or believe we need another election.

Indeed the reference we have heard mentioned around Parliament over the past few days is that of the situation in 1926 when the then Governor General of Canada refused the dissolution request of Prime Minister Mackenzie King. We need to remember that the basis of the decision was not that the government had been in power only a short number of weeks, but that the previous election was eight months prior to the request. Clearly the precedent would support the notion that calling an election now, so soon after the one we just had in October, would be inconceivable and imprudent.

This is most especially the case in view of the fact that we have an alternative government ready to assume office with the guaranteed support of the majority of the members of the House.

The government must remember that in our system we do not elect governments, we elect Parliaments from which governments are formed. Governments are required to secure the support of the majority of the members of Parliament, and clearly the government has lost the confidence of the Parliament.

It should also be remembered that it is not the role of the Governor General to determine the viability of a government, but rather to allow Parliament to make such a determination. Should the Leader of the Opposition inform the Governor General that he has the majority support of the House that should then result in an invitation to form a government.

This would then be followed by the confirmation of support in a vote of confidence in the new government in the House of Commons.

The questioning of the viability of the coalition governments nothing new. In fact, the coalition government of Prime Minister Robert Borden in 1917 met with many questions about its ability to survive. That coalition government operated for several years and was a pivotal point.

• (1710)

Coalition governments in Canada pre-date our nation's Confederation. From 1864 to 1867, the then province of Canada was governed by a coalition government that would ultimately lead to Confederation in 1867. It was known as "the great coalition" and it included the Conservative Party, the Clear Grits of Canada west, and the Parti Bleu of Canada east. This coalition of what we now know as the provinces of Ontario and Quebec brought together the various political parties and interests in a common cause to break the legislative deadlock that had overcome the legislature.

Similarly, from 1917 to 1920, we had the Union coalition which included the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and independents.

We have also seen multiple coalition governments at the provincial level in this country, including in my home province of Ontario in 1985.

In the United Kingdom, upon which our parliamentary system is based, coalition governments are often referred to as "national governments" and governed from 1931-40. That government had three different prime ministers from 1931-40. Coalition governments served as well during both world wars, in other words, in times of great necessity and challenges. In the case of the British coalition government of 1931, this was the direct result of the economic turmoil that had lingered since the 1929 financial crash, and the need for united and effective action by a government.

The current financial situation across the world has been described by many economists and political leaders as being even more perilous than the situation in 1929. Although the economies of the world are more complicated than in 1929, the reality is that ordinary Canadians are losing their jobs, find it hard to manage financially, and they are clearly concerned about the future.

By taking the position of waiting to see what other governments are going to do, the government is adopting a shortsighted and completely unacceptable position. Leadership is about taking action for the best interests of our citizens and if there were ever a time for decisive leadership, this would be the time.

The coalition government we are proposing to the Governor General is one that is committed to act to address the very real and pressing needs of Canadians and one that will take action where the current government was clearly unwilling.

Among other things, the coalition would commit to a \$30 billion stimulus package with assistance to the auto industry and the forestry sectors, two areas of our economy under enormous pressure. The coalition agreement is reflective of a genuine desire to make Parliament work in the best interests of Canadians, and to provide them with assistance they need and deserve in these difficult times. What this proposed coalition government is committed to do is simply the same kinds of policies that governments across the world have undertaken in order to assist their citizens in these difficult economic times.

Governing is about choosing and the choices made by the current government have necessitated this action by the majority of the members of this Parliament.

The terms of our agreement mark a new spirit of co-operation and dedication to the needs of Canadians that have been absent from the Government of Canada for too long. The time to act is now and the action needed is bold and unique to the times.

As former Prime Minister Lester Pearson once said, "No other country is in a better position than Canada to go ahead with the evolution of a national purpose devoted to all that is good and noble and excellent in the human spirit". Let us embrace this noble concept and move forward to build a better Canada.

Government Orders

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member has given an interesting speech. He indicated that he feels this separatist coalition should present a budget now. The Prime Minister and the finance minister have said it will be in January. The member says that is not good enough, we want it now. If the coalition is approved and it is formed, how long would it take for such a group to have a budget? How long would it take them to come back to the House? I expect it will take them a month to read their briefing books. It will be May.

● (1715)

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, it is quite interesting how that member and his party have now decided to take on this notion of wrapping themselves around the flag, a very Republican style, when they do not want to address the real issues facing Canadians, the economic uncertainty, and the plight of Canadians. Now all they want to do is talk about this coalition with the separatists. Something which is important to keep in mind is in today's *Globe and Mail* by Jeffrey Simpson. He writes:

Samuel Johnson once said that "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." It will be for Canadians to decide whether the Conservatives are scoundrels, but patriotism has now become their last refuge. The Conservatives survived in the last parliament with episodic and appreciated support from the Bloc. Their ministrations and supplications for Quebec nationalists of almost every hue knew few bounds. But now, in this battle for survival, the Conservative Party has grabbed a Canadian flag and sewn the Maple Leaf to its heart.

This is what is happening right now. The Conservatives are trying to change the channel from what is actually taking place. We want to talk about the economy and the issues that matter to Canadians. They want to talk about vague, supposed beliefs about patriotism.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. My point of order is not on the fact that the member is refusing to answer the question, because we know the coalition have no budgetary plan. My point of order is on the fact that it is traditional in this House that the so-called attempt to answer the question is equal and proportional to the time of the question. The member is skirting the question, changing the channel, and trying to divert the time of answering questions in this House. If the member has no answer as to when the coalition is going to come up with a budget, he should just say so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I heard the hon. member's point of order and I believe it is a question of debate here. I am mindful of the time that the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon took for his question and we will now move to another question.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague. I think he will agree with me that he and I have sparred many times on many different issues. We represent different parties and different viewpoints. My colleagues from the Bloc will agree that I have sparred with them on many occasions. However, we came to this House at a time of economic crisis to work together, to put our partisan interests at the door, which is why we are willing to work together.

I would like to refer to the antics we are seeing now from reform unleashed. It started on Thursday night, and what do we see from the *Edmonton Sun*? It says that the government's attempt Thursday night

was "—a mean-spirited, petty, dangerous document designed to antagonize the opposition and destabilize the country". *The Montreal Gazette* of course just simply wrote it off as a "disastrous economic update".

I would like to ask the hon. member about the fact that it is being identified already by major media sources that this document was designed to antagonize and destabilize the country. Would he not agree with me now that the reform rump is launching an attack against the people of Quebec, the francophones of our country? We hear it from the hate messages that their reform members from western Canada are phoning into our offices. They are actually continuing with this agenda that they started Thursday night, which is an attempt to destabilize Parliament in order to hold onto power for a leader who has obviously lost the support of his own backwoods coalition.

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, I agree with the fact that the Prime Minister just does not get it. He does not get it about the issues facing Canadians. In fact, as I have stated and many members of this House have stated all along, he has tried to change the focus of this Parliament from the real issues affecting Canadians. We had to respond and we had to act.

This is a historical time. There are historical situations affecting our economy both here and abroad, and the opposition came together in a collaborative way. This is a democratic way of doing things in a parliamentary tradition. It is the same as what happens in other countries throughout Europe.

We also know that the Prime Minister feels this way because, as my hon. colleague stated in his question, the Prime Minister, even in his own previous party, has attempted as well to have coalitions of support both from the Bloc and from other parties in past Parliaments. This is nothing new. This is something that the present government has also tried in the past and failed. I guess that is probably one of the reasons why it is so upset with us.

● (1720)

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question through you of my hon. colleague, who himself raised the matter of the coalition.

There is something very important in the coalition between the Liberals and the NDP, which he has been talking about since the beginning, and that is the members' right to vote. According to what I have seen and my understanding of it, the Bloc agreed not to vote freely according to its conscience, as is its right within these hallowed walls, and agreed not to vote against the government until 2010-11 even if that is contrary to its own members' wishes and its own convictions.

I would like to know whether he checked the legality of this, that is to say, whether the sale of their right to vote is legitimate or even legal?

Government Orders

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I just want to point out that our Prime Minister has lost the confidence of Parliament. It is obvious. He has lost his authority to work with all the opposition parties to improve the situation and tackle the economic crisis facing our country.

I would say this in response to my colleague's question: there is clearly a consensus, in accordance with our country's history, that Parliament has a responsibility to operate with the support of a majority of its members. It is therefore obviously legal and legitimate for an opposition party to form the government if it has the support of a majority of parliamentarians.

[*English*]

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is not only a question of bringing in a budget but it is a question of what is in the budget. Mr. Obama, the president-designate of the U.S., has talked about tax credits for new workers to the tune of \$175 billion to stimulate the economy. He has talked about liability for designated benefits, which is of great concern.

My question for the member is: Is it not a question of enhancing the budget and coming forward with it quickly so that it would benefit all Canadians, not just those who are in the province of Quebec; therefore, the issue of who we are dealing with in terms of serving those people is really not an issue, to the extent that all Canadians would benefit through this coalition?

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, absolutely, and I want to thank my hon. colleague for that question. I think he said it quite well. If we look at, for example, what was referenced by my hon. colleague, the situation with president-elect Obama, he has worked on an economic stimulus package with both the Democrats and the Republicans. He wants to bring both sides together. So, we know that he is united. This Parliament is divided, not united.

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House for the first time in this 40th Parliament. The good people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound have elected me for the third time. I am very humbled and honoured by the trust my constituents have once again shown in me and I sincerely thank them very much.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your recent appointment. You will do a great job.

Constituents ask me from time to time about the pins that we all wear on our lapels. The top one represents the honour it is for each and every one of us to sit in this great House and represent our different ridings.

Even more important than that pin is the one below it. It stands for everything that this country is all about. Right now there is a lot of sadness in people's hearts across this country, and certainly in my riding, about the potential for this so-called coalition to rip the heart out of Canada. That bothers me deeply.

The Speech from the Throne and economic update we have heard in recent days were very welcome news for the people of my riding. The speech made it very clear that this government recognizes the international financial woes that threaten the livelihoods of hard-working Canadians and their families.

In my riding there have already been signs of an economic downturn. Some of my constituents have already been negatively affected by it. While my constituency is one of the largest agricultural ridings in the country, especially when it comes to beef production, my constituents also rely on a number of manufacturers and on the tourism industry for their livelihoods. It is because of these industries that the actions of this government are so deeply felt in my riding.

It is also why I am proud to be standing on this side of the House representing a government that truly understands the challenges ahead and has been working to protect Canadians from an economic crisis since October of last year. It is why I am proud of the policies that flowed from our throne speech and in last week's economic update by the Minister of Finance.

I want to thank the minister for his careful stewardship of Canada's finances during these troublesome economic times around the world. It is thanks to this government, led by our current Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, that Canada is well prepared for the rough waters ahead. In fact, Canada is in a better position than any other G7 nation to weather this economic storm, all because of the actions and changes implemented by this government in the last year or more.

Does that mean we are going to be immune to any effects around the world? Absolutely not. I think ordinary Canadians understand that. However, if ordinary Canadians have to watch their spending, their government must also set an example. It cannot disrespect them by wasting their tax dollars. If businesses large and small must investigate ways to save money, then their government must do the same. I applaud this government for seeing the importance of this principle of fairness. I hope that everyone responsible for government budgets will ensure that the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars are wisely spent.

Yes, stimulus is needed, and the Prime Minister and the finance minister have been acting for the past year, as I said, to ensure economic stimulus, including targeted tax cuts and infrastructure spending to build Canada.

I and my colleagues on this side of the House were elected in part because of the policies put forward by my party, policies that were realistic and very helpful.

We did not threaten our economic stability in the last campaign, but instead focused on targeted spending for those who needed it most. We need to continue this process with carefully targeted infrastructure and stimulus spending that will actually benefit our Canadian economy.

I was happy to hear in the Prime Minister's speech last week a recommitment to increase slaughterhouse capacity for our livestock industry. I talked earlier about my riding, which is the second-largest beef riding in the country. I am a beef farmer by trade. After the problems in the livestock industry in recent years, particularly in beef and pork, and starting with the BSE in 2003, this announcement is welcome news. Our livestock producers will benefit greatly from increased slaughterhouse capacity, as it will assist them in getting their product to market.

Government Orders

● (1725)

Farmers from coast to coast know that this government is committed to cutting red tape and eliminating waste. Along those same lines, it is very important to dismantle the long gun registry. Farmers who own firearms are not criminals and should not be treated as such. I am both a farmer and a hunter, and farmers and hunters in my riding and across this country have for too long paid the financial and social costs for the crimes of thugs in Canada's large cities. The long gun registry is a prime example of wasteful bureaucratic legislation and a gross misuse of taxpayer money.

If this separatist-backed coalition were to happen, the gun registry debacle would not get dealt with, something we have indicated we will do in the next few months, and many law-abiding Canadians would become criminals in the new year.

I want to remind the House of some of the important steps our finance minister has taken in the past month and in his economic update to ensure stability in the Canadian economy.

To help maintain the strength and stability of our financial system, this government has taken steps to free up liquidity so that financial institutions can continue lending to consumers, homebuyers and businesses at an affordable cost. Our measures maintain the availability of long-term credit through the purchase of mortgage pools through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, at no cost to taxpayers.

We have created a backstop, the Canadian lenders assurance facility, to ensure that our financial institutions are not at a competitive disadvantage internationally.

To prevent a U.S.-style housing bubble, we have put in place new rules for government-guaranteed mortgages.

Building on previous action taken by this government to ensure the continued competitiveness of the financial sector, the economic statement includes measures to provide solvency funding relief to federally regulated private pension plans. That is something I have heard a lot about.

To help seniors cope, the economic statement proposes a one-time change that would allow RRIF holders to reduce the required minimum withdrawal by 25% for this tax year. Although most RRIF holders have only a portion of their assets in equities, the change recognizes the impact of recent market declines on those assets.

We are enhancing credit availability through crown agencies for Canadian businesses.

We are accelerating and doubling infrastructure funding this year in order to ensure stimulus for Canada's economy. I would like to thank and congratulate the minister for doubling this funding. Some people have no idea of the importance of infrastructure projects in my riding.

We are carefully planning other steps to stimulate the economy and fend off the economic woes faced by our neighbours. This is the largest investment in infrastructure in over 50 years. That is a long time.

In the economic statement, the government committed to consult with provincial and territorial leaders on the best way to accelerate infrastructure projects to help further stimulate the Canadian economy.

Again, if this separatist-backed coalition were to come to be, this initiative to double our infrastructure funding and get it out to municipalities in the first couple of months of 2009 would not happen. We need to make it very clear that it will not happen. That would be a travesty. My municipalities cannot wait any longer.

Since forming government, in this year we have taken unprecedented action to stimulate the economy, and here are a number of things we have done since 2006.

We have reduced the federal debt by \$37 billion. They want to wipe out \$30 billion of that in the first few days of this so-called separatist coalition government.

We will have reduced taxes by almost \$200 billion over 2007-08 and the following five years.

By 2010 we will have reduced the tax rate on new business investment to the lowest level in the G7. That is great.

We have made historic investments in job-creating infrastructure. We have invested extensively in science and technology and in education and training, which is something very dear to my colleague's riding of Cambridge.

As I mentioned, the government took early action to help stimulate the Canadian economy through tax cuts of nearly \$200 billion over the next five years. It is the largest investment in 50 years.

● (1730)

Our plan strikes the right balance. We are restraining spending and protecting our economic future. I feel very confident that we will overcome the current economic turmoil and have a much stronger economy coming out of it.

I am also pleased to hear from the Prime Minister a recommitment to the banning of bulk water transfers or exports. I heard someone bring this up in the House today, over in the corner.

Canada's fresh water is one of our greatest natural resources. All of us must do all we can to protect it from speculation and abuse. In our country's history we have learned many lessons about our rich natural resources. We must put all those experiences together to ensure that our country protects this precious resource.

Government Orders

I live on Georgian Bay, which part of the Great Lakes. My grandchildren and my family are there. It means a lot to everybody up there. My riding's geographic location in regard to all the Great Lakes makes both the quality and the quantity of fresh water very important.

We must also ensure that Canadians are safe. We must ensure that communities have the tools they require to deal with the social and criminal problems of today.

We must work to ensure that drug dealers who infiltrate our schools and threaten our children are held responsible for their actions, and that those who innocently get caught up with the wrong crowd have access to programs that will change their lives for the better.

The difference must be clear. Those who commit violent crimes should not be met with handfuls of excuses and the comforts of home. Instead they should be met with a strong, efficient criminal justice system. One of my new colleagues from Manitoba is a former police officer. If there is anybody in this House who understands what I am talking about, I am sure she does.

The mandate of this justice system must be to hand down appropriate punishment for violent crime. It must not confuse help with leniency. Constituents in my riding have demanded this approach, and I applaud the recent Speech from the Throne for addressing this very important issue.

Lastly, I fully support the idea of making the Senate more accountable to Canadians. Changes to our upper chamber are needed to modernize the institution and to meet the democratic expectations of Canadians.

On this subject, in recent days we have heard more about this separatist coalition that is coming about. It is becoming clear that there is a distinct possibility that we are going to end up with six new senators from the province of Quebec, senators who will be separatists. Madam Speaker, can you imagine that? The people in my riding have not heard that yet, but they are going to go crazy. They are going to go ballistic. It is unbelievable.

The difference between success and failure for small businesses may lie with our votes in this House. The difference between a healthy family farm and a for sale sign may come down to the policies that we craft here.

With that in mind, I ask all hon. members to reflect on the importance of the work we do here and to remember to put Canadians first, and not our politics. We must all work together.

A strong message was sent on October 14. That message was not to have a separatist-backed coalition in this House; it was in fact to have this government.

Some of my colleagues and even some of the future members of this separatist coalition have told me they are getting a lot of emails. I am going to read some of the examples I am getting. I have received literally 200-300, and that number is climbing daily. Not very long ago I received an email from one of my staff informing me that I have received 255 new ones, and I have not seen her since two o'clock. That shows how fast they are coming in.

This email is from Barb of Owen Sound:

I'm usually one of the silent majority, but everyone who I know, had the same initial reaction as myself. VERY ANGRY! This is totally irresponsible. After... [a recent] election, these three idiots think the Canadian people will thank them for making our country, an unstable third world country

Remember, Madam Speaker, that I am reading this. I am not saying this.

● (1735)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have witnessed a lot of disreputable conduct in the House, but I would ask the member to retract what he just said. He has no business referring to leaders of parties in this House as "idiots". That is unparliamentary language.

Madam Speaker, I will ask you to try to restore decorum and bring a level of civility that is certainly missing. "Idiot" is not a word that is used in this House to speak about any leader of any party.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask the member to refrain from using words such as that. We cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly.

● (1740)

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I never called anyone that. I simply was reading an email. But I can tell you that was an example of—

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. While you were listening to the point of order by the member for Timmins—James Bay, the member for Cambridge made an unfortunate reference to the member as a "pompous moron". I think you may have heard that. When I asked him what he said, he said, "You heard what I said".

I believe in the Standing Orders that all hon. members are to be treated with respect and dignity in this place and I would ask the member to please withdraw that reference to the hon. member.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask the members, particularly at this time, if we could listen to each other respectfully. I did not hear that comment but I will allow the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound to continue.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I want to be clear on the record that I did not call anyone that nor have I ever called anyone that in the House. I am simply reading. I just want everyone who reads *Hansard* to know that.

Just to carry on. It states:

—but to use it as an OBVIOUS power grab is in my opinion TREASON against the Canadian people. ...My late father was a member of the Liberal party, voted as a delegate at conventions, contributed to the Liberal coffers. ...He taught me to vote for the person most responsible.... He would be horrified (at the stupidity). The Liberals are committing suicide on this issue. They have not thought of what is better for the country....

I could not have said it better myself. She goes on to say:

Do they not realize, the Canadian people were not complaining about what Mr. Harper was doing, because they voted for him and trusted him.

She then goes on to say:

An action of this magnitude did not occur just after the throne speech, it has been planned for a long time! The coalition—

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask the hon. member to refrain from using the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Larry Miller: My apologies, Madam Speaker, and I should know better.

She says:

—is insulting the intelligence of the Canadian people by denying this is a COUP planned very carefully.

I can back this up. The Liberal candidate in my riding, who many people said that his mouth would probably get him or his party into trouble eventually, admitted in last Saturday's daily paper in my riding that, "This coalition was being discussed during the September election but we were told to say nothing about it.

It obviously backs up what Mrs. Taylor was saying. She feels that they are greatly misreading the emotional response coming from the public and she is worried that some overstressed, unemployed person is going to snap over this.

She says, "I will do my best to convince the Liberals what a mistake they are making".

I can go on. I have another one here from Elizabeth and Garry sent to the Governor General. They say:

Please do not let this move by opposing parties come into being, it is ANARCHY.

I have another one from Howard and Kathy. It states:

We wanted to express our shock and dismay by the attempt of the Liberal and NDP parties to overthrow the results of the recent election and seize power in what can only be described as a "bloodless" coup. These parties claim to represent the Canadian people but in fact it is quite clear that they only represent their own narrow ambitions. Their actions are typical of Third World dictators who use the democratic system to overthrow it.

I have another one from Roger and Maureen from Tobermory, Ontario, at the very tip of the Bruce. It states:

...I totally protest what the opposition parties are trying to do. They have no mandate to lead the government. This backroom deal is undemocratic.

Obviously they don't care about what is good for the country and only care about gaining power and playing politics.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment to the Speaker's chair.

I would like to know your views on the relevance of what my colleague is saying to the subject currently being debated, namely the government's economic and fiscal statement. My colleague is reporting various views and opinions about the opposition coalition, which may well defeat his government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I want to thank the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer and will say this.

The Speaker already ruled on this. The subject of this debate is quite broad and a certain latitude is therefore permissible.

[*English*]

I would like to remind the hon. member that he had only 30 seconds left, so I will give him the 30 seconds to conclude.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I will conclude by finishing this email. I would also ask that since the member over here is

worried about discussing the coalition, I will look forward to him standing in his question time and telling us that he does not support the separatist-backed coalition. The last part of the email reads:

It would be disastrous...especially in the economic hard times facing everyone.

I hope by our written protest this will help in some way.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, on page 50 of the economic statement, there is a chart that shows that the projected deficit will be in the range of about \$6 billion in the next fiscal year. That is also based on an assumption that the growth rate for that year is 0.3%, which happens to be higher than any other forecasted economic growth rate, and it ranges anywhere from zero percent down to a -2.2% negative growth.

I wonder if the member could give us his thoughts as to why the economic outlook uses a growth rate for Canada in the coming fiscal year that is way beyond the expectations of any credible expertise.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, I do not have the book right in front of me and I have not memorized it, although there is some great reading in there and some great work by the Minister of Finance.

However, some of things I talked about, the things that the government has done in the last year and a little bit to get this country in better shape to weather an economic storm, are some of the reasons, I am quite sure, that those kinds of objectives and figures are laid out in there. The member revealed the honesty in that page, where the minister has provided the number for the deficit.

I can remember a government, not too long before us, whose tradition was to announce to the Canadian public that there was a \$1 billion or \$1.5 billion surplus and yet, when it came down to the end of the year, it was usually somewhere between \$10 billion and \$13 billion. It was basically not coming clean with the public and it felt that the money was its little bag of goodies that it could spend as foolishly as it wanted. Lord knows, we all know it did that at times.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his re-election. He, indeed, does come from a beautiful part of Ontario.

The budget makes some very strong recommendations to create credit for the manufacturing sector and our exports, in particular in the automotive industry and aerospace, which are equally important right across the country. The expansion of the EDC and BDC to allow for additional credit is a step in the right direction.

However, both the aerospace and automotive industries have required more credit to accelerate a stimulus. Why would the government not have come forward immediately when it was apparent that there was a crisis in those sectors with suggestions as to how they could make a difference? That is what was being looked for—

• (1750)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, the member across the way and I have had some great conversations while travelling and I congratulate him on his re-election.

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As to the part about the auto and aerospace sectors, when it comes to the auto sector, we are the mouse in bed with the elephants, so to speak, when it comes to our neighbours to the south. Of course, we all know that in the auto sector, 90% of all the cars that we produce in Canada go there. I think most people know that the Americans usually buy somewhere between 11 million and 11.5 million cars a year but that is down to about 10.5 million this year.

My point in bringing this up is that President-elect Obama has indicated that he will be coming out with a package. In discussions that the Prime Minister had in Washington just a few short weeks ago with the G20, it was decided by 20 well-respected world leaders to follow a plan. The Prime Minister is doing that at this point and I believe it would be very prudent to bring out a plan on the auto sector. The finance minister has indicated it is coming. It will come in due time and I believe it will coincide with the Americans.

A lot of people in my riding and across the country want something for the auto sector, not as a handout but as a leg up, and it needs to have strings attached to it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to try to put myself in your position. It must be difficult to preside over the House and prevent the Reform Party from reading the emails and letters it receives from its voters. When a member does not have anything substantive to say about the economic statement, he just reads his correspondence. We could do the same thing. The Public Service Alliance, the Canadian Federation of Labour and the FTQ are all in favour of the coalition.

There is therefore virtually nothing substantive left to say about the economic statement. It announced cuts for the political parties, but that was withdrawn. It announced a freeze to pay equity for women, but that was withdrawn. The Prime Minister made it known through his finance minister that he would remove the public service's right to strike, but that too was withdrawn. So what is left in this famous little document? Where are the requests that the Bloc sent to the finance minister regarding an economic recovery? Where in the statement are the Quebec National Assembly's requests, as forwarded by the Premier of Quebec? There are reasons why the main stakeholders in Quebec unanimously support the coalition and are asking the Bloc Québécois to make the House work. The government has lost all credibility and no longer enjoys the confidence of the House.

[*English*]

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, it is obvious that members across the way do not like to hear what Canadians think, whether it is my riding or across the country. I am sure they are hearing from a lot of federalists in their ridings, the same as I was reading. I make no apology for passing on the comments of my constituents in this great House.

I came here to protect this great country, not rip it apart. The member across the way should be ashamed of belonging to a party whose sole goal is to do just that. I will not apologize for anything that I said.

One thing he said was that enough has been said and there is no more to say. He is right. After some of those comments, there is no more to say. People have had enough of this crap.

• (1755)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think it is not acceptable for a member to make assumptions about what a party will do and say that a party wants to destroy a country because it wants to build its own.

I would ask that the member withdraw his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): That is a point of debate and I am going to allow it. I think the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound had in fact finished his answers.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, beware of December 1, because 300 years ago Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the British parliament, but just this last week, Guy Giorno succeeded in blowing up the Conservative Party.

What we are seeing here is the rage of reform that has been kept in a box, under wraps and told to keep its hatred of other regions to themselves, to be polite, because it would all work out and the coalition is falling apart.

My hon. colleague sat in the House, but clearly he does not understand the role of the democratic system in a parliamentary democracy. The language of using “coup”, “taking power” and “seizing power” speaks perfectly to the reform rump who never believed in the parliamentary system of Canada in the first place, who believed that this place should have been used to usurp the role of Parliament, and that is what it came to do. The reform were kept in a box for two years but now the box has been opened and the ugly children of the Reform Party are running wild in the streets.

I would ask my colleague if he respects the will of the House of Parliament, will he tell his now disgraced leader to hold a vote in the House, so the House can make the decision on Monday night and then we can move on and bring forward a government that is willing to put its partisan games outside the House and—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound the opportunity to answer. He has 40 seconds.

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, when the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay mentions reform, I presume he means the Reform Party and I will make no apologies. One thing about the Reform Party, at least it believed in democracy, not like the member who belongs to a socialist, borderline communist party. I would like to hear the member for Timmins—James Bay stand up and tell the House that he is not going to be part of a separatist—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Québec.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Madam Speaker, I think we need to take the debate a little more seriously, particularly on the question of the economic statement.

We know the position the Prime Minister has put this House in. The economic statement is really a statement devoid of democracy and respect for the people who are facing an economic crisis in which jobs will be lost. It was urgent that something be done. When the throne speech was delivered, I rose to speak and gave the Prime Minister an idea of the Bloc's position on the throne speech. The Bloc believed that it was uninspiring and, most importantly, devoid of any long-term vision to help the economy of Canada and Quebec. We urgently needed a stimulus plan. We told the Prime Minister that something urgently needed to be done. Instead, we were presented with an economic statement that contained no concrete plan to help the various sectors that will be or have been affected by the economic crisis.

Instead of laying out a plan to help people get through this difficult crisis, the Prime Minister decided to launch an attack on democracy, lashing out first at unions, women and political party funding.

Madam Speaker, I forgot to say that I will be splitting my time with the member for Laval, who will speak after me.

The Prime Minister instead delivered right-wing ideology, rather than talking about the economy. Not only do we have to deal with an economic crisis, but now we also have to deal with a democratic crisis here in this Parliament. That crisis was quite simply created by the architect in chief, the Prime Minister. We were entitled to expect a detailed, concrete plan so we could know what the Prime Minister's intentions were.

The election cost \$300 million. Instead of dealing with the crisis, we wasted time and we are still wasting time. While the other governments around the world are dealing with the economic crisis, the Prime Minister is dragging his feet. He says he wants to wait, when this is the time to act and choose a direction. We need only think of China. China has injected \$700 billion to combat the crisis and stimulate the economy. Europe has injected \$318 billion. The Americans, \$850 billion. Us, what are we doing? Nothing. That is why the Bloc Québécois has made an agreement with the opposition parties. We decided to set aside partisan considerations to get concretely involved and find solutions to combat the economic crisis, unlike this government.

We are acting forcefully to support and stimulate the economy. That is the purpose of the agreement signed barely two days ago. People are aware—although not here in Canada—of the urgent need for action. The government is not taking the lead and is not demonstrating that it is dealing with the economic crisis. In fact, I wonder whether the Prime Minister believes there is an economic crisis. He has refused to prepare an emergency plan. He is stalling for time instead of buckling down to work with the other parties.

Obama has been mentioned. He is said to be very inspiring, but what did Mr. Obama do the day after he was elected? He sat down with the people who were his political adversaries. Why? Because he knows very well that he is taking over the reins of a country and he will have to make agreements with the various parties. It is much more difficult in the United States, because he has to come to agreement with the Senate. We wish him good luck. With all the opposition parties, with all of the opposition there is in the American

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administration, Mr. Obama has made sure he has a better chance of making it, and not disappointing his constituents.

In Quebec, 73% of the people voted for something other than this Conservative government. What did the Bloc do when it saw how urgent the situation was? It came up with an economic recovery plan. I encourage the voters who are listening to us tonight to go to our website at www.blocquebecois.org. They will see that the Bloc has been working on solutions and something to really help all the sectors affected by the economic downturn. The government, on the other hand, wants to slow its expenditures, in contrast to what the whole rest of the world is doing, which is to stimulate the economy and pump money into the system and into the various sectors.

• (1800)

What is this government doing? It is closing things down. It is afraid of a deficit. We may well run a deficit, but governments everywhere are prepared to run a certain controllable deficit to assist all the sectors that are in trouble.

We did not see any openness or willingness to compromise on the part of the government. We are asked why we did not negotiate with the Conservatives. It did not want to negotiate. It did not want to sit down at the negotiating table.

All the parties met with the Prime Minister and they all emerged disappointed. We, for our part, worked hard to come up with a plan. When we asked questions before the economic statement was released, the Prime Minister said we had some good ideas for countering the crisis. But when we saw the economic statement, there was nothing in it of what the Bloc wanted. How then can we believe in any good faith on the part of the Prime Minister?

He says he loves Quebec, but he wants to impose a federal securities commission contrary to the unanimous desire of the Quebec National Assembly. It is not showing much love for Quebec when he has no respect for what is being done there and wants to turn over a sector that could compete with it.

There was a way of approaching the securities issue, called the passport system, which gave the provinces that have a securities commission a certain amount of autonomy. Mr. Luc Labelle of the *Chambre de la sécurité financière* in Quebec said that in any case we will now have to refer to Toronto and not Quebec. This is another hard blow for Quebec's preferred policy direction.

In addition, the equalization ceiling is a threat to the financial stability of Quebec. According to a Toronto-Dominion Bank study, there will be an annual shortfall of \$450 million. That is an awful lot of money for Quebec, which will have to be made up.

We know how the federal government offloads its problems. We have seen the same thing with other political parties in power here. When the federal government has a deficit, it is easy to offload the problem onto Quebec and the provinces.

The manufacturing and forestry industries have been completely abandoned, and that did not start just recently. We have not been doing very much for our manufacturers ever since 2005. Many industries have closed down and there have been massive layoffs.

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What did the government do with employment insurance? There is supposed to be billions of dollars in the employment insurance fund. The government kept that money in the consolidated revenue fund. Meanwhile, workers were faced with a two-week waiting period after losing their jobs when companies closed. The government did not come up with creative solutions and did not provide adequate support for some manufacturing companies, which could have solved their problems by purchasing better equipment, being more competitive and diversifying.

Canada is currently selling less to the United States. The United States does not need to purchase as much from Canada. There are too many goods on the shelf. Meanwhile, what is the government doing to help? The economic situation is going to get worse in the next two or three years, but the government is doing absolutely nothing.

People are asking why we formed a coalition with the opposition parties. It is because we want to take action on this crisis. We do not want to engage in ideological partisanship. What did the Conservatives do? They took a purely partisan approach to the economic crisis, attacking women, unions and political party financing.

We are proud of what the Bloc Québécois has done. Once, we were asked to work together. That is what everyone else is doing. They are working together to come up with concrete proposals so that people get the help they need and the public respects the members who sit in the House of Commons.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the speech from my colleague across the way. I do not agree with the speech, but I appreciate the member taking part in the debate.

Part of the speech was about leadership. The Bloc has made an agreement with the New Democratic Party and, I would say, the leaderless Liberal Party. She talked about leadership at a time of economic instability, and here is a leader of the Liberal Party who got the worst return at the polls, worse than any other Liberal Party leader has gotten not just in this century but in the last century, the worst in the history of that party. There is no leadership.

They signed a deal with a leader who knows he is only going to be there for three months at the maximum. The leader's own party wants to throw him out. The Liberals know that he is leaving.

The member talked about instability. I want to quote what was in the newspaper:

with political instability, especially in these tough economic times, I think people are going to shy away from investing in Canada for a little bit until things get sorted out.

What they are proposing provides more instability in this country. Is that not going to affect the investment in all of Canada, including Quebec?

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, as I said in my speech, the Prime Minister is the architect in chief of this instability.

We would have loved to vote in favour of the Speech from the Throne, we would have loved to vote in favour of the economic update, but the direction that the government has chosen to take to deal with the economic crisis is that of the Conservative ideological right. It was reminiscent of the Reform and Alliance and was supported by some elected members from Quebec. We could not give our support to that.

We have also read in the press about the games being played by the Conservative members and the Prime Minister.

This Prime Minister wants to lead a majority government so that he can do as he wishes and walk all over the opposition. Since the Conservatives came to power, we have seen how they respect the work of parliamentarians.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, the question before us in the House is about the need for members of Parliament to come together here in a time of economic crisis. The Canadian public sent a very clear message that they wanted us to do this. This is what all the countries in the western world have done.

What we are seeing is the fact that three parties are actually willing to put aside partisan differences and get down to the business of addressing the serious economic uncertainty. It is countered by a party that is doing everything it can to destabilize this Parliament, a destabilization that began Thursday night when the present Prime Minister, who is pretty much a political pyromaniac at times, came forward with a document that was intended to create this instability. The *Edmonton Sun*—

Mr. Larry Miller: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I was reprimanded a little while ago for reading something that somebody had said.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member is not in his seat to speak.

I will allow the member for Timmins—James Bay to complete his question very quickly.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I will correct that and make it a simile by saying that he is like a political pyromaniac, as opposed to a metaphor that he is a political pyromaniac.

I would like to quote the *Edmonton Sun* for the hon. colleague, which said that what the government did was to deliver a mean-spirited, petty—

Mrs. Joy Smith: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I rise to object to the unparliamentary language that the member is using. Just a few short minutes ago there was another member in the House who was reprimanded for reading something.

I think what is happening right now is quite unfair, and it certainly is unparliamentary. It does not help the situation here. We are supposed to have a spirit of some sort of collaboration. I call this name calling.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): As I mentioned earlier, I have asked members to refrain from using language that could be unparliamentary. I will allow the member to complete his question.

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Mr. Charlie Angus: Madam Speaker, I was not sure if the member was opposed to what was said in the *Edmonton Sun*, that the government delivered “a mean-spirited, petty, dangerous document designed to antagonize the opposition and destabilize the country”. We are now seeing that campaign being carried out by the Reform grassroots.

I would like to ask the hon. member, why is it that members on this side of the House can put aside our partisan differences and work together to—

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I will ask the member for Québec to respond quickly, in 15 seconds.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon: Madam Speaker, if we are to work together, we must keep our cool. The parties have decided to put aside their differences to agree on a budget, on a Speech from the Throne. And then the Bloc Québécois and the NDP would be free to vote or not—

• (1815)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the member for Laval has the floor.

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have to say I am a little embarrassed and a little ashamed to be in this House this afternoon listening to everything going on and everything being said. I am talking about the Quebec bashing, the disparaging of the Bloc Québécois and francophones. Personally, I find it very difficult to witness everything said today, everything said during and after question period. I find it personally very difficult.

We have had calls from people who live in Quebec and in other provinces of Canada. They are asking what is going on and why the government is displaying this kind of obstinacy, this kind of contempt for francophones in Quebec and Canada. Maybe the government is not aware of what is going on right now, but I can assure it that this may leave deep wounds that will take a long time to heal. People will remember this.

This so-called economic statement is really an ideological statement. It shows us how little respect this government has for the members of this House, and for the people of Canada, whether or not they voted for it. The entire voting population of Canada, in the last election, voted for a government to be serious and pay real attention to the economic and financial crisis we are experiencing.

It there is any doubt remaining in the minds of our Conservative colleagues, I can assure them that Stephen Jarislowsky, at least, a well-known billionaire financier and investor, said today at the Montreal Board of Trade that he supported a coalition government and that this was probably the most important and most useful thing at present in Canadian politics. At this point, a government has to make major investments, and he criticized the Prime Minister for not doing that in a crisis as serious as this. When a man as well versed in finance as Mr. Jarislowsky tells us something, I think we should listen, whether we are sovereignists or not.

When we chose to form an alliance with the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party to create a coalition government, we did it in good faith, as we have acted in good faith for the 15 years that the Bloc Québécois has been in this Parliament. The Bloc Québécois, a

sovereignist party, as always shown scrupulous respect for the protocol, rituals and members of this House. The Bloc Québécois has always taken its role seriously and fulfilled it responsibly.

Today, we see members trying to lay their own strategic mistakes at the doorstep of the Bloc Québécois because they are incapable of getting traction for the right-wing ideas we do not want, and nobody in this country wants, either in Quebec or in Canada. They are arguing from weakness and condemning the parties that have done their job properly.

In the past, we have made a number of proposals to the Conservative Party to ensure that the people we represent could get the help they need and would be able to say that their government was genuinely concerned for their welfare. Now, the only thing they can say is that the government is extending its hand and going right for their pocket. It has forgotten about the welfare of the people. When they tell seniors that 25% of their retirement income will not have to be withdrawn this year, that is not very much. This will be a very hard year for seniors who have to live on their retirement income and have to withdraw money from their RRIF. We would have hoped that the government could have shown some compassion and raised the age when they would have to withdraw money from 71 to 73.

• (1820)

We hoped that it would understand that people who have lost their jobs over the past few weeks and those who will be losing their jobs in the coming weeks need immediate access to employment insurance benefits to support their families.

We hoped that the government, despite its incomprehensible right-wing ideology, would understand that women have the right to pay equity, not equal pay for equal work, but equal pay for work of equal value. Women in Quebec have had pay equity for 10 years now, and they do not have to worry about taking pay equity cases to court. It is a de facto right, it is non-negotiable, it belongs to us and we are entitled to it. Pay equity is one of our rights.

We also hoped that the government would understand that families that have to work, single-income families that need two incomes, need more than \$100 per month to take care of their children. The government failed to understand that. According to its ideology, a woman's place is in the home. We have seen it do things for the sole purpose of sending women back home. Every woman in this country, like every woman in Quebec, has the right to a job, the right to work, and the right to earn an income that belongs to her, not a virtual income. Under the government's proposed new programs, a woman who stays at home could virtually receive a portion of her husband's income.

As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois has always stood by its commitments to the people it represents. As I said earlier to the Conservative member, we want to build one country, but that does not mean that we want to destroy another.

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Many of my family members live in the western provinces, many of them live in eastern Canada and many of them live in Quebec. Never would anyone in my family think that I bore them any ill will. Never would anyone in my family think that I want to destroy this, the most beautiful country in the world. That is not what we want, but like all people and all nations, we have the right to self-determination.

In closing, I truly hope that we will one day have a government that understands that the members in this House have a duty. They have a duty towards the people who elected them and not towards the government, which claims to have all the answers and to know better than anyone what Canadians want or what Quebecers want. We must listen to our constituents more closely and we must—I hope the Prime Minister will take this into account in his address tonight—work together and do everything in our power to get through this economic crisis together, growing stronger, in order to really help our citizens pull through this crisis.

[*English*]

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I respect the fact that my colleague is an elected individual and a representative of her riding.

First, the member talked about the economy. Does she agree that the Conservative government has stimulated our economy by 2% as of January, which has been recognized by major economists in the country? Everybody is embracing what that the United States has done. The president-elect is planning on a stimulus of a little over 1%. Nothing has been done to stimulate the economy there.

Second, you talk about our great beautiful country and this great building we are in, yet your sole objective is to separate and break away from Canada. Could you please clarify that?

Third, could you tell me why—

• (1825)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. I would ask the hon. member to direct his questions to the Chair.

The hon. member for Laval.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Speaker, I would remind my honourable Conservative colleague that Mr. Jarisklowsky has painted a depressing picture of the current economic situation. He does not say that the Conservative government has helped the country to recover. He even urges the parties to reach an understanding and establish a crisis government as they would in wartime. This is no trifling matter: he urges the parties to reach an understanding and establish a crisis government, as they would in wartime. This is reality, this is not fiction. This is an economist speaking, a financier highly regarded by his peers, and he knows what he is talking about.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question through you of my colleague from the Bloc Québécois .

I too am part of Quebec. They are not the only ones living there. What did the Liberals do for 25 years? They invoked the War Measures Act, they patriated the Constitution, they engaged in

armed operations in which they stole Parti québécois lists. What is more, they arbitrarily arrested 485 people.

What will my colleague have to say to those who were arbitrarily arrested? What will she tell them today about this association?

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Speaker, I am constantly in contact with people in my riding, with associations and women's groups, and all without exception have congratulated us on what we have done and on our desire to work together in a coalition government.

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, almost everyone in Canada recognizes that the government's economic update was bad. Consequently, it was likely that the opposition parties would vote against it. Fine.

We would have voted against it last Monday night. What situation would we have put the Governor General in if there had been no other choice?

If we had not participated in this choice, the only other option would have been an election. Does taking part in this choice mean that we want to destroy the country or, instead, does it mean that we are overcoming our ideological differences in Canada's best economic interest?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Laval has 40 seconds to respond.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we can put this argument to rest. My hon. colleague for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin has said it well.

This coalition is unprecedented in this chamber. The various parties are putting partisanship aside and joining forces to act on this economic crisis, at last, so that our constituents do not have to take action and so that they can be sure of having a normal Christmas.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

CULTURE

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Madam speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment. This is the first time that I see you occupying the chair.

I am here for the debate on adjournment proceedings because, having asked the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages a question in this House, I have not received a satisfactory answer.

An hon. member: You will not get one.

Ms. Carole Lavallée: A colleague says that I will not get a satisfactory answer this evening. I will nevertheless try to obtain one. I believe in the work I do and if those opposite are cynics, they will have to live with that reputation.

I explained in my question on November 20 that there was an outcry when it was announced that \$45 million would be cut from arts and cultural programming. The former Minister of Canadian Heritage said at the time, in an awkward attempt to restore calm, that there would be a review and new programs. When the new Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages arrived, he said that it was a done deal, final, that he had decided. He said that studies had been conducted but we have not seen them. I will speak of this later. The Minister of Heritage, alone in his office, comfortably ensconced in his chair with his iPod earphones on, decided that he would not revisit the decision.

I asked him to explain to us why he kept on depriving the arts and culture sector of resources even though that sector is dynamic and essential to the economy. The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages responded that during his Conservative government's first mandate, arts and culture spending had increased by 8%. He is mistaken. That was not spending on arts and culture. That was the budget for his whole department, which has a number of responsibilities. The Minister of Canadian Heritage is responsible for arts and culture, which is a big field. He is also responsible for sport, amateur sport, the Olympic Games, francophone communities, la Francophonie, and national parks. He said that he increased spending by 8%, and that is true, but what did he spend that 8% on? He spent it on the Olympic torch relay. He said so himself:

We gave that money to the torch relay so that francophone communities outside Quebec could be involved in the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages gave the artists' money to the Olympic Games, to the torch relay. He said so himself. The minister does not understand the difference between entertainment and the arts. That is the problem. The minister does not like artists. He does not understand that, while the arts can be entertaining, they are not just for entertainment purposes. This government does not understand a thing. It gave artists' money to the torch relay; it robbed Peter to pay Paul. The government's attacks on culture and artists are undermining the very foundations of the Quebec nation. What is more, arts and culture have a significant economic impact. In Quebec, the sector accounts for 314,000 jobs. In Canada, it represents some \$85 billion, which is 7.4% of our GDP.

The minister also said:

We, a national party, are the ones who understand Quebec, who understand Canada, and who understand francophones—

In my opinion, the minister misled the House. In Quebec, 78% of Quebecers voted against this government. Moreover, the ideological—not economic—statement that his Prime Minister delivered in this House did not demonstrate any understanding of Quebecers, artists or francophones.

• (1830)

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your appointment.

I would like to set the record straight regarding our government's support of arts and culture in Canada. As we have said many times in this House, and as the opposition member knows very well, our government supports arts and culture. We have increased spending in this area by 8% since January 2006. I would like to illustrate this by

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highlighting a number of accomplishments that have allowed us to reach an unprecedented level of funding to support our artists.

I would also like to take this opportunity to talk about the challenges facing the global cultural industry today.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Our government is all about managing hard-earned tax dollars in a responsible way and being accountable to Canadians. We are making the same choices that Canadians are making every day regarding the spending of their money.

I am proud of the way our government manages tax dollars. There are no exceptions to finding value for money. We did and we will continue to make sure Canadians get good value for their money. This is about responsible spending and it is about investing in the future. We are giving Canadians the tools they need to innovate, create, and compete at home and abroad. As stated in our government's last Speech from the Throne, we need to skate where the puck is going to be, not where it has been.

[*Translation*]

As we look towards the future, our government also recognizes that culture, creativity and innovation are all essential to the economic vitality of our country. That is why our government is investing in arts and culture as no other government has done in the history of Canada.

[*English*]

We have made significant investments across the Canadian heritage portfolio, which now total over \$3 billion annually. This support is essential to the development of our economy, our communities, our culture and our identity. Our government allocated \$30 million a year to support local artists and heritage activities. We are investing in festivals and events that celebrate and propel the cultural vibrancy of communities in every province across this country.

We are committed to managing tax dollars in a manner that ensures every dollar spent delivers results for Canadians. That is why we have increased funding to the Canada Council for the Arts by 17%. That is \$181 million this year alone for artists working for artists.

We also know that our cultural landscape is changing. Major technological, economic, social and international changes are transforming the ways in which Canadians engage in their culture. Canadians are not only consumers. They are also creators of our culture and identity, and they are accessing and sharing our culture online. As a government we need to make sure we are fostering innovation and providing support that allows Canadians to flourish, at home and abroad, in this changing environment. We led the world in bringing into force the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, a convention which now has been ratified by 93 member states. Our government is also committed to ensuring that we are effective in the way we serve communities and organizations.

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We are making it easier for communities and businesses to access government programs and services. We eliminated the capital gains tax on donations of publicly listed securities to charities and private foundations, which has been an important measure that supports cultural organizations. Canada's culture and heritage policies and programs are seizing new and exciting opportunities to meet—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Carole Lavallée: Madam Speaker, it hurts me to listen to the Conservative member reciting the party mantra. There is nothing new in what she said. It is still a mistake to think that increasing the budget of the Department of Canadian Heritage will increase funding for artists. In fact, this government cut the PromArt program, which provided essential funding for international tours. CINARS, for example, which is made up of 300 performing arts organizations across Canada, is complaining about these cuts. The \$2 million they received in tour funding allowed them to mount thousands of international tours. As a result of the cuts, 600 tours will be cancelled and some cultural agencies and industries will no doubt be forced to close.

When this government talks about restraining spending, we can see the Reform Party thinking behind it. When it talks about maximum benefit for taxpayers, that means cuts for artists. We can read between the lines.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Madam Speaker, our government is investing in the future of our country, in a future that will give

Canadians more choice, enhance our economic prosperity, strengthen our identity and improve our quality of life.

Here are some examples of our support for culture. Our investment in the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics will provide an outstanding showcase for our artistic community by giving millions of spectators around the world the chance to appreciate our talented artists.

[*English*]

As the world is invited to share in Canada's cultural riches, so too will every community in every corner in this country. As the torch relays pass through scores of Canadian communities, our government is supporting Canadians to deliver cultural and community celebrations so that every Canadian can experience the breadth of what this country has to offer culturally.

Again, I look to the visionary words of the Speech from the Throne: "Building a more dynamic economy will require new ideas and new investment". That is what we are doing".

● (1840)

[*Translation*]

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

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)

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