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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

• (1000)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The Speaker: I have been informed that a clerical error has occurred during the drafting of Bill C-301, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (registration of firearms).

Accordingly I have instructed that the bill be reprinted and that an updated version be posted on the parliamentary website.

[*Translation*]

For the information of all members, I am tabling a copy of the letter addressed to the Speaker from the Law Clerk in which the necessary changes are described.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-333, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mass transit operators).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this bill which aims to amend the Criminal Code so that those convicted of assaulting the operators of buses, street cars, rail and light rail vehicles and ferries would receive the same penalties as currently apply in the cases of assaults of pilots and peace officers.

We know that millions of Canadians depend upon the skill and protection of transit drivers each day and we value their service to our communities, yet as the law stands, these workers regularly endure threats and attacks.

Since 9/11 we have become increasingly aware of the targeting of mass transit vehicles and the vulnerability of their operators. This bill is in the spirit of trying to protect our public service workers who transport people in various ways and we want to ensure their safety.

Although this bill was written and introduced in the last session, prior to the tragic death of Tim McLean, who was beheaded on a bus

coming from Edmonton to Winnipeg, and although we do not know whether this bill in fact would have any bearing on that case, we are reminded, each and every one of us, about the importance of safety on our public transit systems.

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

* * *

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Madam Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I believe you will find consent for the following motion regarding the report stage of Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill.

I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, at the conclusion of debate at report stage of Bill C-10, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009, and related fiscal measures, all questions necessary to dispose of report stage of this bill be deemed put, and recorded divisions be deemed requested and deferred to 3 p.m. on Tuesday, March 3, 2009, provided that the bill may be taken up at third reading in the same sitting.

• (1005)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Does the hon. minister have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from the people of the Northwest Territories calling on the Conservative government to stop its plan to eliminate the environmental protections and the protections of the rights of navigation under the Navigable Waters Protection Act found in Bill C-10.

Government Orders

My constituents go on to indicate their displeasure with this provision being attached to the budget implementation bill and the elimination of the opportunities for extensive examination of this important right of Canadians and committees. This petition contains 63 signatures of people from across the Northwest Territories.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the clerk of petitions, I would like to present two petitions to the House today.

The first petition comes from constituents in my riding who are concerned about religious persecution. They would like to draw to the attention of the House that religious persecution is affecting many religious groups in countless countries around the world and that the persecution of persons and groups on the basis of religious beliefs violates individuals' rights of freedom of religion.

In August 2008 in Kandhamal District, State of Orissa, India, 179 Christian churches were destroyed and thousands of Christians in the area were displaced in the aftermath of the religiously motivated violence.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament assembled to condemn the persecution of religious minorities around the world, and in particular Christians in Kandhamal District in the State of Orissa, India.

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is another income trust broken promise petition.

The petitioners remember the Prime Minister boasting about his commitment to accountability when he said that the greatest fraud is a promise not kept. The petitioners remind the Prime Minister that he promised never to tax income trusts, but he broke that promise and he imposed a 31.5% punitive tax on hard-earned retirement savings of over two million Canadians, particularly seniors.

The petitioners therefore call upon the government to first, admit that the decision to tax income trusts was based on flawed methodology and incorrect assumptions; second, apologize to those who were unfairly harmed by this broken promise; and finally, repeal the punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed from March 2 consideration of Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 2.

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to join this debate on the budget implementation bill today. I have to say right at the beginning that I find it distressing that we are standing here and having to deal with a budget bill that is going to spend a huge amount of money and put us back into a huge deficit position. I am sure that all of us as parliamentarians are not happy about what has happened to the economy. We are hoping that we can work together and overcome some of the issues where we have differing opinions, and that we will do what is necessary for Canada and what all Canadians expect of us in difficult times.

Looking back a brief couple of years ago when the Conservative government was elected, its members were fortunate enough to come in during good, strong economic times and find themselves with a \$12 billion surplus. Now we are talking about going into a \$34 billion to \$50 billion deficit. How fast the times have changed. It is too bad that money was not put aside in the rainy day fund in order to help Canadians during this very severe downturn we are having to deal with today.

Had the Conservatives not spent the cupboard bare, we would have had more resources and not have to be dealing with going into such a massive deficit, not even knowing whether or not that is really going to help us through these difficult times. But as responsible parliamentarians on this side of the House, we are going to do what we need to do and what Canadians expect us to do, and that is work together with the government to try to make sure we have accountability and that the investments are being done where they are needed.

Quite clearly we are not afraid to stand and put a motion of confidence in when it is necessary if we do not see the kinds of investments going where we believe would better serve Canadians. When looking at all of the decisions we had to make as the official opposition in this last bit of time, a very wise man I know in the House said quite recently "Canadians need another election like a hole in the head". That clearly reflected on behalf of the official opposition where we were coming from, that we were putting the interests of Canadians first. We know we are going along with a budget that gives us huge concerns in various areas such as navigable waters and the changes being made to that act, as well as other ones. But on behalf of Canadians and in their best interests, we are going along with that. The wise man that I referred to, of course, was the leader of our party who made that comment about the election. It is a tribute to his level common sense approach that he brings to the challenges facing all of us in government.

Government Orders

We said earlier we would put the government on probation and will not be afraid to call the government to task if we do not believe that the investments are going in the right direction, that they are not meeting the needs of our country and meeting the needs of Canadians. Putting the Conservatives on probation and having a reporting process was a very smart, intelligent way of working with the government, working on behalf of Canadians and making sure that we were following through, and that the money would be getting where it needs to be spent and not just being scattered all over the place like the previous \$12 billion surplus that really did not create any significant job creation or investment that we could actually point back to that really made a difference in the lives of Canadians.

We will be supporting the budget with reluctance as we have heard from many in the House on the condition that Canadians will clearly get the accountability and the help from the government that they expect and that they deserve to have. We are bringing the government to account by amending the budget bill. If the Conservatives are unwilling to provide this accountability, or if they fail to satisfy the expectations of Canadians, we will act and we are going to do whatever is necessary on behalf of the citizens of this country. That is our responsibility.

Canadians are going to get regular reports to Parliament on the budget's implementation and its cost, one in March, which we look forward to coming in soon, one in June, and another one in December. We will examine those reports. They will be the subject of much discussion and review, and we will go forward very carefully. Each of them will provide us an opportunity to withdraw our confidence should the government fail Canadians at this important time in our country.

There are some positive investments proposed in the budget. Some of the measures the Conservatives are putting forward, as a result of work with the Liberals and pressure from us, deal with investment in social housing and infrastructure, something we have been calling for, for many years.

• (1010)

When we were in government, we had a minister of housing. We had committed significant dollars toward affordable housing throughout Canada as well as investments in infrastructure. We all know that investing in infrastructure is a huge bonus for our country. We have an aging infrastructure and the needs are many. Investment in infrastructure, providing that it really gets done, provides an amazing amount of jobs and spinoffs.

The concern we had with the so-called building Canada fund is that very little of that money actually hit the streets of our cities. Instead, it was tied up in cumbersome red tape. It is up to the government to cut through that. The minister has said he is going to do all of that, but sometimes talk is just hot air and there is lots of it. The money needs to hit the street. We need to see the equipment out there and the necessary building going on.

There is targeted support for low and middle income Canadians through an expansion of the child tax benefit and the working income tax benefit. Again, we have to face the struggles of the unemployed and people with low incomes who cannot make ends meet. The government has a responsibility to be there when those people need a helping hand.

With respect to colleges and universities across Canada, young people are the future of our country. We need to invest more and provide the opportunities for education for our young people. This is critical if Canada is going to compete in the future. Those areas are in the budget because the Liberal opposition pushed for them. We intend to continue to monitor that money to ensure that it is getting to the places where it is needed.

There are some aspects of this budget that we are still concerned with. We will be watching very carefully and we will be holding the government to account. One aspect we are concerned with is the reference to the modernizing of pay equity for women. The Conservatives call it modernizing, but it clearly looks as though it is two steps backward.

Another aspect that concerns us is the heavy-handed and divisive approach to federal-provincial relations. This is a broken promise to all of the provinces on equalization. This is not the time to be getting into fights with the provinces, as they are all dealing with their own challenges in these difficult times.

What kind of strings are going to be tied to the infrastructure funding? What strings are going to be attached to the funding for the auto industry? It is important that the official opposition and all parliamentarians know, because we have a responsibility to do the right thing to make sure that the conditions that are put on all of these things are fair, adequate and will protect our investment as well as achieve the goal, which is to keep some companies operating. The auto industry is critical for Canada and there are spinoff jobs. I am anxious to see that they get the assistance they need.

The public service collective agreements have been undermined. Those are not the kinds of things that should be in a budget implementation bill. That gives us a lot of reason for concern, because they were negotiated agreements and it would have been far better not to have them in the budget implementation bill. They should have been discussed and negotiated rather than put in a government bill.

There is a missed opportunity to target significant stimulus toward the green sustainable economy. There are very few comments in the budget when it comes to the green economy. Changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and the weakening of the environmental requirements are things that we have to watch very carefully. There are not enough improvements to the employment insurance program. There is no help for Ontario. I had hoped that the government would balance the employment insurance benefits all across Canada. Ontario is a have not province now and those changes need to be met sooner than later.

The Conservatives also failed to extend EI eligibility, which is critical during these tough economic times. There is no credible plan to get us out of an \$85 billion deficit.

These are things that we on this side of the House are very concerned with. I would have liked to see more help for our veterans and seniors, who are also dealing with difficult times.

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●(1015)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are many things the member stated as the priorities of her party and there are some that I would agree with. If there are things in this budget that can be changed, they should be changed. We are here today to amend what is an ill-conceived budget in many ways.

She indicated that there were many things on the fiscal update that were wrong, including the problems with the public service collective agreements and the pay equity issue. At the time, people were not supportive. We are not supportive. We want those facets taken out of the budget bill. They have no place in the budget implementation bill in terms of stimulus and helping Canadians.

I want to know why her party is not supporting us in removing the retrograde parts of this bill, such as pay equity, the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the collective agreements.

●(1020)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, we have issues and the NDP has issues. We are the official opposition and I believe we are acting responsibly.

The government has clearly indicated that any amendments to the bill will trigger an election. Is it a threat? Sure, but we are not prepared to go down that road right at the moment. We are going to try to work with the government. We are going to hold the Conservatives to account.

Report cards will be coming up in March, June and in the fall. If the government is not meeting the needs of Canadians and is putting us into a negative position, we are not going to run away from it. We will stand here and we will vote non-confidence in the government. We will do it with the full intent of knowing what we are doing.

However, we have a responsibility to try to make Parliament work. Canadians expect that of us. I would suggest that if the NDP members were really looking at what their role is, they would be joining with us in trying to make Parliament work rather than being obstructionist at a time when they know Canadians expect us to do better for them.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member mentioned items in the budget that have no business being there, such as pay equity, the Competition Act and the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I want to ask her about infrastructure. She has worked hard on the city and urban agenda. Over the last two years some \$2 billion of approved infrastructure funding never got delivered. It was approved, appropriated, promised, but never spent.

We are into the last month of the current fiscal year. The budget deals with the year starting on April 1, but we still have a month to go and we have money that is approved which is going to lapse.

It seems to me that even with regard to the budgeted infrastructure money, and I think 40% of the stimulus package is for infrastructure, that we just do not say it should be done and then put the shovel in the ground. There is a lot of pre-work. There are the considerations, the approvals, all of the administration and set-up.

I fear that the only reason work is not happening with the existing approved funds in the current fiscal year is that the government is trying to window dress the results of the current fiscal year to make it look a little bit better than it actually is. It appears to me that the government is putting partisan interests ahead of the people's interest.

Hon. Judy Sgro: Madam Speaker, certainly we have seen that in the past, with the so-called building Canada fund which involved the gas tax of \$33 billion, and 4% of that has actually been applied.

I have grave concerns about two things. One is that there are lots of announcements and lots of hot air but nothing actually gets done. That is partly why we have brought in the accountability measures. We are going to monitor that and see whether things are being done right.

Also, there is money that could have gone out to the cities to address the aging infrastructure. There are sewers and water mains breaking in all of our major cities in Canada. We have seen that throughout this really tough cold winter. Those are items that are on the books right now for our cities to do. They just need the assistance from us.

I thank the hon. member for that question because it makes me think about matching funds. Whether we are talking about my city of Toronto or we are talking about smaller cities, they do not have the funds to match. As much as I understand how the government does things in requiring a 50% commitment from my city or some of the smaller rural areas, it is going to be very difficult for them to match.

I think it is just pretending that there is money there—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I rise today to raise concerns about a budget bill which is not really a budget bill but contains poison pills. It contains poison pills that the Liberals seem all too willing to swallow for months and months to come, poison pills regarding women's rights, workers' rights, and the one on which I especially want to comment today, environmental rights, because the environment should have rights.

I rise today to raise my concerns regarding the review of the Navigable Waters Protection Act. This is an act with good goals but it is a bad act and it especially should not be in the budget bill. It should be a stand-alone bill that we can debate without fear of bringing down the House and precipitating an election.

Government Orders

I have been getting a lot of correspondence from my constituents and many groups in Thunder Bay and the rest of northwestern Ontario, such as the Mattawa First Nation and other first nations, Environment North, which is northwestern Ontario's largest and oldest environmental group, many paddling groups, including the Lakehead Canoe Club, and EcoSuperior, which is a non-profit group seeking to protect the environment of northern Ontario. Those concerns are around the proposed changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act. I know that nationally there are many dozens of other organizations that have concerns about this act. They are all up in arms over these changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

In February 2008 the government requested that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities undertake consultations to develop a new Navigable Waters Protection Act. That act was written in 1882. It is one of the oldest pieces of legislation in Canada. It certainly is time to rewrite it, but the way we are going about it and the suggested changes are not acceptable.

Last year the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities wanted to eliminate a lot of the red tape around municipalities, in particular building infrastructure in and around waterways. At the same time, it wanted to modernize this 127-year-old act. Those were laudable goals. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have done it the wrong way and the result of a rewritten Navigable Waters Protection Act is fewer navigation rights, less environmental protection, less accountability and less transparency.

During the committee hearings, numerous government departments, both federal and provincial, testified and brought forth their issues and proposals for modernizing the act. Unfortunately, the committee restricted the number of witnesses from environmental groups, first nations and citizen organizations. The NDP opposed this limitation and regarded this as a violation of both the concept of consultation and the proper functioning of parliamentary committee reviews.

As a result, the committee then attempted to offer a comprehensive proposal for modernizing the entire act, which was the original government request, and instead of doing that, chose to recommend a series of amendments to the act which are problematic at best and completely unexamined at worst. The NDP voted against these proposed amendments.

The committee, through a majority vote of the other parties, would not allow a supplementary or dissenting opinion to be included in the report. This action is rather unusual since it is a traditional practice to include supplementary opinions and recommendations when there is not yet a unanimous vote in favour of the committee reports and studies. This is yet another example of the increasing dysfunction of that committee acting beyond traditional procedures and practices of parliamentary democracy.

While this is the first phase of the process for changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, this method sets a troubling precedent. The committee now awaits the government's legislative amendments which are anticipated and now available. At that time the NDP had intended to ensure that all interests, including environmental, first nations, recreational and citizen organizations,

were to be allowed to make both written submissions and oral testimony in regard to all changes, but that has not occurred.

•(1025)

The Navigable Waters Protection Act does need to be modernized. The process must be comprehensive and transparent, and truly consultative. We need to do it, but now is not the time, and this budget is not the place.

A rewritten Navigable Waters Protection Act would create a class system for Canadian streams, granting the minister absolute authority to deem certain waterways worthy and others unworthy of environmental protection, and designate some as minor waterways. There is no such thing as a minor waterway.

Work on newly defined minor waterways is to be exempted from environmental review processes. This would likely mean that most environmental review requirements for projects on Canadian waterways would be eliminated. Reviews for even major bridges, dams, causeways, and barrages will be left up to the discretion of the minister.

By taking out today's automatic triggers for environmental assessment, these changes mean that politics and money will govern our streams and rivers, not the environment, and not society's long-term needs.

Where is the transparency and accountability in all of this? Eliminating public notification and consultation on these projects on the minister's whim will pose problems for the historic public right of navigation on our waterways, which has been in place since the founding of our country.

I can guarantee that this issue will not go away even if the changes in part 7 are not decoupled from the government's omnibus budget legislation. The government is trying to inappropriately slip environmental changes in with a fast-tracked budget omnibus bill. More than just transport, this issue impacts the protection of our waterways and the access to those waterways by everyday recreational Canadians and other Canadians. What we need is a separate debate in the House and in the appropriate committees.

We agree that the Navigable Waters Protection Act must be modernized, but this must not come at the expense of the public's right of navigation or environmental protection.

We propose that these proposed changes be decoupled from the budget implementation legislation.

Government Orders

•(1030)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, I know that my colleague has personal experience in his professional life with the issue that he is speaking about. I want to thank him for the comprehensive remarks he made and the very real and important points he put forward on behalf of all those who care about the conservation and stewardship of our water systems.

Would my colleague tell me a little bit about the background that led him to hold these views, some of the personal experiences that he may have had working with the conservation groups in the region that he represents, and expand somewhat on the state of the stewardship of our waterways as it stands today, as that compares to what has been put forward in this bill that he spoke about today?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Madam Speaker, I am a biologist, and in a former life I used to write environmental impact assessments and review them.

Over many years of doing that work I have discovered that rarely do environmental assessments stop projects, rather they improve them. Environmental assessment is one more tool, a useful, necessary, and in this case, essential tool to help us to do better planning, better building, better construction, and to assess the likely impacts upon the environment—in this case, upon our streams—by proposed projects.

Environmental assessment is just one more kind of good planning. I am sure everyone in this House supports good planning. We should not be reducing environmental assessments in these days; we should be ensuring, particularly in our waterways, that environmental assessments occur.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on this group of amendments to Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill. I believe it would be appropriate at this point to actually recap where we are, so Canadians understand just how significant this debate is and how we are at a defining moment in the life of our country.

We remember that the budget for 2009 was intended to address the economic crisis. It was supposed to be a stimulus package. It was supposed to kickstart the economy. It was supposed to create new jobs, protect current jobs, and protect the most vulnerable. At least those were the parameters or the principles going into this debate on the part of many parliamentarians, and certainly articulated by the Liberals. They specifically mentioned protecting jobs, creating new jobs, and protecting the most vulnerable as their mark, as their defining description of how they would judge the budget implementation bill.

The bill does not achieve those objectives. It does not protect jobs, it does not create new jobs, and it does not protect the most vulnerable. Despite that, the Liberals gave their blessing to the bill and to the Conservative agenda.

The other side to this whole budget debate is that not only does it miss the mark in terms of a true economic stimulus for the economy, it is also, as my colleague from Thunder Bay just pointed out, filled with poison pills. It is filled with a whole set of favoured projects of the Conservatives, part of their neo-Conservative agenda to try to use every avenue, every opportunity to destroy, to eliminate, to hijack

those developments, those innovations and those important projects that were developed over many years reflecting the values of Canadians.

Despite the fact that it is neither a true stimulus budget and despite the fact that it is filled with poison pills that kill important initiatives in this country, critically important issues such as pay equity, such as environmental assessments pertaining to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the list goes on, despite all of that, the Liberals will hold their noses and vote with the Conservatives, despite the permanent damage that this will have on our economy, on our environment, and on our record around human rights.

That is truly mind-boggling. How did the Liberals let themselves get hoodwinked by these Conservatives? How is it possible that they still stand here to this day being inundated with information from organizations, groups and individuals right across this country about the devastating impact of this budget, and they can still stand in the House and tell us they want to avoid an election, and therefore, in the interests of political expediency, they will support the Conservatives, no matter the damage done, no matter the hardship created, and no matter the principles involved?

That is what is so frustrating and so disappointing in this chamber, because as Canadians look at Parliament they will ask, what does it mean, why are we here, and what do we stand for if, in the blink of an eye, politicians can abandon their principles for the sake of a partisan political agenda?

How is it possible that we are dealing here right now with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which, as my colleague said, has been around since Confederation, an act that allows for accountability when major projects are embarked upon, whether we are talking about dams, bridges, the widening of navigable waters, or dredging of waters, whatever the term may be? Whatever the issue involved, this was an act that allowed for some accountability to the people of Canada, that required environmental assessments, that had some protections in place to ensure that something as precious as our navigable waters were not tampered with and not in any way that would affect the lifestyle or the working requirements of people right across this country.

•(1035)

In one fell swoop, without a blink from the Liberals, we are going to eliminate something so historic as these protections under the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Judy, you have forgotten that the government is over there.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, the Liberals are again yapping from their seats, suggesting something about the Conservatives. We know the problem is the Conservatives bringing forward extremely right-wing neo-conservative agenda items.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: We get along with them; you guys don't.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: We know that.

•(1040)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask the hon. member for Eglinton—Lawrence to wait until he has the floor. He will have the opportunity in a few minutes.

Government Orders

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for reminding me, too, of that Liberal who is yapping from his seat, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, who seems to be on the defensive as a result of my statements around Liberals propping up Conservatives. How many votes are we up to now, 55 votes in the last couple of years, propping up Conservatives? Still, every day, the Liberals stand in this House, saying, “We don’t like it. It’s not good for this country. It’s against our principles. But we’re going to go with the Conservatives anyway.”

When do we draw the line? When do we say enough is enough?

How is it that we are dealing with something as important as environmental assessments right now, as we speak? That is what these amendments are about: amendments being made to the Navigable Waters Protection Act to supposedly “streamline the approval process”. What does it do? It gives more authority to the minister; it takes away authority from members of Parliament and from Canadians; it allows for construction without further environmental assessments; it will exclude certain classes of work and works on certain classes of navigable waters from the approval process.

That means we are giving carte blanche to the Conservatives, these great defenders of our environment, to, on their own, without any consultation with us, with Canadians, with the environmental community, make decisions about our navigable waters.

Do Liberals trust that? Do Liberals here believe they are putting the best interests of this country first? I would remind members, the future of our planet is at stake. Do the Liberals believe, in fact, that they can trust the Conservatives to do what is best? I see some nods. Well, that might explain it, then. So they talk out of both sides of their mouth at once. One minute, they stand in this House in question period and condemn the government for everything that is in the budget, from the Navigable Waters Protection Act to pay equity, to the way students are being treated, to just name it; and then, the next minute, they are nodding their heads with the Conservatives and going along with them.

I think Canadians have had it with that type of two-faced, double-standard politics. They are sickened by the way people give up their principles so easily, the way they cave in to pressure. They could not bear the heat. They could not figure out a way to work with the opposition parties to create a reasonable budget, a progressive budget that not only was a true economic stimulus package but that also had none of these extreme right-wing poison pills throughout the budget.

Mr. James Lunney: Judy, you’ve become extreme.

Hon. Jim Abbott: The sky is going to fall.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, the Conservatives are suggesting that I protest too much. They are suggesting that the sky will not fall. They are suggesting that everything is good with the budget.

I have to tell members something that Canadians know full well: There are some very critical elements in the budget around which the sky is falling. In fact, the bill actually brings down the sky on a number of key issues.

It kills pay equity. Is that not the sky falling? Of course it is. It is not tongue-in-cheek. It is not to be toyed with. It is true. It is a fact. We know the Conservatives’ agenda on pay equity. They are killing pay equity. It is gone with this legislation. We have one moment, today and the next day only, to stop it.

They are also killing any kind of checks when it comes to navigable waters and environmental assessments. That is a fact.

And the list goes on.

I suggest that we stand today in this House, with my colleagues from the Liberals joining us, opposing the bill by supporting these amendments that put back what is essential when it comes to navigable waters and ensuring that we are doing our jobs as members of Parliament to protect the environment and to save the planet for future generations.

Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Madam Speaker, I think my friend doth protest way too much. With respect to the issue of navigable waters, apparently she does not understand that there is an environmental assessment done anytime a public work will touch a body of water. The province is responsible for the foreshore of a river and a lake, the bed of a lake, the bed of a river and the water in the river. The only thing the federal government has anything to do with on the navigable water is what people do on the surface of the water.

What we want to do is to get the money out. We want to create economic activity in Canada. Having the additional environmental review about what people do on the surface of the water is redundant, considering the environmental review that will already have been done by the province.

She does protest way too much. In fact, by making this amendment, it creates the ability of being able to efficiently assess environmental concerns and, with satisfaction, moving forward.

She really does protest way too much.

● (1045)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Madam Speaker, do I protest too much when we reference the fact that the government, despite all of its emphasis on dealing with crime, turns around and cuts RCMP salaries? Is that protesting too much?

Is it protesting too much when I say that the budget totally ignores child care and does nothing to ensure that working people and families are able to do the best they can in these tough economic times and know that their children are cared for?

Is it protesting too much when we reference some of the groups that work with those who are impoverished and homeless each and every day and say that the budget does nothing to help the most vulnerable in our society?

Do I protest too much when I refer to all the organizations and individuals, those knowing that pay equity is dead under the Conservatives unless we can convince the Liberals to change their minds?

Government Orders

Do we protest too much when the former director of pay equity for the Canadian Human Rights Commission stands up for us, as he did yesterday, and says that this is contrary to the charter and human rights?

Do we protest too much when we say, with respect to navigable waters, that we are dealing with federal jurisdiction? We are dealing with the fact that the Conservatives are taking away checks and balances on something as vital as the environment and the future of this planet.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was almost swept away by the member's protestations of protestations. Yes, she does protest too much.

The fact that we have the government opposite is in large measure thanks to steps that she personally took two elections ago, and that her party has taken ever since then.

However, since she would profess to have the greater interest of the future of Canada in mind, does she have a plan in place that the government has already put to one side, or does she have a better plan in which she would like to engage the official opposition in order for us to support a viable plan?

We are determined to be co-operative and, as members heard me say, when we were prepared to work with the members of the NDP, the government objected. Now that we are moving ahead with others, they are objecting.

Which one does she want?

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis: Madam Speaker, what the member for Eglinton—Lawrence said has just reinforced what we all know, and that is the Liberals never seem to accept the will of the people. They did not accept their defeat two elections ago. They do not accept the fact that Canadians want them to stand up for their principles today, and it is about time they did.

If the member truly believes what he is saying, if he truly believes in representing his constituents, he would not for one minute stand here and support a bill and a budget that kills pay equity, a fundamental human right in our country.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order, please. Seeing no other speakers rising, pursuant to order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of Motion No. 7 are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred. The recorded division on Motion No. 7 will also apply to Motions Nos. 8 to 31.

● (1050)

I shall now propose the motions in Group No. 3.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 32

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 358.

Motion No. 33

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 359.

Motion No. 34

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 360.

Motion No. 35

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 361.

Motion No. 36

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 362.

Motion No. 37

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 363.

Motion No. 38

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 364.

Motion No. 39

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 365.

Motion No. 40

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 366.

Motion No. 41

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 367.

Motion No. 42

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 368.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ) moved:

Motion No. 43

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 383.

Motion No. 44

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 384.

Motion No. 45

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 385.

Motion No. 46

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 386.

Motion No. 47

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 387.

Motion No. 48

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 388.

Motion No. 49

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 389.

Motion No. 50

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 390.

Motion No. 51

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 391.

Motion No. 52

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 392.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 53

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 394.

Motion No. 54

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 395.

Motion No. 55

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 396.

Motion No. 56

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 397.

Motion No. 57

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 397.

Motion No. 58

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 399.

Motion No. 59

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 400.

Motion No. 60

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 401.

Motion No. 61

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 402.

Motion No. 62

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 403.

Government Orders

Motion No. 63

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 404.

Motion No. 64

That Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 405.

Motion No. 65

Bill C-10 be amended by deleting Clause 406.

He said: Madam Speaker, I rise today to do what my party has been doing for a number of years, and most recently on this budget. As opposition members, our role in the NDP is to get involved with what we think is an extremely important project, which is the budget of this nation.

The budget of the government lays out its priorities and intentions and shows what direction it wants to take us. We saw the direction the Conservatives wanted to take last fall when they provided a forecast and road map that would have taken Canadians down a very interesting path. They told public servants that their rights were gone, that they would not have the right to strike, that their wages would be frozen, that collective bargaining would be suspended for however long, the intention I suppose being as long as they were in government. They wanted to rip up pay equity and play politics with funding to political parties, and we saw where that led.

The government claimed, like Saul on the road to Damascus, that all of a sudden it understood the role of government, that it got the fact there was a fiscal problem and that there was a crisis in which government had a role. Then it came up with the budget.

On the surface, one would think that was good, that the government actually saw the light. Quite frankly, it was my party working with other parties that forced the government to pull back from the precipice, to understand that there was a role for government and that it would mend its political errors by way of having a budget that would be there for people.

The amendments I put forward today illustrate how illiterate the government is when it comes to this fiscal crisis. We have talked about the Navigable Waters Protection Act, but the amendments we put forward to delete clauses of the bill have to do with pay equity, the provisions for students and equalization.

It is important to understand that the government is demonstrating exactly what the Mike Harris government illustrated when it first came into power. For those of our colleagues who were not in the Ontario legislature or the province of Ontario at the time, we know who the chief of staff is now to the Prime Minister. His fingerprints are all over the budget.

The idea is to put all ideological tenets and elements into a very large budget. I believe bill 26 was the ominous bill that wrecked the province. There were so many different things put in the budget that there was not time to responsibly deal with them in committee. Why? Because the Harris government changed the rules in committee so they could not be debated.

The Harris government made sure that all the things it wanted to do to change government, in fact take government out of the business of many of the things that it responsibly had a role in, were put into a very large bill. Guess what? Mike Harris is back. It is in this budget bill, to rip up pay equity and change environmental

regulations. When it comes to students, one of the amendments is to take out the provisions.

Do members know what the government wants to do in this budget, a budget of so-called stimulus for students? The page I have open now tells students that if they make an error on their filing, the government will go after them. The government has given power to the minister to do that. The government is taking power and concentrating it. Everyone else around the world is looking at ways to open up government, to be more open to the public on how government works and to be transparent.

The Conservative government is going in the other direction. Instead of giving grants to students to ensure they can get a leg up, the government is coming in with retrograde legislation that basically says that it does not trust students and because of that it will put in a provision to ensure it can go after them and get them.

• (1055)

That is what this provision is all about. It has no business being in a budget bill that claims it is going to stimulate the economy.

Further to that, we have heard about the retrograde treatment of pay equity. That galls me, my constituents and many who have fought long and hard to see pay equity. By the way, I hope that by now the government understands the difference between pay equity and equal pay. I think there was a lesson on it yesterday, and hopefully the Conservatives came and took notes. I am not sure they did.

The President of the Treasury Board has the gall to stand in this House day after day, pointing to both the Government of Ontario and the Government of Manitoba and saying that it is exactly what the government is doing. I hope one day he will actually have to be held to account for his performance on this file.

What they did in both those jurisdictions was to give a pay equity commission the resources to make sure there was pay equity in the workplace. What this government does is say that the right to appeal for pay equity is gone; by the way, there will have to be negotiations; by the way, your contracts are frozen.

Who in their right mind would believe the government on pay equity? Who in their right mind who believes in pay equity would let this go through?

The government took away the ability for people to challenge it when it has gone wrong. The court challenge funds are gone. That was a couple of budgets ago. At the time the government said, and this applies to pay equity, that all the laws it would bring forward would be charterproof from then on. Let me say today in this House that the government will be challenged on this law. I will want to know, when this law is challenged and struck down, how much we paid through legal fees and through government justice lawyers having to defend this nonsense, and how much we lost in real dollars.

I can guarantee one thing: people will look back at this day and ask why this bill was ever let through. It is retrograde for pay equity, it is retrograde for women, and it is going to cost us more.

Government Orders

In a nutshell, the amendments are essentially trying to take out the worst elements of this budget. We hear the government saying it wants to get to stimulating the economy, so it brings in measures to take away pay equity and measures to have oversight over students. It won't give them grants, but it is making sure it can go after them and is cracking down on them. They are a big problem, and their tuition is so low. Every single member of this House paid less tuition than students pay today.

It is absolute hypocrisy that instead of providing grants, section 358 states that the government is going to go after students. It is making sure that if they omitted one thing in their file, the government will go after them. How much money is it going to take to go after students? Could that money have been put toward actually helping students? I do not know. It is not on the government's radar. These amendments are trying to take out the worst elements from an absolutely retrograde approach to budgeting.

In summary, I have to say to my friends in the Liberal Party that it is not too late to stand up for your principles. They should not let themselves be bullied. What is the difference between this retrograde legislation going through now and dealing with it in June?

We must remember that every single right and progressive piece of legislation that has been fought for in this country, when it is ripped away, does not come back soon. My friends from the Liberal Party should know that what the government is doing today is saying it is okay to do that because it is going to get a report card from it.

On this side of the House, we say it is not okay to rip apart pay equity, to go after students, and to rip up agreements on equalization.

• (1100)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I completely agree that the budget is far from perfect, but I have to ask the hon. member frankly, if he is so concerned about the interests of Canadians, why he defeated the budget in 2006. That budget would have provided Canadians with universal child care, a Kelowna accord, protection for aboriginals, and an environmental protection plan under Kyoto.

Is it not more important to accept this budget with all its warts and omissions to ensure that Canadians who need the extra funding and the sectors that need the stimulus will receive it, and to ensure that the infrastructure spending that the municipalities, like my own of Mississauga—Streetsville, are crying for will take place, as well as the EI extensions to help the unemployed, the sector investment, and the subsidized housing?

If he really cares about Canadians, will he not work to help get the money flowing to Canadians who need it?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, I think my colleague would probably know that in 2006 it was the Conservative budget that we voted against, and I did it gladly. She might be referring to 2005. I was not in this House at the time, but what we are talking about now are things so reprehensible that I am absolutely not able to support it with the facets in it.

Today we are asking the Liberals and others to support our amendments, which take out those things that are so ill-conceived and destructive to our country. I would like the member to support us

in making this budget bill a little less reprehensible through trying to amend the most destructive aspects.

Finally, on this business about getting money out the door, where is the infrastructure money from the last two budgets that the government has in the register right now and has not spent, but could spend tomorrow? The hon. member should not get caught by Tory traps. It is a trap the Tories set all the time. The hon. member should not believe them. They have money now. They did not spend it two budgets ago, and they could do it today if they wanted.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, let us carry this one step further. If the member would take all the chaff off the wheat, what it really gets down to is that if the budget is defeated, there would be an election, and the House would likely not return and get back to the same point of having a budget before us until next fall.

It would appear to me that the stimulus package needs to be there and needs to be there now. There is nothing that can happen months from now that is going to change the critical nature of having that stimulus in there now because of the economic lag in its impact.

Can the member advise the House of other items he is concerned about that cannot be fixed when the government is replaced? Does he not agree that if the stimulus does not come now, there is not going to be any opportunity to give assistance to Canadians when they really need it?

• (1105)

Mr. Paul Dewar: Madam Speaker, I am trying to get to the logic of the member and his party. They say they cannot do anything about it right now, they will ask for a report card, they will not put any amendments forward, and they will not negotiate to make it better.

We were just talking about the 2005 budget, when our party negotiated \$4.5 billion in stimulus because we saw that as our role. The Liberals were in government at the time.

What do we get from the Liberal Party now in hard-nosed negotiations? What do they do? They are tough and not to be messed with: they are going to ask for three report cards and they have this nonsense about probation.

The Liberals are an opposition party. They cannot pretend to be in opposition Monday and then not on Wednesday. Can the member tell the House the difference between defeating an ill-conceived budget now and defeating it in June? By the way, that is what the hon. member's party is saying it might do, so it is about them, not about the Canadian people, and that is a travesty.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I rise this morning to speak to the changes proposed in the Bloc Québécois amendment.

With regard to equalization, we propose to delete clauses 383 to 392. The Conservative government has proposed similar measures that, in a way, completely change major elements it had announced in 2007.

Government Orders

With the change in the equalization formula, the increase in equalization payments will be much smaller. Payments will be \$991 million less for the fiscal year running from April 1, 2009 to 2010. This is significant, because Quebec was counting on that \$1 billion.

Equalization payments are planned well in advance. Increases in those payments are also planned well in advance, and a province like Quebec plans its expenditures and the services it will provide for the public accordingly. The federal government is using an economic crisis as an excuse to unilaterally modify a formula that had already been agreed on. That is what is known as passing the buck to the provinces.

As I said earlier, this represents a shortfall of just about \$1 billion for Quebec for next year alone. Just imagine the services the Government of Quebec is going to have to take away from people. What services will it eliminate? What tough choices will the Government of Quebec have to make because the federal government decided on its own to change a formula?

One feature of the changes made in 2007 is that they were predictable. That was one of the strong arguments put forward by the Conservative government in 2007: from now on, the equalization amounts the provinces receive will be known in advance. I will come back to this later. That was a strong argument made by the Conservative government, which even said it was correcting the fiscal imbalance in this way.

We do not agree that the fiscal imbalance has been corrected, far from it. In fact, the fiscal imbalance will be corrected when the government stops collecting tax money where it has no business doing so and transfers those tax points to the provinces, including Quebec. But that is another issue.

This change, which was announced in November during the Minister of Finance's update and during a federal-provincial meeting of ministers of finance not long afterwards, and which has been confirmed, completely changed the Quebec government's calculations. Consequently, Quebec's National Assembly held a special session in January where the three political parties—I should say four political parties, since there is now a fourth one represented—unanimously passed a resolution denouncing the federal government's intention to unilaterally modify the equalization formula.

This motion, which was unanimously passed, urges the federal government to keep the equalization formula as it is now. We did not create the current formula. Rather, in 2007, the Conservative government agreed to a new formula. The Prime Minister even wrote to the Quebec Premier to tell him in no uncertain terms that "...for the first time in decades, provinces and territories can now count on long-term, predictable and substantially growing federal support for shared priorities including health care, post-secondary education, training and social programs, and the rebuilding of Canada's infrastructure."

Knowing that these words were written by the current Prime Minister just two years ago and that today, the government is unilaterally putting an end to it, we no longer have confidence in this Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, who is the same one as in 2007.

●(1110)

It is a matter of trust, because a commitment was made, in the budget and in a specific letter, to be a good government. As well, a plan was promised that would reflect a strong commitment to open federalism and respect for provincial jurisdictions, notably by limiting the use of the federal spending power. That letter even added that Quebec would benefit from long-term, predictable transfer payments and new investments in post-secondary education. That was not all. In the second last paragraph of that letter, the Prime Minister wrote, "We are establishing a solid foundation based on budgetary accountability and transparency and long-term, predictable fiscal arrangements."

All that did not last very long. Today, we are faced with a budget that shows very clearly and distinctly that the federal government is making unilateral changes to these arrangements, which were supposed to be predictable. It is nonsense for the federal government to make changes unilaterally. It ought to have called a federal-provincial conference to discuss them, since it had already made a commitment that the arrangements would be predictable and long-term. I have already referred to trust in connection with the fine words of the Minister of Finance in 2007, but that is now a thing of the past.

The people of Quebec have great difficulty in trusting this Conservative government. Once again they have been given strong reasons for not trusting it. It says things, but what good is its word? It does not keep promises. It makes commitments, but does not stick to them.

There is a myth in Canada, particularly in the west, that Quebec is the spoiled child of Confederation, the one that takes everything and gives nothing in return, but nothing could be further from the truth. It is true that Quebec receives substantial equalization payments, but that is just because Quebec is a very populous province. But if the whole amount is recalculated per capita, it is very clear that Quebec is not the spoiled child of federalism, absolutely not. In past years, Quebec received \$1,037 per capita, while Prince Edward Island got \$2,310, New Brunswick \$2,111, and Newfoundland and Labrador \$1,781. The disproportion is very clear and it is also very clear that these changes will have a major impact on the future of public services in Quebec, particularly in the areas of education, health, and early childhood resources.

We are therefore suggesting these changes, and we hope all opposition parties will vote in favour of these amendments, so that Quebec will be able to regain the share of the equalization payments that the Conservative federal government has abolished unilaterally, which will cause great suffering to Quebec.

●(1115)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Madam Speaker, there are so many things that are problematic with the budget bill. There are so many, as someone said earlier, poison pills in this bill that when we look at it we wonder if it is a budget to stimulate and help people or a budget to change the role of government and how government works.

Government Orders

What is really going on here with the Conservatives? Does the member think they actually understand what is required now in terms of the government's role, or are they using this as a bait-and-switch equation, trying to put in what they need to feed their base and change the things they do not like, while saying that they have a couple of dollars to stimulate the economy on the side?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his question. It seems as though the government has used this budget bill as something of a catch-all. It includes amendments that have absolutely nothing to do with the budget bill.

If the government really wanted to take honest, concrete steps to stimulate the economy the right way and approach its governmental responsibilities coherently, this bill would not include measures to change responsibilities with respect to navigable waters, just to avoid future environmental studies.

Nor would it include amendments to pay equity legislation that attack women's rights, or unilateral changes to the equalization formula, as I mentioned earlier, without going through the usual channels for amending the formula.

It would also not include clauses that give the government \$150 million to gradually set up a single, Canada-wide securities commission that almost nobody in Quebec wants. Last January, Quebec's National Assembly passed a unanimous resolution to that effect.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, my colleague mentioned legislation that the government wants to bring in—such as pay equity—that has nothing to do with the current economic crisis.

As to the building Canada fund, does the member think that the funding the Conservative government plans to inject will really help the communities not selected by the Conservatives?

Allow me to explain. Communities in my riding submitted applications for this funding, mainly for water-related projects, and they have spent in excess of \$80,000 over three years. Unfortunately, they did not get the green light for their projects.

Does the member think that it will help them?

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague raises an important point regarding the extreme partisanship practised by this government. As we know, the government was elected to represent all citizens. Normally, the citizens of all regions of the country—regardless of the party they voted for, since that is democracy—could have expected that some measures would apply to them.

There are also very real concerns about this government practising extreme partisanship. In Quebec, we have even seen public servants already following in the footsteps of MPs or ministers who have announced that certain regions will not receive certain subsidies, because they did not vote for the right party. It feels like 1940, during the good old days of Duplessis, and it is deeply regrettable. This is step backwards for democracy in Canada and Quebec.

• (1120)

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is just about my last opportunity to try to convince my colleagues in the Liberal Party to change their minds about a fundamental human right which is at stake in this budget implementation bill.

We are at a minute to midnight. We are on the verge of losing a fundamental human right in this country, a right that is entrenched in the Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, that gives women the ability, the right, to seek justice when they are being denied equal pay for work of equal value. The budget implementation bill, Bill C-10, takes away that right.

I may have been very emotional at times in the debate, and I may still be emotional in this last chance to speak on the bill, or one of the last chances, but I hope with all of my heart that I can somehow convince the Liberals that this is a fundamental human rights issue that has to be stopped dead in its tracks today.

We owe it to the women who have struggled before us. This has been a part of the women's movement for 30 or 40 years. I go back to the mid-seventies, when the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, Women and the Law, advisory councils on the status of women, and women everywhere in the labour movement, at the community level, fought with everything they had to get recognized in the true meaning of equality, which is to be paid according to one's worth.

That is what equal pay for work of equal value is all about. It is about recognizing that if we really believe in equality, we have to address the issue of job ghettos, we have to recognize that men have traditionally been in job categories where they are considered invaluable to their business, to their organization, and are paid accordingly and paid very well.

Whereas women traditionally have been placed in job ghettos, and although they may be performing work of the same value as the men, as their counterparts in other organizations, they are paid far less. They are treated as second class citizens. They are still treated as second class citizens. They are not paid according to their worth, and that is what is at stake: pay equity. It is equal pay for work of equal value. It is not equal pay for equal work, which is comparing exactly the same job, which does nothing to get women out of job ghettos and does nothing to ensure that we eliminate the wage gap in this country.

Government Orders

We owe it to women who have fought before us for this, and I want today to pay special tribute to Michèle Demers, who was the head of the Professional Institute of the Public Service. She died tragically recently and we mourned her loss. She fought tirelessly for her movement, for professional employees in the public service. She fought for pay equity. She never let us down, ever, and today, we are about to let her down. We cannot let her death be in vain. We must find a way in this House to be true to the people like Michèle Demers who fought day in and day out for fundamental human rights, the right to contribute one's very best, be recognized for it, and not be diminished in terms of one's status in society or treated as a source of cheap labour to be moved in and out of the economy as needed.

The Conservatives talk out of both sides of their mouths. We know from the past that the Prime Minister has said that pay equity is "a rip-off". We know that when he was involved with the National Citizens Coalition, he said that the government should scrap its ridiculous pay equity law. We know that the Conservatives, at their November convention in Winnipeg this last year, actually redefined pay equity from what it really means to the 1950s version, calling it equal pay for equal work.

We know where the Conservatives are coming from. Yet, at the same time in the House, the President of the Treasury Board defends this new move under Bill C-10 as something progressive, something that will ensure that pay equity is maintained, because the Conservatives will legislate it and people will not have to wait so long before the Human Rights Commission.

• (1125)

The fact that that is not true must be connected to the real agenda of the Conservatives, so we understand where they are coming from. The Liberals should know that. The Liberals should use their heads and their hearts to finally do what is right and stand up for the women of this country. We are talking about a fundamental human right.

I would like to quote a few words from Darlene Dziewit, the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour. She said this:

I watched with great concern as the Federal Conservative government announced that it would remove women's right to pay equity from the Federal Human Rights Code. Treasury Board Minister...pronounced that such protection for women is too costly and time consuming, and as such, must be removed from the Code and into the realm of collective bargaining. He also cited the pay equity legislation that was passed in Manitoba in the mid 80s as a better alternative to Human Rights Code protection.

Darlene went on to say, "what bunk", and I say that 100 times over; what nonsense, what bunk, what complete fabrication of the truth. She went on to say:

When a government announces its intention to remove protections accorded to any group from Human Rights legislation red flags should be raised. To use [the President of the Treasury Board's] argument, it would then follow that if any other discriminatory practice, such as discrimination based on age or ethnic origin, for example, were to prove too time consuming or costly, then that too ought to be removed from the Human Rights Code. Then, I guess there would be more time and money to pursue other, less sticky or costly discriminatory transgressions.

The question for everyone in this House, especially the Liberals, is, where do they draw the line? If they cannot stand up for pay equity, which is a fundamental human right, when will they stand up? Where is the line in the sand for the Liberals? Is it racism? Is it

homophobia? Is it an attack on the rights of unions to bargain collectively? Is it an attack on people with disabilities? Is it an attack on people of colour? When do Liberals draw the line, if they will not stand up for women on a fundamental human right?

I do not know if I can find the right words today to actually impress upon members in this House, especially the Liberals, just what is at stake. We are talking about a fundamental human right, and the Conservatives are proposing to take that away completely by eliminating the right for anyone in the federal government, at any level, in any aspect of government, to take a complaint about pay equity to the Canadian Human Rights Commission. No matter what happens in society, whether one is working in the labour movement, is protected by a collective agreement, or is working in a private sector company that has none, there is no provision to go to the Canadian Human Rights Commission to pursue a fundamental human right as outlined in the charter.

There really is no legislative alternative either, because in fact this is not equal pay legislation we are talking about; this is something called equitable compensation. It does not define what that means. It does not entrench the notion of equal pay for work of equal value. The word "men" is not even mentioned anywhere in the legislation, so how in the world does one compare jobs? Is that not the essence of what we are talking about?

We are talking about comparing the value and the worth of the work that women do in our society with that which men do, and in fact trying to find ways to bridge the gap. When women are performing jobs that are at the same level of skill, education and responsibility in the workplace as jobs being performed by men, should the women not be paid the same rate as the men? Should they not be at a comparable salary range?

That is what is at stake in this bill. Gone will be the ability to pursue that kind of comparative work. Gone is the right to pursue pay equity before the Canadian Human Rights Commission. Gone is pay equity forever, unless we can convince the Liberals to get off their duffs, start to stand up for their principles, speak up for what it is right, not be compromised, do what is in the best interests of Canada and stand up for equality and human rights.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Bloc Québécois to speak to a motion moved by our party, calling for the deletion of clauses 383 to 392 of Bill C-10. Those clauses would amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, in other words, equalization. Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, includes a change to the formula for calculating equalization. Under the new formula, Quebec's increase in equalization payments will be cut. This change will deprive Quebec of \$1 billion in equalization payments in 2009-10. In these tough economic times, a billion dollars less in Quebec's coffers is a very significant loss.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois has led the fight in this House, on behalf of Quebecers, against the fiscal imbalance between Ottawa and the provinces. The partial correction authorized by the federal government—as a result of the Bloc Québécois' efforts—involved changing the formula for calculating equalization. The federal government, supported by the Liberals, has unilaterally decided to deprive Quebec of \$1 billion.

I had the opportunity to read the letter written by Quebec's Minister of Finance to the federal Minister of Finance. Ms. Jérôme-Forget—I will mention in passing that she is not in our political camp—wrote this letter on January 21, 2009. This demonstrates the importance of the Bloc Québécois in defending the interests of Quebecers. I will read the beginning of her letter:

Dear colleague,

In recent days, authorities of the federal government, among them yourself and emissaries from your government, have said that all the relevant information on the changes you are considering for equalization were communicated at the federal-provincial meeting of Finance Ministers in Toronto last November 3.

That is incorrect. Allow me to set the record straight.

When such remarks are made by the Quebec Minister of Finance, all Quebec members in this House, whether Conservative or Liberal, should sit up and listen, as we have done. For the past few months, the federal government has kept us in the dark. It says that the provinces were aware of the changes to the equalization formula and that it was not a unilateral move, even though it was. Once again this is a unilateral change. The federal government is again avoiding settling the fiscal imbalance. It will deprive Quebec of \$1 billion. I will come back to this letter.

It is important to understand. All too often, people wonder why the Bloc Québécois rises so often in this place to defend the interests of Quebecers. It is simply because the federal government does not keep its word. Its failure to do so will cost Quebec \$1 billion in 2009-10. That is quite significant.

Equalization is not unique to Canada. It is part of this confederation—we no longer know if it is a confederation or a federation. However, one thing is certain, equalization in Canada and in other countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Australia, India, Pakistan and South Africa, has a similar purpose. The United Kingdom also has an equalization system that takes into account the special needs of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This system results in a better division of wealth within a confederation or a federation. It ensures that the poorest provinces receive a contribution from the confederation or federation. Equalization helps to balance the finances of the provinces with weaker economies.

It gives us no pleasure to defend equalization. I would prefer that Quebec not have to benefit from the equalization system. That would mean that Quebecers are better off than those in other provinces, which is not the case.

• (1135)

When we are told that Quebec is the spoiled child of the federation, that is obviously a myth, and I will give examples to prove it. Let us look at the amount paid per capita in 2008-09 under equalization: Quebec, \$1,037; Nova Scotia, \$1,679; Manitoba, \$1,732; Newfoundland and Labrador, \$1,781; New Brunswick, \$2,111 and Prince Edward Island, \$2,310. Once again, the

equalization system is not equal in terms of the money received per capita in the provinces. This is why Quebec has been asking, for a number of years, that the equalization formula be recalculated in order to correct the fiscal imbalance. If a province is receiving equalization because it is not as rich as the other provinces, the amount should be more or less the same per capita. We are trying to restore this balance.

The Conservative Party has made economic mistakes. I think that reducing the GST was a mistake. Tax payers see very little gain, and it also deprives the federal government of \$14 billion. When the government saw an economic crisis on the horizon, it did as it always has, cut transfers to provinces. That is the reality. Quebec will lose out on \$1 billion in 2009-10.

Quebec's minister of finance referred to the new formula in the January 21, 2009, letter. In the concluding paragraphs of her letter, she said:

I also want to raise a matter of first importance for Quebec that was raised by the Premier of Quebec at the meeting of First Ministers last January 16.

On November 14, 2008, your officials advised their provincial counterparts that changes to the equalization regulations were under consideration. These changes were announced in the *Canada Gazette* on December 24, 2008. One of them concerns a change to the treatment of dividends paid by Hydro One to the government of Ontario. The federal government has decided to consider this source of revenue under the corporate tax base rather than the natural resources base.

The argument made by your department is that this enterprise transmits and distributes electricity, but does not produce it.

Clearly, that is important. The minister added:

However, all the dividends paid by Hydro-Québec to the Quebec government remain included in the natural resources base, even if a good portion of these dividends results, as is the case with Hydro One, from electricity transmission and distribution activities.

Once again, this would deprive Quebec of an additional \$250 million. By changing the formula, the Conservative government decided to penalize Quebec yet again to the tune of \$250 million.

I am worried because, once again, the Conservatives and the Liberals, political parties that have elected members from Quebec, are attacking Quebec. That is the harsh reality in this House. People are always trying to put Quebec down. As if by some unwritten rule, Ontario gets better treatment for Hydro One, and Quebec gets penalized. This will add to the fiscal imbalance that Quebec has to live with as part of this federation or confederation—no matter what people call it, nobody knows exactly what kind of arrangement it is supposed to be.

That is why, in election after election, Quebecers have put their faith in Bloc Québécois members to raise these issues in the House of Commons and propose amendments, just as we have done with Bill C-10. We hope that all of the Quebec members in the House will stand up and vote for Motions Nos. 43 to 52, as proposed by the Bloc Québécois.

Government Orders

• (1140)

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, this budget really is an attack on women. International Women's Day is approaching and it is supposed to be a day of celebration. I think that the celebrations this year will be quite sombre. We will have very little to celebrate because we are not advancing. We are actually going back in time. We were supposed to be moving forward, not backward.

The budget did not just leave women out. It actually attacked and undermined their equality. The federal government has to stop ignoring the fact that women in Canada need pay equity. Instead of attacking them, it should be helping them. The Conservative budget's proposals on pay equity are not just an attack on women but on children and families as well. Instead, it should be looking at EI changes. That would help women. We need to ensure that there is a reduction in qualifying hours and we should qualify the hours at 360. The qualifying hours are very different across Canada. They vary and it is very unfair to some workers, especially women.

We need to remove the two week waiting period so that people who find themselves out of work are not facing the hardships right away and can start accessing that money right away. We need to extend the qualifying weeks for the waiting period. The government has indicated that it is going to increase the qualifying weeks by five weeks. That is fine and dandy, but it is still not enough. We certainly need the 52 weeks to be there.

The demand for national, affordable and accessible child care has fallen on deaf ears with the government. The help it has given with regard to the allotted amount of money per month does not even cover a day's pay for a child care worker. It does not cover how much it actually costs to pay for a child to be in child care. When women have an average income of about \$27,000 a year, compared to \$45,000 for men, the tax reductions in the higher tax brackets are of very little help. The poor will get poorer and the rich will get richer.

I have talked about national child care because it would certainly assist women in the workforce to earn a decent living, not to say that they are going to work just to pay for their child care. We also have to look at the minimum wages at some point because the minimum wage across the country is not enough for someone to go to work. All too often, I have seen situations where people on welfare, who have actually gotten a job, are being told that they are better off staying at home because it is going to cost too much money to have their child looked after.

Instead of giving them a hand down, we should be giving them a hand up. I have talked about EI reform. I think that it is a really big key here because EI is the biggest economic stimulus one can find. For every dollar that is spent in the economy through a person who receives EI, it is an economic stimulus of \$1.64. That was provided to the government during its prebudget consultations, yet it chose to ignore it. Imagine ignoring the biggest stimulus package. These people will spend their cheques over the first two weeks that they get them.

Infrastructure is another big economic stimulus, but we have to do it properly. We held two economist panels, one prior to the prebudget

consultations and one after, and the information that was provided to us said the same thing. In order to deal with this and stimulate the economy, we have to deal with poverty. When we address poverty, the economic stimulus package will kick in. By building affordable housing and making sure that people have jobs, we can move the economy forward.

We also have to look at measures to end violence against women. We have talked about the upcoming International Women's Day. That is a big key as well. All too often, we see that the people who are living in poverty are the ones who are being abused. We need to make sure that the government addresses that.

• (1145)

With regard to the pay equity law, we saw in the budget how unfair it is to women. To say that one has to go into collective bargaining to do that, well not everybody actually has a collective bargaining process. That process can actually be lengthy because it all depends on the employers, whether or not they want to bargain. I think we are truly going back in time and we really need to have that addressed.

We have to talk about the people who are retiring. The largest number of people retiring right now and living in poverty are actually women. A 2004 study found that an astounding 45.6% of women in these circumstances still live in poverty. Just think about it, these people have actually helped build our country and all of a sudden they are finding themselves retired. They are supposed to be enjoying their retirement life, and now they cannot because the government refuses to address the fact that a pension income, CPP or a CPP disability, is not enough to live on. We need to make sure this is addressed. Again, it is hitting women the most.

With regard to jobs out there, this why I wanted to touch base on minimum wage a while ago. When looking at jobs, more than ever we see that women are taking those minimum wage jobs. More often than not we are seeing immigrants in those jobs. There is so much poverty out there that it is a shame that the government chose to attack women in this budget.

There is so much that we could actually do to support women. The labour movement certainly has been working in that direction. Instead of kicking women who are down, we should be giving them a hand up. Pay equity legislation prohibits wage discrimination where employees are performing work of equal or comparable value, whereas equal pay legislation prohibits it in respect of the same or substantially similar work.

We have to look at pay equity in Manitoba and Ontario because it is not a part of the regular collective bargaining process. Human rights cannot be bargained for at a bargaining table. The provincial legislation in Manitoba and Ontario covers both unionized and non-unionized employees. Manitoba legislation only covers public sector workers, while Ontario legislation covers both the private and the public sectors. For unionized workers, pay equity plans are developed between both the employer and the union but not during collective bargaining. This process happens separately.

Government Orders

Ontario has a pay equity commission with the same powers as the labour board. It can investigate, mediate and resolve complaints. If one side disagrees with the complaint resolution, there is an appeal process that is referred to as a tribunal. The results of the tribunal are binding.

In Manitoba the pay equity bureau existed to deal with complaints. However, because the Manitoba legislation is quite old and the process only existed for public service jobs, the pay equity commission has run its course. It functioned in a similar manner to the pay equity commission in Ontario. Any disputes now are handled through the Manitoba labour management services board.

Let us look back at how much a woman actually makes. A woman actually makes 71¢ on the dollar compared to a man. For a woman of colour, it goes down. For an aboriginal, the amount a woman makes is even less.

I think it is time the government takes a serious look at what it has actually put into the budget bill and pulls that part of it out. We really need to move forward on it. Pay equity is actually a human right protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act. The current law prohibits differences in wages between female and male employees and I do not think the government gets it.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened with considerable interest to my colleague's very progressive and heartfelt remarks. I understood her bias in favour of the fight against poverty, which is all to her credit. I think she is right to remind us that, in terms of employment insurance, it is the government that dragged its feet. The Bloc has tabled a number of bills to improve things for those who are, unfortunately, unemployed.

I would like to put three questions to my colleague. I would ask her to remind us of the importance of social housing in the fight against poverty and of the vital nature of the amendments needed to employment insurance and, finally, I would like her opinion on the fate reserved in this budget for women.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I will deal first with the employment insurance question, as I consider it a big challenge.

It must indeed be recognized that employment insurance needs to be changed. Our colleague and his party proposed a change last week. Unfortunately, it appears that the Conservatives did not hear what is so necessary to help employment insurance claimants. The impact on women is huge, and the matter must be dealt with. As I mentioned earlier, every dollar spent in the community by employment insurance claimants amounts to a stimulus to the economy of \$1.64.

Affordable housing is a very important matter. It took a long time for them to build a block of affordable housing units in the London region, if I am not mistaken, and there are only 12 units. It took them three years to build it. Imagine the people in need of affordable housing and unable to obtain it. They cannot go to work and do not have employment insurance. It is these people who usually work for minimum wage.

This government should recognize once and for all that we are in the midst of a crisis right now. It would then understand the importance of stimulating the economy and of making affordable housing available as well. If the government could start building affordable housing, it would reduce poverty. First, people will have housing and, second, they will be able to go to work.

We need, as well, a national child care program so parents can take their children to day care where they will be given appropriate supervision and protection while the parents work. This service must be affordable. It has been under discussion for a long time. The Liberal government said it would set up such a system. It totally forgot its promises. The Conservative government said that it would look into the matter and would help parents. However, it provides only a little money and says that is enough.

It cost me even more when I had to put my children in private day care. Not everyone can pay that much for day care.

My thanks to my colleague for his question.

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is always a pleasure to see you back in the chair. I know that you enjoy the responsibility conferred upon you and wish you every success.

The Bloc Québécois is engaged in a battle of the utmost importance to the people of Quebec to ensure that the sums due to the provinces under equalization are actually paid. This is no trifling matter. I want all the people listening to us, and I know there are a lot of them, to know that the Conservative government has decided in a deliberate, planned way to deprive Quebec's public finances of \$1 billion in the 2009-10 fiscal year. This shows that the federal government has the ability to destabilize the public finances of any province.

The equalization formula was determined in the 1950s pursuant to the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Constitutional Problems (Tremblay Commission) and its purpose was to ensure that all the provinces were able to provide public services to their citizens. Its purpose has always been to correct regional disparities. Equalization was entrenched in the Constitution in 1982 when it was unilaterally patriated. Quebec's National Assembly has never agreed to this constitutional change initiated after the 1980 referendum. The Quebec National Assembly, supported not only by René Lévesque but Claude Ryan as well, was against the unilateral patriation of the Constitution. It feared for its prerogatives, especially concerning language legislation. History has obviously proved it right. The Supreme Court has overturned whole sections of Bill 101, especially those dealing with freedom of expression.

Government Orders

Equalization is supposed to make it possible for the provinces to provide services in view of their tax base, their ability to generate taxes, and the number of companies they have. The federal-provincial conference managed to enrage the finance minister in the Quebec National Assembly, Ms. Jérôme-Forget, who cannot be suspected of any sympathy for the sovereignist cause. She sent the current finance minister in the Conservative government a letter saying how terrible she thought it was for them to make unilateral changes. These changes will result in the loss of a billion dollars in 2009-10. The second terrible thing about this is that the provinces are not only being impoverished but were also not given reasonable advance warning about what it would mean for their ability to provide services.

Ms. Jérôme-Forget, the finance minister in the government of Mr. Jean Charest, tried on at least two occasions at the federal-provincial conference of finance ministers to get information on how the formula was calculated. Premier Charest returned to the charge at the Council of the Federation, but the government never acted transparently and revealed how the payments would be calculated. That is totally unacceptable.

Who is defending Quebec's interests in this Parliament? Who among the Conservatives is speaking up to denounce this unilateral approach, which is impoverishing the provinces and completely ignores the fact that we must work together, in a spirit of partnership?

• (1155)

If not for the Bloc Québécois, there would be no voice to defend Quebec's interests in particular. And I regret to say that I did not see a single member of the Conservative caucus from Quebec rise in this House to denounce this completely unacceptable way of doing things.

Clearly, when Quebec is deprived of \$1 billion in revenues in its budget, some services will definitely have to be reviewed and some aspects of its programming will have to be adjusted. Is that what is meant by a spirit of partnership?

I clearly recall that, during the 2006 election campaign, the current Prime Minister gave a speech in the Quebec City area, in Sainte-Foy if my memory serves, in which he talked about the need to work together, to act in partnership, to put in place what he called "cooperative federalism", thereby hoping to differentiate himself from what he described as the executive federalism of the previous government. However, does cutting \$1 billion in equalization payments sound like cooperative federalism? It definitely does not.

Many aspects of this budget are terribly lacking and absolutely dreadful, and there is no way the Bloc Québécois would have ever considered supporting such a bad budget. I will give some examples, since I have a feeling that people are anxious to hear them.

Of course, I am talking about employment insurance. The Bloc Québécois has repeatedly called for a standard number of hours to qualify for employment insurance and has asked the government to set this figure at 360 hours. The Bloc Québécois has called for the elimination of the waiting period, which defers eligibility by two weeks. Of course, we have waged a long battle to have the system

cover seasonal workers. Nothing in this budget makes people looking for work happy.

We know how many unemployed people are looking for a job during this economic crisis. Unfortunately, employment insurance does not meet these workers' needs. One worker in two pays into the system, which the federal government does not underwrite. The federal government does not put any money into the system based on government revenues. The system is funded 100% by workers and employers. Nothing in this budget makes people looking for work happy.

In addition, the Conservative government has chosen to deal a direct blow to women's right to equal pay for equal work. It has chosen to attack the rights of women who are not unionized, and it is no longer allowing women to turn to the courts for satisfaction on the issue of pay equity. That says a lot about this government and its sensitivity toward women.

In its fierce and enlightened defence of Quebec's interests, the Bloc Québécois has put forward amendments. I will close by saying just how important the issue of equalization is to us. We cannot overstate how terrible it is to deprive Quebec's treasury of \$1 billion for 2009-10. Imagine the impact that will have on the people whose job it is to plan services for the public. It is shameful, and it shows just how insensitive the government is. If it were not for the voice of the Bloc Québécois in this Parliament, no one would have been concerned, even though this is devastating to the National Assembly of Quebec.

• (1200)

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this Chamber to ask a question of the hon. member for Hochelaga. I was astounded to hear the member's speech because what he said was the opposite of common sense and truth.

Never before has Quebec received such large equalization payments as it does with our Conservative government. Quebec members, and all my caucus colleagues, have not done anything to deprive Quebec of significant payments. In the days of the Liberals and the Bloc, hospitals were closed and cuts were made to education. What have we done for Quebec since coming to power? We have increased equalization payments but we have not stopped there. Social transfers to Quebec have also hit record highs in the history of our federation. The Conservatives and the Quebec members rise in this House and approve initiatives such as this budget, which is an extraordinary prescription for Quebec in these times of economic uncertainty.

My question for the member for Hochelaga is the following. How can he abandon Quebecers, workers, families and seniors by not supporting this economic action plan in such a period of economic crisis? How can he keep his blinders on and continue with his ideology when Quebecers need members in this House who will deliver the goods for Quebec?

Government Orders

●(1205)

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I would, however, like to say that he is rather far from the truth, and could even end up actually lying, if he maintained in this House that Quebec would not be deprived of one billion dollars. I would ask him, through you, Mr. Speaker, if he maintains that the National Assembly will not be out one billion dollars, contrary to the statement made by the Quebec finance minister in a letter to the Government of Canada, in which she objects strongly to the formula being proposed by his government, when he is collaborating in that initiative? When a Conservative member rises in this House to question that statement, he is on a nasty slippery slope headed toward lying.

Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have heard my Conservative colleague's reference to the fact that, in the budget proposed by his government, workers, families and seniors would benefit. We probably did not read the same budget. The measures for workers are in fact for just two years. Five weeks are being added on to employment insurance. These are not appropriate measures for workers. Given the job losses and this government's inertia as far as injecting enough money to get out of this economic crisis, the program for older worker adjustment, or POWA, would have been useful. The government ought to have made an effort in that direction.

Then, they talk about the \$1,500 income tax deduction for seniors. But those people have to be paying income tax. If seniors are living below the poverty line, we can be sure they will not be paying income tax, and so they cannot take advantage of that government measure.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. What would be the solution, the attitude Parliament ought to take, to this Conservative government and to this budget?

Mr. Réal Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his insightful questions. That is not surprising, coming from such an insightful man.

The easiest solution, financially, would be for us to receive additional tax room through tax points and, thus, Quebec would not be dependent on transfer payments that can be changed without negotiation and without respect for the provinces.

In terms of seniors, the Bloc Québécois introduced a bill to increase the guaranteed income supplement. As for the national question, the real solution is sovereignty for Quebec.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am most pleased to add my voice to the concerns expressed today, particularly in regard to the insinuation in the budget implementation bill of the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. What an Orwellian term that is.

Over the last three and a half years, the government has tried to silence the voices of women. It has reduced funding to Status of Women Canada. It ended research, advocacy and lobbying. It closed 12 regional offices of Status of Women Canada. It ended the funding to many women's organizations and its removed equality from the

mandate of Status of Women Canada, all of these measures designed to keep women quiet, to keep them in their place.

It is not working. The government may have tried to deny the voices of women, but I have a letter, signed by 79 individuals, winners of the Governor General's Award in regard to the Persons Case, lawyers, academics, Canadians of great stature. I want to ensure that their voice and the voice of millions of Canadian women are heard in this place, so I will read into the record a letter they sent to the Prime Minister. It states:

We write to express our dismay at the introduction of the new Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. We are concerned that this legislation has been introduced as a part of Budget 2009, and that, as a consequence, Parliament will not be permitted to decide whether the legislation has its support as a new law independent of the Budget. This amounts to legislating by stealth in our view, and is unworthy of any Canadian government, as well as unfair to women.

The legislation takes away the right of women federal public servants to equal pay for work of equal value. You have claimed that your government recognizes that pay equity is a right of women and that this new legislation merely introduces efficiency and speed to the process of obtaining pay equity in the public service. We have studied this legislation closely and find these claims false. The Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act empties the right to pay equity of its meaning.

The new legislated criteria for evaluating "equitable compensation" will reintroduce sex discrimination into pay practices, rather than eliminate it. Under the Canadian Human Rights Act, it is a discriminatory practice for an employer to establish or maintain differences in wages between male and female employees employed in the same establishment who are performing work of equal value. In assessing the value of work performed by employees, the criterion to be applied is the composite of the skill, effort and responsibility required in the performance of the work and the conditions under which the work is performed (section 11). The new legislation adopts these criteria, but adds new ones that completely undermine the commitment to equal pay for work of equal value for women. Section 4(2)(b) of Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act adds that the value of the work performed is also to be assessed according to "the employer's recruitment and retention needs in respect of employees in that job group or job class, taking into account the qualifications required to perform the work and the market forces operating in respect of employees with those qualifications." This permits any evaluation to take into account that male-dominated jobs are valued more highly in the market, requiring the employer to pay more to attract new employees or retain current ones, even if the value of the work when it is assessed based on skill, effort and responsibility is no greater than that of female-dominated jobs.

The right to equal pay for work of equal value was introduced in federal human rights legislation in 1977 precisely in order to expunge the sex discrimination that is inherent in market pay practices from the assessment of the value of work. Historically, the market has devalued work that is done by women. Seeking now to evaluate the federal public service's compensation practices for female dominated job groups by comparing them with pay assigned to these jobs in the market will entrench sex discrimination, not correct it.

In addition, the new legislation defines a female dominated group as one in which 70% of the workers are women; only these groups can seek "equitable compensation." This is too rigid a definition as it simply puts outside the boundaries of the legislation those job groups in which women are 51 – 69% of the workers, no matter what the context is. The legislation restricts comparisons of male and female job groups so that comparisons may only be made within defined portions of the federal public service, or within federal agencies, not across the public service as a whole. In addition, the legislation repeatedly refers to providing "equitable compensation" within "a reasonable time." This seems to imply that women public servants may not receive compensation for the full period when they received less than equal pay for work of equal value and may not receive what they are owed immediately.

●(1210)

We conclude that the substance of the right to equal pay for work of equal value is gone, restrictions have been placed on who falls within the scope of the legislation and on how comparisons can be made, and time periods for which compensation is owed are malleable.

Government Orders

In addition, the processes set out in the Act for seeking “equitable compensation” are fundamentally flawed. The legislation makes employers and unions jointly responsible for “equitable compensation,” even though federal public sector unions do not have any control over the federal purse. It also makes “equitable compensation” for women federal public servants a matter to be negotiated between employers and unions alongside and at the same time as other collective bargaining issues, not separately and distinctly, as it is under the *Manitoba Pay Equity Act*.

This puts women federal public servants at risk of having their right to be free from sex discrimination in pay bargained away because other issues are of more importance to the employer or the union, or both. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in *Dickason v. University of Alberta* that employers cannot contract out of their human rights obligations. There is nothing in this legislation that ensures that women’s human rights will be respected and fulfilled in the bargaining process, rather than ignored and set aside. The effect of this restructuring of the process for obtaining pay equity is to make pay equity no longer a human right of women, but a benefit or privilege which may be bargained successfully, or not.

We note that individual women, both non-unionized and unionized, are permitted to make complaints to the Public Service Labour Relations Board if they believe that their compensation is not “equitable.” However, neither non-unionized women nor unionized women will have anyone to assist them. Currently, if women file a complaint with the Canadian Human Rights Commission, the Commission will investigate it, interview witnesses and examine evidence. Under the Public Service Equitable Compensation Act, complainants will receive no assistance whatsoever.

Further, unionized women cannot have the assistance of their unions to make pay equity complaints. Indeed, unions will be fined \$50,000 if they assist any woman to make a complaint. We point out that this legal imposition of a fine violates international human rights norms, since it contravenes Article 9(3)(c) of the Declaration on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders. Article 9(3)(c) states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others...[T]o offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

This individual complaint procedure has been turned into a meaningless enforcement mechanism. Complaints about pay equity are, by definition, group complaints. Individual female public servants, without help from the Commission or their unions, will not have access to the information about pay rates and job descriptions that is necessary to make an “equitable compensation” complaint.

I see that my time is running out, although I had a lot more to say. However, the letter goes on to state:

We conclude that the *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act* does not comply with the commitments that Canada has made to women in international human rights instruments or the Charter. We ask you to withdraw this legislation immediately and instead to implement the recommendations of the 2004 Pay Equity Task Force.

As Canadians who have contributed many years of work to improving the lives of women, we are angered when the Government of Canada moves backwards on the rights of women. This is the fifth overt attack on the rights of women in Canada made by your administration, following as it does on 1) the cancellation of funding to the Court Challenges Programme, 2) changes to the criteria for funding for Status of Women Canada’s Women’s Programme which preclude support for advocacy or lobbying for law reform, 3) cancellation of the Status of Women...

• (1215)

These individuals have indicated that they are ashamed of what Canada has done to women. This is a dark day—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments, the hon. member for Drummond.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from the opposite side of the House clearly pointed out that nothing can force unions to defend women’s rights. It is not written in stone as part of their mandate. If they want to do it, they will; if they do not want to, they will not. If things are happening quickly during negotiations and there are more details to work out other than just pay equity for women, women will be set aside as they always have been in the past.

There is nothing forcing unions to fight, and there are also tens of thousands of women, as my colleague said, who are not unionized and that no one will ever defend. Women have an intrinsic right to pay equity; that is, equal pay for equal work. It is a fundamental right that is non-negotiable. My colleague is correct in reminding us of this.

By introducing a legal system where this right is denied, the government has set us back 50 years. It fundamentally denies women’s rights and makes them disappear for all intents and purposes. The most distressing and tragic thing is that the Liberal Party, which claims to defend women’s rights, is siding with the government to deny these rights.

I would like to hear my colleague’s opinion on this.

• (1220)

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I must admit, having read the letter with regard to the incredible women and leaders across Canada, who have expressed shame that the government would compromise the human rights of women and in fact trample them, that my shame is equal when I contemplate the Liberal Party of Canada joining in this sham of a piece of legislation in this march to end women’s equality and human rights.

I want to be very clear in my remarks in response to my colleague that including equitable compensation, or the government’s version of it in collective bargaining, makes it very difficult. I am very proud of the union association I have had in my career as an advocate and a member of the London and District Labour Council. I know unions do their utmost to ensure the rights of all members. However, when it comes to a matter of safe workplaces and compensation, very often there are pieces bargained away. In this case, it cannot be human rights.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I first want to indicate that the Liberal caucus agrees fully with the member with regard to women’s issues, pay equity, court challenges, the Status of Women issues, et cetera. The government clearly has shown itself to be anti-women in virtually everything it does.

With regard to the dilemma of the plight of those who are at risk of losing existing jobs, the problem of not having the creation of new jobs to alleviate the employment situation and the implications and problems created for those least able to help themselves in our society, it would appear that the only element of the budget that will address this is a stimulus package, some 40% of which is infrastructure funding.

Although we know very well there are many other problems and we have an omnibus bill rather than a budget bill, the stimulus package is something that people need and, if delayed, may cause some permanent damage to the lives of Canadians. Would the member agree?

Government Orders

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, it was very clear to us in the New Democratic Party caucus, and has been clear for months and months, that an economic downturn was coming. The situation in August of 2007 in the United States with mortgages made that evident to anybody who was watching or paying attention. That is why we told the government over and over again that it needed to have something in place to protect existing jobs and invest in the jobs of the future. We said it over and over again and it did not listen.

Now we are in a crisis and the government is using this crisis to insert these poison pills into the budget implementation act, poison pills that would take away labour rights and women's human rights, that would give away public assets at bargain basement prices, that would eliminate our ability to look after our own industries.

It is time to stand up—

• (1225)

The Deputy Speaker: I will take her advice. We will have to move on.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill. I want to say a few words in support of the Bloc Québécois' proposal to delete clauses 380 to 392. These clauses relate to the Conservative government's unilateral decision to amend the equalization formula as it was previously amended. What we have to do now is maintain the status quo.

If clauses 383 to 392 remain in Bill C-10, Quebec will lose almost \$1 billion in the 2009-10 fiscal year. At a time when the economic situation is affecting Quebec's tax revenues, the \$1 billion shortfall will have very serious effects on the Government of Quebec's ability to fulfill its obligations in terms of health, education and social solidarity.

We hope that all of the Quebec members will do the right thing for Quebec by supporting the Bloc Québécois' amendments. If Quebec members from any of the other parties decide to support Bill C-10 as written, they will be doing a poor job of representing Quebec's interests and will be acting against the National Assembly's decisions. As everyone knows, in mid-January, the National Assembly unanimously passed a motion demanding that the federal government respect the current equalization formula, among other things.

On March 19, 2007, which was just months, not centuries ago, Canada's Prime Minister wrote to the Premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, and made a number of promises that Bill C-10 does not keep, particularly with respect to the issues addressed in clauses 383 to 392. I would like to read an excerpt from his letter. At the end of the first paragraph, the Conservative Prime Minister wrote to his Quebec counterpart:

Budget 2006 reaffirmed this commitment, and launched a dialogue with provincial and territorial governments, experts and Canadians on how to return federal transfers to a principled, predictable and formula-driven basis after two years of one-off deals.

At the end of the Liberal regime under Mr. Martin, patchwork changes were made to equalization. In his letter, the Conservative

Prime Minister indicated that there will no longer be any one-off agreements, and that principles and a formula will be used to ensure stable transfer payments. There is no denying that Bill C-10, particularly clauses 380 to 392 relating to equalization, does not respect this commitment made by the Prime Minister of Canada. In the second paragraph of that letter, we read:

All governments will have principled, predictable and long-term support for their key responsibilities.

Once again we see that Bill C-10 flies in the face of the Conservative Prime Minister's commitments. The Minister of Finance tried to tell us that the information was made public during the finance ministers' conference last fall. Ms. Jérôme-Forget, who is not a sovereigntist—and I am not convinced she votes for the Bloc Québécois—is the Liberal finance minister in Quebec and cares very much about Quebec's interests. She has clearly said that the information was not communicated at that meeting.

I would like to point out that the Conservative government is in the midst of reaching a parallel agreement with Nova Scotia based on the fact that it had not been informed of the changes to equalization and the impact this would have on transfers to that province. During that meeting of finance ministers, Ms. Jérôme-Forget, and I have no reason not to believe her, very clearly told the federal Conservative government and the Minister of Finance that the information had not been made available.

• (1230)

There was no indication that the amount of the shortfall would be as high as we are talking about now, that is, \$1 billion.

I would point out that the essence of clauses 383 to 392 limits the amount to which each province will be entitled. That is a significant constraint of itself. In addition, the government is amending the formula for calculating equalization payments, which, in our opinion was unsatisfactory. I would point out that the government included only 50% of royalties or other forms of revenue related to natural resources, which, to our mind, was totally insufficient. If the government wants equalization to play the role it was created for and enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, all revenues from natural resources must be taken into account. In our opinion, the formula was already a hybrid, as it took into account only half of these revenues. We continue to believe that all revenue must be taken into account in order to establish the real level of equalization and transfer payments to which Quebec and the other provinces are entitled.

If we go back further, the equalization formula and stable principles for it to be determined on were part of a series of demands the Conservative government failed to meet. Despite what the Prime Minister, Conservative MPs from Quebec and the Minister of Finance say, it is incorrect to say that the fiscal imbalance has been resolved. On this point, there is consensus in the Quebec National Assembly and in Quebec. The fiscal imbalance has not been resolved.

Government Orders

For it to be resolved, the levels of transfer payments for social programs such as health care, post-secondary education and social solidarity would have to be returned to 1994-95 levels, just before the Minister of Finance, Paul Martin at the time, began his unilateral cuts and began shovelling his financial problems into the yards of the provinces and Quebec. That is why there is still an \$820 million shortfall in Quebec in transfers for post-secondary education. Canada-wide, the figure is \$3.2 billion. Efforts were made in the past for health care, but, in the case of post-secondary education programs, we remain at the 1994-95 levels. That is unacceptable.

Once the levels have been restored, we want the federal government and the Government of Quebec to negotiate equivalent transfers of tax room to Quebec. It is very clear, as we can see today with Bill C-10, that federal transfers to Quebec and the provinces are still subject to federal arbitrariness. The only way to make sure that Quebec has the financial autonomy it needs to discharge its responsibilities, even within the Canadian federation, is to transfer tax room to Quebec, as has been done in the past.

Under Lester B. Pearson, the transfer made at the request of Jean Lesage made the Quiet Revolution possible and allowed Quebec to catch up. There was also a transfer in 1977 under René Lévesque. Whether you are a federalist or a sovereigntist, when you work for Quebec's interests, you get results. The transfer made in 1977 was essentially for health care.

What we are asking for is not new, but for these transfers to take place, the government must restore the 1994-95 levels, then negotiate with Quebec to transfer the tax room these transfers represent.

There is still another problem: the Conservative government had promised on two or three separate occasions to address the issue of the federal spending power. It is very clear to us that what is needed is not to restrict or limit the federal spending power, but to eliminate it. The only way to do this is to give Quebec and any province that so desires the chance to opt out of any federal program put in place in the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec, with full compensation and no strings attached. We are still waiting for the bill, but I seriously doubt that we will ever see it. If the government cannot keep its word on equalization and the formula it put in place barely a year and half ago, when it promised that equalization would be guaranteed for the long term, I would be very surprised if it kept its promise on the federal spending power, when it has not even begun creating the conditions to fulfill it.

• (1235)

This is regrettable. Once again, I invite all the members of this House to vote in favour of deleting clauses 383 to 392.

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Joliette for his wonderful explanation. Thus, very shortly there will be a \$1 billion shortfall for Quebec. For those who do not have that kind of money and who never will, it consists of a thousand \$1 million dollar bills stacked one on top of the other. It is a great deal of money with which a great many things can be done and, without which, they cannot be done.

It is a large hole in Ms. Jérôme-Forget's coffers, which she talks about constantly. At present, there is not much in the coffers. One of the reasons is probably the cuts made there also. The National

Assembly decided to unanimously denounce the cuts. All federalists, as well as the sovereigntists, in the National Assembly of Quebec have spoken out against this. It is unanimous and it is Quebec that speaks in the National Assembly and not two or three persons in this House. It is all of Quebec.

All members of the House who are not members of the Bloc, save one, will vote against Quebec on this matter. We understand why. In fact, this is all about the rules of caucus. In caucus, democracy prevails: the majority decides and the minority follows. Our members are in the minority everywhere, no matter what we do, and will always be obliged to defend the positions established by the Canadian majority that wants these cuts. They will always back Canada rather than Quebec.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Drummond for his extremely pertinent question. In a debate on equalization, one sees the importance of the debate that went on during the election campaign. When campaigning started, the Conservatives tried to question the legitimacy of the Bloc Québécois and the votes of millions of Quebeckers in the last 18 years.

Whether in 1993, 1997, 2000, 2004, 2006 or again in 2008 at the last election, the people of Quebec each time decided that the majority of their deputation would be under the Bloc Québécois banner. Why? They are very much aware, as they are this very day, that the only party that will stand up and without compromise defend the interests and values of Quebec is the Bloc Québécois.

As long as we remain within the Canadian federation, the Bloc Québécois will have a role to play. I am certain that, in the future, as in the past, Quebeckers will continue to send a majority of MPs who truly defend their interests and their values, that is MPs from the Bloc Québécois.

Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for this extremely enriching and very true speech. I strongly support his comments.

As my colleague from Drummond has said, it is a matter of Quebec losing one billion dollars. I wonder how the Government of Quebec will be able to plan certain budgets in future without really knowing the true amounts it will be getting from Ottawa. It would also be important to point out that this is not money being given to us by Ottawa, but money being returned to us. Our money. Our work provided that money, which was transferred to Ottawa. It needs to come back to us.

A little aside concerning the Conservative ideology. Alberta is receiving ongoing transfer payments, according to a certain progression, while equalization payments to the other provinces are being slashed.

Government Orders

Does my colleague find it logical that rich Alberta continues to get money, while the other provinces watch their equalization transfers getting cut back—equalization that is not only justified, but necessary, especially for the development of Quebec?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Louis-Hébert for his question. This illustrates what Canadian federalism is really all about. The federal government will make a transfer for a specific program as long as it feels it will enhance its visibility.

Take social housing, for example. The federal government implemented a program. The provinces, Quebec in particular, took advantage of it to respond to social housing needs. All of a sudden, in the mid-1990s, funding was slashed and Quebec was left to pick up the pieces. That is always the danger. Even worse, all of the programs in the past few years have been based on population—

● (1240)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the amendments that have been proposed for the budget implementation act. I am going to be dealing specifically with clause 362, which has to do with the student loan amendments, and clause 394, which has to do with pay equity.

With regard to student loans, I want to talk specifically about the requirements for additional documentation. This section of the bill deals with the fact that anybody who receives Canada student loans will be required to provide additional documents to the minister upon request. It creates a host of new penalties for false statements or omissions and also appears to permit the minister to retroactively punish students for making a false statement or omission in their application for Canada student loans.

In this day and age, we want to make post-secondary education as accessible as possible to students. We know that in times of economic downturn, it is very important for people to be able to upgrade their skills and education, so that when the economy turns around they have an opportunity to take advantage of the economy as it moves up.

This clause is particularly troubling because it is going to put additional barriers in front of getting education. Currently, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is conducting a post-secondary education review. It is reviewing a program called PSSSP, the post-secondary student support program. One of the options being floated is that some first nations students will be channelled into applying for Canada student loans.

We already know that when it comes to post-secondary education, first nations students have less access, more barriers, and a lower graduation rate. Yet, we also know that in many provinces the first nations and Métis are a significant part of the student population. It is of concern that we are revamping a program that will affect students broadly in terms of access with the potential to impact first nations students more directly.

At a February 23 gathering of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, National Chief Phil Fontaine spoke about the

importance of education. He was speaking about kindergarten to grade 12, but I think this also applies to post-secondary. He talked about the fact that the cost of doing nothing is astronomical. He went on to say:

I recently read an editorial in the Star Phoenix which projected that the First Nation and Métis population in Saskatchewan could account for approximately 23% of the labor force by 2016. The implications of this are huge, and not just here but across the country. Nationally, more than 600,000 Aboriginal youth will be entering the labour market by 2026, with the potential to make a major contribution to the Canadian economy estimated at \$71 billion. The social and economic costs will be financially crippling to the provincial and federal governments if we don't make the right decisions today.

I would argue that there is a serious omission in a budget implementation that does not consider the impacts on both Canadian students and first nations, Métis and Inuit students.

Many people have talked eloquently in the House about pay equity. It is actually called the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. Since 2006, we have seen a continuous erosion of women's equality in this country, whether it is the removal of the court challenges program, the removal of the word equality from the Status of Women website, or the underfunding of women's organizations that can provide a perspective that is lacking in the House. Only 20% of the members of the House are women. It is very important to fund those women's organizations to make sure that that representation in economic and social policy is heard by the government when it is developing legislation. In the budget implementation act and the budget itself, we saw the virtual absence of women.

I want to touch briefly on first nations. The Québec Native Women's Association issued a press release when it examined what was in the budget. It talked about the fact that the investment plans in infrastructure and industries tend to benefit the sectors of activities that are predominantly comprised of a male workforce. The double discrimination faced by aboriginal women has already led to a feminization of poverty and the economic struggle will no doubt exacerbate their marginalization. The press release goes on to talk about the fact that the United Nations has provided numerous recommendations on key areas of concerns in regard to its human rights obligations. Sadly these recommendations were blatantly ignored by this present budget.

● (1245)

The Native Women's Association of Canada talked about the need to have aboriginal women specifically mentioned as part of the stimulus plan. Instead, we heard only a general comment about aboriginal issues such as social housing on reserves, aboriginal skills and training, child and family services. It went on to talk about the fact that women are not specifically mentioned. When we know that there are no programs, services and infrastructure specifically geared toward women and women's issues, they simply get left off the table.

Government Orders

I bring this up in the context of pay equity because one of the comments made in the House was that we need to ensure that families in this country have access to reasonable compensation. The former pay equity task force from 2004 which did hundreds of hours of consultation from coast to coast to coast, talked to business, trade unions, individual stakeholders and came out with a very substantial set of recommendations which have been ignored since 2004. So it is not just the current government that ignored it, it was ignored in the past as well. That pay equity task force would have put in place some very real measures to tackle equal pay for work of equal value, and let us be clear, that is what we are talking about. We are talking about equal pay for work of equal value, and that gets lost in the noise and the rhetoric in the House.

The current piece of legislation effectively rolls back the clock. We know that women in Canada, on average, make somewhere around seventy-some odd cents to the dollar for every dollar that a man makes. What we really needed was some teeth around the pay equity legislation. Furthermore, it should never have been included in a budget implementation bill. It should have been a stand-alone piece of legislation, so that the Status of Women committee would have had the opportunity to call witnesses, to fully examine the piece of legislation to make sure that it reflected what was in the pay equity task force.

Instead, we have an attempt to bury a piece of legislation in an omnibus bill without adequate oversight. That applies to any number of other aspects that are buried in the bill including navigable waters.

I want to quote from a couple of press releases. The Public Service Alliance of Canada issued a press release on February 23 that said:

PSAC slams Budget Implementation Act for undermining collective bargaining and threatening women's right to pay equity.

It went on to say:

The Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act would make it virtually impossible for women in the federal public sector to be paid equal pay for work of equal value. It uses pay equity as a bargaining chip during negotiations where the employer historically holds the balance of power. It bars unions from supporting members who want to make pay equity claims. Bill C-10 would do nothing to narrow the income gap between women and men in the federal public service.

In a detailed briefing note, prepared by the women's and human rights officer at the Public Service Alliance Canada, entitled "The end of pay equity for women in the federal public service", it talks about restricting access. I am going to read a couple of sections. It says:

The Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act will restrict the substance and the application of pay equity in the public sector. This bill would remove the right of public sector workers to file complaints for pay equity with the Canadian Human Rights Commission. The bill would make it more difficult to claim pay equity, by redefining the notion of "female predominant" job group to require that women make up 70% of workers in the position. It also redefines the criteria used to evaluate whether jobs are of "equal" value.

It goes on to talk about the \$50,000 fine on any union that would encourage or assist its members in filing a pay equity complaint and it talks about the fact that pay equity is a fundamental human right that has been protected by the Canadian Human Rights Act since 1977.

We know this is a signature attempt by the government to continue to undermine women's equality in this country. It is rolling back the clock on women's rights and it signals the government's overall

approach to women's issues. I would urge members of the House to support the amendment to strip this out of the budget implementation bill and put it back where it rightly belongs, in front of the Status of Women committee, so it can have some fulsome discussion on this and appropriate oversight.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are at the report stage for the budget implementation bill. In the group of proposed amendments today, there are two types of amendments that do not belong in the budget bill. In terms of equalization, the federal government has tabled an economic stimulus budget that, with one hand, is taking from Quebec what it is giving with the other.

The equalization system, as Canada has developed it, is financed entirely by the federal government with the help of taxes paid by Canadians and Quebecers. It is based on a fundamental commitment to equality, so that citizens have access to public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation. In other words, the formula that has been determined over the years aims to measure a province's fiscal ability to offer public services. But it does not take into account the various factors that could influence the volume or cost of public services in a province, with the exception of its size and population.

In this case, the decision was made to unilaterally change the procedure. Quebec ends up with a shortfall of some \$1 billion, while Quebec, like the other provinces in Canada, is coping with major problems, reduced consumer spending, and a need to jump-start the economy. On the one hand we are told that money will be invested, in infrastructure for example, in order to stimulate consumption, while on the other they are taking away the leeway Quebec was counting on in order to be able to have access to it. Moreover, the Quebec finance minister wrote a letter objecting to this and calling upon the federal government to reconsider its assessment of the situation and to put on the table what was really important. To that end, the Bloc Québécois has introduced some motions to get that part of the bill deleted.

The fact is that the Conservatives can count on Liberal support. This coalition of the blue and the red is a bit like Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. No matter which one is in power, we have the same centralizing federal government steamroller. This is particularly the case for this matter of the cuts to equalization, which will hurt Quebec a great deal.

Another important aspect concerns the whole issue of pay equity. In this block of amendments, there are also ones aimed at restoring the important status of pay equity. We are, moreover, amazed to find measures like this in a bill to implement the budget. We have seen this sort of model in the U.S. Congress, particularly under the Republicans, when they were adding amendments onto omnibus bills with undesirable results.

Government Orders

The Bloc Québécois is, of course, in favour of pay equity and considers it a non-negotiable right. In order to ensure that pay equity exists for all Quebec and Canadian working women, proactive federal legislation is necessary that will cover all women in areas under federal jurisdiction.

In the present bill, rather than give each worker equal rights, an additional category of women is created who are not covered by the same conditions. One protection is given to women in the public sector, and another to those not covered by this bill. This strikes us as unfair to the women affected by this bill.

The Bloc Québécois opposes the part that makes pay equity a negotiable right within a collective agreement. The Bloc would rather see the creation of sectoral committees on pay equity, as has been done in Quebec. We take exception to the fact that this bill creates a third category of workers in Quebec. As I was saying earlier, one category falls under Quebec pay equity legislation, another falls under federal legislation on equitable compensation and the remaining category is in the federally regulated private sector and certain crown corporations and has an ineffective complaint system.

Thus, there are three different categories of citizens in this pay equity legislation. Something does not make sense here. The federal government should not have ventured into this territory. It has put forward measures that will create more inequities, rather than solve any problems.

• (1255)

We believe that the gaps, omissions and false premises, including the notion of a market economy in this bill, make it unacceptable and out of sync with Quebec's values.

If the Conservative government believes that equitable compensation is necessary in the government, why would that not also be the case for private businesses under federal jurisdiction, unless it believes that this principle is too costly and harmful to private enterprise?

Equity is established not based on the rights of the workers in question, but rather based on the interests of the employers who hire them. This is a very unacceptable practice and I believe the Conservatives should have reversed their position. That is why we, particularly as members of the Bloc Québécois, have strongly held beliefs on the issue of pay equity in Quebec, a practice that has not been sufficiently developed. We would like to see the Conservative government reverse its stance on this issue. Otherwise, it will have the public to answer to.

Part II of the bill deals with equitable compensation and enacts the Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act. The term pay equity never appears in the bill. It speaks instead about equitable compensation, without ever defining it. This terminological fuzziness could well present problems when it comes to legal interpretations and we may find ourselves facing one of the obstacles that the Conservatives claimed to eliminate, that is to say, endless battles before the courts which will ensure that female workers never get justice.

The bill applies strictly to employers in the public sector: Treasury Board, the RCMP and certain agencies and crown corporations. Companies under federal jurisdiction are not covered, nor are certain

other crown corporations, for example Canada Post and the CBC. They are therefore creating a great muddle that ultimately will do nothing to improve the situation.

The government could have forged ahead in this budget with steps that would have really helped Quebec's economy, especially forestry and manufacturing. We see once again today how much these sectors need help but have been abandoned by the government. We need action, loan guarantees, and some original thinking. The Bloc Québécois suggested some measures last fall. It was also the only opposition party to come up with some specific suggestions.

In addition to the things that are missing from this stimulus budget but are so important to Quebec that the Bloc Québécois must oppose the bill, the government has included various measures that are not really related to the budget and, most importantly, should not be changed in any case in the way they want to right now if we want to be fair toward the provinces and if we say they have the funding they need to jump-start their economies.

When the Finance Minister boasts of having invested billions of dollars in infrastructure to boost the economy while at the same time he cuts Quebec's equalization payments, he creates a situation in which Quebec will not have the funds it needs to activate the tripartite programs requiring federal, provincial and municipal participation. If Quebec had been left some leeway with its equalization payments, there would have been a lot more positive effects on the economy and we would really have had a stimulus package to counter the economic downturn.

In that regard, the Conservative government has not been able to kick its old laissez-faire habit. Even when told that a change in approach is needed to deal with the situation, we see several typical Conservative behaviours. One of them is to penalize Quebec by cutting equalization payments. This has draconian consequences for the Government of Quebec, which will have particular difficulty preparing its budget.

I am being signalled that I have only one minute left. We also realize that this approach is one of main factors that has led an increasing number of Quebecers to consider that if they controlled all their taxes—an important aspect of sovereignty—they could make decisions as an adult nation. They would not be required to conduct such debates or to depend on a government that, from one year to the next, changes the funding provided by equalization. In my opinion, both Canadians and Quebecers would be much happier with that sort of arrangement.

• (1300)

While waiting for the time when the Quebec people decide to pursue the sovereignist project, the Bloc Québécois is here to defend the interests of Quebec. We are doing so again with the proposed amendments to the bill and by the Bloc Québécois' position, which is unlike that of the Liberals who have chosen to be associated with a Conservative budget that is harmful to Quebec. We have clearly defended the positions of Quebec and we will continue to do so.

Government Orders

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

He raised the subject of pay equity. I would like to point out that, today, women earn some 70.5¢ for every dollar men earn. The figure is 64¢, for women of colour and 46¢ for aboriginal women.

I would like my colleague's opinion on the Conservative government's attack on pay equity in the budget. How does he see it stimulating the economy? I do not see it doing so. I would also like his opinion on the fact that our women colleagues in the Liberal party, who in the past defended the rights of women, are now supporting this budget.

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, pay equity is a right. It is not a measure to revive the economy. It is a woman's right, a right that the government should respect and put in practice through appropriate measures.

This budget sets up a three tier system, according to the type of employer a female employee works for. It is hard to see how this sort of arrangement will improve the situation of women. In the end, there will be no economic impact, obviously, because recovery will take a long time. There will still be important court challenges. Pay equity must not be made dependent on its effect on the economy. It must be seen as the right to equal pay for work of equal value. All women are entitled to the same wage as men when they do work requiring similar skills, effort and responsibility, in similar working conditions. To link this recognition to employer type, to create different categories according to the place of work—the public, private or para public sectors—is not the road to the future. A forward step must be taken with a pay equity measure that would translate to full equality and that would enable a woman to earn an equal salary for equal and similar work.

So, in the budget, the government should have set this approach aside and instead include a real plan for economic recovery.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. I have a question for him.

Of course, question pay equity for women and give them certain rights publicly, but ensure that, privately, they have no rights, that is more or less the Conservative party style. It has already attacked the status of women and the court challenges programs. So, this is in much the same style. I would like to hear what my colleague has to say on this.

There is also the fact that the government cut equalization payments. It has failed to support our industries in the manufacturing sector and, furthermore, continues to allow tax havens to the tune of \$80 billion. I would like my colleague's comments in this regard.

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, on the issue of pay equity, what is ridiculous about this bill is that it creates one group of women who will be subject to the federal equitable compensation legislation and another group, employees of certain crown corporations, who will have to use the ineffective complaint system in the federally regulated private sector. Under the guise of creating more equity, the government is creating more inequity. The answer is there in the wording of the bill.

As for the whole issue of equalization, Quebec wants no more of this mechanism that, year after year, gives it unpredictable payments. It is like a sword of Damocles the federal government is dangling above Quebec's head. This time, it has major consequences. The cuts will be in the order of \$1 billion, and when the effectiveness of the overall federal budget measures is assessed, it will come to light that the provinces, and especially Quebec, have not been able to spend the necessary money, because they will have had to make up for the decrease in equalization funding.

● (1305)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate. Seeing no other speakers, pursuant to an order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of Motions Nos. 32, 43 and 53 are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred.

[*Translation*]

The recorded division on Motion No. 32 will also apply to Motions Nos. 33 to 42.

[*English*]

The recorded division on Motion No. 43 will also apply to Motions Nos. 44 to 52.

The recorded division on Motion No. 53 will also apply to Motions Nos. 54 to 65.

Pursuant to an order made earlier today, the recorded divisions stand deferred until later today at 3 p.m.

* * *

CANADA GRAIN ACT

Hon. Diane Finley (for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board) moved that Bill C-13, An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act, chapter 22 of the Statutes of Canada, 1998 and chapter 25 of the Statutes of Canada, 2004, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to be here today to speak to the proposed amendments to the Canada Grain Act. The government puts a high priority on this legislation because farmers have asked for it and we agree that it is high time that this act was brought into the 21st century.

Commitment to producers is shown in our improvement to the Canadian Grain Commission's mandate. In the past, because it includes the phrase "in the interests of grain producers", it has from time to time resulted in differing interpretations of what that means. Based on the recommendations from both the COMPAS group and the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Canadian Grain Commission's mandate will be split into two parts.

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Part one will set out the CGC's core mandate to establish and maintain standards of quality for Canadian grain and to regulate grain handling. Part one is undertaken in the interest of all Canadians, but in the interests of producers we felt that we needed to make sure they were specifically recognized. Therefore, part two will establish that the Canadian Grain Commission shall specifically protect producers' interests with respect to a few things.

The first is with respect to deliveries to elevators and grain dealers, the second is with respect to access to binding CGC determination of grades and dockage, and the third is the allocation of producer cars. We have made changes and improvements to the mandate in order to address the concerns we have heard from the industry across Canada.

The Canadian grain sector stands out as a success story among the considerable accomplishments of Canadian agriculture over the last 100 years. Due to the tremendous work of our producers, Canadian wheat, barley and other grains are known by our customers all over the world for their unequalled consistency, cleanliness and quality.

On a yearly basis, farmers earn about \$10 billion from grain production in this country. That money helps to keep the economy of Canada running, both urban and rural. It sustains employment through the grain production chain, from farm input suppliers to elevators, to people who transport the grain and to processors. These dollars support our rural communities, which contribute so much to Canada's economy.

To put it in more concrete terms, it is Canadian grain growers who sustain our health and well-being. They are the people who put bread every day on our tables.

This government has taken concrete action in support of the vital agricultural sector in our economy. The minister has always talked about putting farmers first, and he has done that.

Almost three years ago, one of our first acts as a new government was in the interest of grain producers. We accelerated the grains and oilseeds payment program. It was my privilege and pleasure at that time to work with the opposition parties in the House to get that bill through. We worked on it with all the other parties and were able to get quick passage of that bill and those changes.

We are investing more than \$2 billion in the development of biofuels to open up new markets for our grain and oilseed producers, to create new jobs for our rural communities and to create a better environment for Canadians. We have given producers a chance to participate in those programs. These dollars have helped with the planning of new biofuel projects across Canada and will help build biofuel and biodiesel plants.

We have improved cash advance programming by doubling the interest-free portion for producers. We are helping the transfer of family farms to young farmers by boosting the capital gains exemption. At the WTO agriculture negotiations, we remain committed to pursuing an outcome that benefits Canada's entire agriculture sector.

Many of us are working to open up our grain marketing structures in order to provide choice for producers. New marketing opportunities will help Canada get through the current economic uncertainty and come out stronger than ever.

As well, we need to move forward on stable, bankable programs. These programs will also help farmers weather the storm and continue to drive the Canadian economy. That is what the goal of the Growing Forward framework is all about: making Canadian agriculture more stable in the present, and then building a strong agricultural sector for the future.

We are working with the provinces and territories to finalize the suite of non-business risk management programs that will be offered in each province. Our goal is to implement those programs before April 1, and we are making good progress on that front.

In terms of business risk management programs, we find them to be a key part of Growing Forward. In the budget delivered in January, we took steps to ensure that Canada and its agricultural industry emerge stronger than ever from the current economic crisis.

I would like to talk about a couple of the things that were in that budget. We announced a \$500-million agricultural flexibility plan aimed at helping farmers with regional market challenges and opportunities. These funds will help farmers cope with the cost-of-production pressures, promote innovation, and ensure environmental sustainability.

We also set \$50 million aside to strengthen our slaughter and meat processing capacity. That is to aid slaughter plants other than the big ones that we see in the country.

We set \$1 billion aside for a community adjustment fund aimed at helping rural communities adopt and adapt to economic challenges.

● (1310)

I would like to talk a little about Bill C-13, the bill that is before us today, and about our commitment to grain producers. The amendments that the government is proposing to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission are evidence of our commitment to grain producers. I already mentioned the mandate that specifically speaks to the interests of grain producers. Canada's quality assurance system for grain provides a key competitive advantage for our farmers. The amendments that we are proposing will build on that advantage.

When our global customers choose Canadian grain for processing, they count on consistent quality and cleanliness with every delivery. The world-class reputation that our Canadian grains enjoy around the globe has been earned.

First and foremost it has been earned through the hard work of our farmers. Grain handling companies, research scientists, and the Canadian Grain Commission have certainly played a role in building that golden reputation. Our edge in the marketplace is all about quality. Much of the responsibility for quality resides with the Canadian Grain Commission and the quality assurance system that it administers under the Canada Grain Act. That is why this act and the changes that we are making to it are so important.

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The grain industry is changing, and the legislative tools required to keep the industry competitive need to change along with it. The Canada Grain Act has not been amended substantially in almost 40 years, so it is time now for us to take a look at that act and make the changes that are relevant to farmers across the country.

The marketplace has evolved. We all understand that. We have a major new customer for grains in the form of the biofuels industry, which has been supported by initiatives put in place by this government.

We have quality management systems that allow amounts of grain with specific qualities wanted by buyers to be kept separate throughout the handling system. That is a huge change from the system that we have had in the past, which has been just a huge bulk handling system. We have new initiatives in place for farmers who want to be able to deliver smaller amounts of grain with specific qualities to their customers.

We have niche marketing. We have processing that is going on in grains across Canada. We also have a broader range of crops in Canada that we need to consider.

In the mid-1990s the reform of the Western Grain Transportation Act triggered a wholesale diversification in western Canada as producers opted to market their grain through livestock or switch to other crops such as oilseed, pulse crops or horticultural crops. In my area, it meant a substantive change; we had probably 80% or 90% grain growing, and now I think we are probably below 50%. Across the prairies, about one-third of the crop land is now growing wheat, and two-thirds are other crops, which we were not growing 20 years ago.

Still we need an act that is relevant to the present and to the future, so I would like to speak to the specific amendments that we are proposing for the Canada Grain Act. These amendments are to help keep our producers competitive by improving the regulatory environment for Canada's grain sector.

The proposed changes to the Canada Grain Act and the Canadian Grain Commission will help the grain sector meet the challenges of a more competitive and market-oriented sector for the 21st century. By removing unnecessary mandatory costs from the grain handling system, the bill works to build a lower cost, more effective and innovative grain sector for our producers.

We are modernizing the regulatory environment. As all costs in the system eventually work their way to farmers, this will result in a less costly system for farmers.

The amendments that we made just did not come out of thin air. They reflect the direction of both the COMPAS report and the good work that was done by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. Both reports reflect extensive consultations that were held with the sector in preparing them. The fact is that this package is built on many of those recommendations, and particularly on the standing committee recommendations. In short, these amendments speak to the will and to the needs of the Canadian grain industry.

I would like to speak specifically about three or four of the changes that we are suggesting.

First, we are suggesting that inward inspection and weighing of grains no longer be mandatory in western Canada. There is no reason to require something that is not necessary, particularly when the cost comes out of the bottom line of farmers and the grain industry.

Currently when farmers deliver grain to the elevator it is graded, the grade is agreed to by the farmers, and then they unload their grain. This will not change. However, currently the Grain Commission is also required to inspect and weight each railcar or truck lot of western grain that is handled by licensed terminal elevators.

• (1315)

The industry has been calling for change in this area for some years now, because mandatory inspections impose costs and are not essential to ensure grain quality. Bill C-13 moves to make inward inspection and weighing no longer mandatory. Instead, shippers of grain will be able to request an inspection at their discretion when they feel that the benefit justifies the cost. Elevators will also be required to allow access to private inspectors when an inspection is requested, and that is a crucial availability that farmers need to maintain.

The Canadian Grain Commission would also be authorized to provide grade arbitration if the parties to a transaction request it. This means that if there is a dispute about a grade, the Canadian Grain Commission would be able to impartially determine the grade.

I want to be clear. This does not mean that grain would go through the system without inspection. Outward inspection would still be required when grain is loaded onto vessels for export, and export vessel shipments would continue to require certification by the CGC, based on inspection and weighing by CGC personnel.

With the bill in place, our customers will be assured that they can continue to have confidence in Canada's grain quality assurance system.

To summarize, the Canadian Grain Commission would continue to regulate the grain handling system for the benefit of producers. It would continue to license grain handlers and dealers. It would continue to require them to have proper grading and weighing equipment and to properly document their purchases. It would also require them to continue to ensure that producers have access to grade arbitration by the Canadian Grain Commission.

The bill would actually enhance farmers' protection by extending Canadian Grain Commission grade and dockage arbitration to farmers delivering to process elevators and grain dealers. Currently, if a producer disagrees with the grade or dockage received for a grain delivery at a licensed elevator, he can ask the CGC to determine the grade and dockage and make a binding decision, but he does not have that same opportunity with regard to other facilities or to grain dealers. The bill proposes to extend this service to deliveries to all licensed grain handlers, including process elevators and grain dealers. Farmers have never had this protection before.

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Second, the bill proposes that the Grain Commission would get out of the business of collecting and holding security deposits from licensed elevators and grain dealers under the producer payment security program. The present program has a cost: it ties up working capital that then has no return. The ultimate bill lands in the farmer's mailbox.

The present system has holes in it. We all know that there are some notable failures in which producers found out the security systems do not guarantee that they would be paid. These amendments mean that the field would be open for farmers and farm organizations to develop alternative approaches to producer payment security. In fact, the government has been assisting farm organizations in their efforts to find the appropriate alternative mechanisms for themselves.

Through the private sector risk management partnership program, the government is helping the Canadian Federation of Agriculture to study alternatives. We understand and we know that there are concerns across the country with regard to these proposals, and we are certainly more than willing to work with the opposition at committee to make the changes that may be necessary in this area.

In addition—

An hon. member: That'll be a change.

Mr. David Anderson: I am glad to hear my colleague from across the way agree that he believes he can work with us on this. So it is good to see that we will be able to get that co-operation at the committee that we have had so many other times and on so many other bills.

The proposed legislation has several additional amendments to modernize the act. These amendments would do things such as improve the clarity in the application and the enforcement of existing provisions. They would reflect current practices as things have changed over the years. They would enhance producer protection, which is important. They would also eliminate some of the provisions that are no longer used.

The proposed amendments to the Canadian Grain Act would help the grain sector continue to evolve in a direction of greater competitiveness, greater freedom for farmers to manage risks, and effective regulatory oversight where it is needed.

In conclusion, with these amendments, we have put farmers first. I believe that the amendments proposed in the bill would help build a competitive and innovative grain sector by doing a few things. One of those would be to reduce costs.

As we know, farmers bear the burden of all the costs that are passed on to them. This is one way we could reduce those input costs that we are being told are so heavy on farmers these days.

It would improve competitiveness. It clearly improves regulation, and it provides choice for our producers and others in the grain sector.

However, given the spirited debate that we had here when this proposed legislation was introduced a year ago, we recognize that there are some issues that we may want to discuss at standing committee.

● (1320)

As I have pointed out throughout my speech, we are willing to work with the opposition to make the amendments that will work for western Canadians and, indeed, all Canadian farmers. I welcome that discussion and I welcome the standing committee's input into helping to make this legislation the best that it can be.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually wondered if the parliamentary secretary would get to Bill C-13 when he started, but I can understand why he would avoid it. The bill completely ignores the work and the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. The parliamentary secretary and the current minister were part of that committee.

I have a couple of questions for the parliamentary secretary on what he said at the beginning. He went to some length to state that the government was putting farmers first when the direct opposite is true. I believe the government's performance in agriculture is a record of failure. Would the parliamentary secretary agree with me on these points which prove it is a record of failure?

He talked about stable, bankable programs. We now know that AgriStability and AgriInvest, the two new bankable programs from Growing Forward, in times of declining prices, when there is a decline of 15% in terms of income, they actually return \$7,500 less than the old CAIS program, which the government opposite railed against.

In terms of AgriFlex and the promised \$500 million during the campaign over four years, that is really \$190 million of new money over five years. Another broken commitment. It cancelled the cost of production program, the \$100 million annually that went to producers. Would he not call that a failure?

Finally, on AgriRecovery, it just does not do the job in terms—

● (1325)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am sorry to cut off the hon. member but I do have to allow time for other questions.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I came here today to talk about the positive things that have happened in agriculture and this bill is certainly one of those things that is happening that is a positive thing for western Canadian farmers.

The member opposite may not want us to support agriculture. His government had a dismal record in terms of supporting it and its programs consistently failed. However, this government has made a commitment to agriculture and has extended it in a whole host of ways, including the support programs that he mentioned.

However, I want to talk about this bill today and some of the things that it does because it does support producers. I just want to run through them again and talk about the good things about it. This bill, in its mandate, recognizes that producers' interests need to be protected by the government and so we have moved ahead to bring that forward.

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The elimination of the inward inspection wing, from a practical perspective as a western Canadian farmer, is something that reduces costs. If I need to have an inspection done when I deliver, I can call that in and have that done. However, it does not change anything when I deliver my grain to the elevator. We sit down, agree on a grade and I can deliver it, which is an improvement as far as I am concerned.

We have made some suggestions in terms of the producers' security program but we are certainly open to other suggestions. The member opposite spoke about some things that have nothing to do with the bill here but we would be willing to listen to his contributions there as well.

We do need to modernize this bill in order to help out our producers and we are trying to do that.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of issues that I would like my colleague to respond to.

Since the ending of the Crow rate on the prairies, it has changed some of the secondary processing that is going on, on the prairies. The livestock feeding industry is huge in my area and that has come about because of that change. Maybe he could comment on the aspects of the changes we are proposing in Bill C-13 that would help to address the developments that have taken place since the Crow rate ended.

I am also interested in his comments on the security issue. I know I have dealt with an issue in my area where some producers were harmed by the failure of a grain company. He talks about alternative methods. I am not sure if there were alternative methods of ensuring the farmers against loss. I was not at the ag committee when these discussions took place, so maybe he could expand for me and for the House on some of the proposals that were brought forward to replace that security aspect of the Canadian Grain Commission.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I have enough time to address all of those issues but I would like to because it is a discussion about the positive things of agriculture.

Huge changes took place in western Canada because of the change in the Crow rate. Obviously my colleague's area of Lethbridge and around there have benefited immensely from that, because they now have a huge feeder industry that would not necessarily have been there otherwise.

There are other things that have really grown in the agriculture of western Canada. We see the pulse industry that has just exploded over the last couple of decades. That is an industry that was not even part of my region 15 years ago. Now there are pulses, peas, lentils, chickpeas and all kinds of things growing there. The canola industry has really expanded and grown across western Canada.

In terms of the security issues, there are a number of ways that security can be dealt with. We have had discussions at different times about everything from either continuing the bonding or strengthening the bonding issue or removing the bonding issue to things like self-insurance where farmers can self-insure their own transactions to clearinghouses that might be put in place to protect those transactions.

There is a number of options out there and we are willing to talk about those with the opposition to see how we can best represent and protect western Canadians and Canadian producers.

• (1330)

Mr. Rick Casson: Mr. Speaker, maybe the member and I could get into a little one on one debate if nobody else gets up on questions and comments.

The effect of the arbitration aspect is something that interests me in a personal way that I cannot get into here. However, when a producer finds himself in conflict with the grade of the grain that he has put up for sale, in the past there was a method for a producer to have an arbitrary decision made.

What changes in Bill C-13 would address or enhance that. Do these changes have anything to do with the bigger grain terminals on the prairies, and were they delivered to a local elevator or one of these terminals? I am just not clear on that and maybe the member could help me with that.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in the past, when producers had some sort of problem in terms of grading, they were able to go through a process through the Canadian Grain Commission. They were able to sit before a tribunal and then a decision was made about which way the grade dispute should be handled.

The suggestion in the amendments in the bill would set it up so that when I deliver my grain to an elevator it is graded, as it usually was in the past. If it is sent in a producer car, whatever the agreement would be at the other end and what the grade would be, if I have an issue with that I could take it up directly with the Grain Commission. I could go to the industry first and say that I do not agree with its grading. If we cannot reach some sort of resolution with the industry, then I could take that up directly with the Grain Commission. It would be an independent third party separate from the process, so it would be able to make an independent decision as to what the grade on that product would be.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary would know that one of the key recommendations of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food was that there would be a cost of benefit analysis done prior to the bill being brought into place. Has that been done and, if so, is he willing to table that cost benefit analysis with the House today?

One of the big concerns from primary producers is that the bonding of grain companies has been done away with by the bill. That is there to protect primary producers. Why is the government weakening farmers' protections and letting industry basically do as it pleases?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I will address the issue of bonding and security. Obviously it does provide some protection for producers but there is a cost to it as well. We have heard from producers who have asked to have the cost removed. We have heard from other producers who do not mind paying the cost in order to be bonded and protected.

The discussion needs to take place at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food about what the proper balance is between those two things. We look forward to working toward modernizing the act and getting it in place for producers across the country.

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Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated a moment ago, I am somewhat discouraged to speak at second reading of this bill. I say discouraged because Bill C-13, in the second session of the 40th Parliament, is exactly the same bill with exactly the same extensive flaws and shortcomings that were contained in the old Bill C-39 introduced in the 39th Parliament, originally on December 13, 2007.

I would refer government members, and especially the minister and his bureaucrats at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to the *Hansards* of February 1, 2008 and February 15, 2008 where extensive concerns about this bill were outlined in this House at that time.

Where have the minister, the bureaucrats at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and those at the Canadian Grain Commission been for the last year? This bill could have come in this House substantially improved. We could have started at a higher level. However, this bill is coming in with the same old flaws that were in it previously. Very prominent in those concerns was the fact that the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food's report on the Canadian Grain Commission was all but ignored.

The chair of the committee at that time, who signed off on that report, was the very minister who now puts forward this flawed bill. One would think the Minister of Agriculture would have more respect for his own signature than to sign a report making certain recommendations and then ignoring those recommendations when he has the authority as a minister to put forward the bill.

However, we all know that the Minister of Agriculture, when it comes to listening to farmers, is about as stone deaf as one can get. Even so, one would think that at least the department or the Canadian Grain Commission would have addressed some of those concerns.

We also know that the person who happens to be chief commissioner at the Canadian Grain Commission is a friend of the minister. In fact, I would wonder if that friend is more interested in protecting the minister's desires and programs than he is of protecting the very producers who he is supposed to represent.

In my question to the parliamentary secretary a moment ago, I outlined that there was absolutely no cost benefit analysis done in terms of this proposal on changes to the Canadian Grain Commission by the government. Now that is not unusual for the government. We know it did not do a cost benefit analysis when it exercised its attack on the Canadian Wheat Board.

Finally, the Parliament of Canada shut the Prime Minister and the minister down in terms of what they wanted to do in undermining the Wheat Board. Even the court system had to come in a couple of times and shut the Prime Minister down in terms of his undermining of the Canadian Wheat Board.

The government has a history of trying to undermine the very institutions that protect farmers in western Canadian, the Canadian Wheat Board and the Canadian Grain Commission. The Canadian Grain Commission does have protective measures for grain producers right across the country.

I would like to take the opportunity to put one thing that I probably should put on the record in terms of the way the minister has used his position to attack institutions that in fact protect farmers in this country.

I will quote an article from the *Melfort Journal* on February 24. The minister stood in this House and attacked the contingency fund losses of the Canadian Wheat Board, which was the wrong thing to do. In fact, that hurt grain producers commercially.

● (1335)

The quote from the *Melfort Journal* says:

Last year, the CWB registered \$7.2 billion in returns for western producers, a year which saw nearly a 50% increase in wheat revenues and nearly a 100% increase in barley and durum revenues from the previous year.

Simply put, the board outperformed its international competitors, an outstanding performance that should be recognized even by the board's most strident critics...and you sure shouldn't expect any government minister to misuse their offices and authority by telling a small portion of the story to advance their political agenda. This is an issue that goes well beyond whether you support the board or not.

I make that point because it is extremely important for Canadians to understand that the minister and the government know no low when it comes to attacking the various institutions that are there to protect the farmer community, because they clearly favour ensuring that greater benefits, greater authority or greater power accrues to the industry side of the equation, mainly the grain companies and the railways.

I was in Alberta on the weekend, at a great event in Edmonton that our party was doing. I could not help but think, when I was talking to producers there and looking back over the years, that when I first went west as a farm leader in the late 1970s, western Canadian farmers had a branch line and railway infrastructure that went into nearly every community. The cooperative movement was strong at that time. Shapiro, from the United States, had come up and talked about a pool system, and farmers in the west set up a pool system. They had Manitoba Pool Elevators, the Alberta Wheat Pool, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and organizations and cooperatives working for the farm community, so farmers had protection on that front as well.

All that is gone. Now we have grain corporations that are interested in their shareholders and the profits of their shareholders elsewhere in the world, and not in those primary producers in those rural communities.

The elevator system within that branch line infrastructure was fully paid for by primary producers. Yes, they were wooden elevators, but they were in every small town and they were fully paid for. There was no debt, and they were paid for by farmers. Now we have a system in which big grain and big railways are trying, almost on a daily basis, to close down branch lines and abolish service to those small communities. As a result, grain has to be trucked on the road, which taxpayers pay for at the provincial level. The steel that Canadian taxpayers paid for on those railways has been sold to the likes of Brazil and elsewhere, and at the end of the day farmers have poorer service and less service. Their branch lines have been torn up and they do not have the protection of the cooperative movement they once had.

The only protections farmers have any more in western Canada are, one, the Canadian Wheat Board, which the Prime Minister has tried everything to undermine and undercut, and two, the Canadian Grain Commission, which this bill is all about. Through this bill the government is trying to weaken many of the protections within the bill itself.

Looking at the bill itself tells much about the attitude of the government. In the 2008-09 report on plans and priorities, the Canadian Grain Commission outlines its mandate. The Canadian Grain Commission administers the provision to the Canada Grain Act. The Canadian Grain Commission's mandate, as set out in the act, is to:

...in the interests of the grain producers, establish and maintain standards of quality for Canadian grain and regulate grain handling in Canada, to ensure a dependable commodity for domestic and export markets.

● (1340)

The reference to the interests of primary producers is what is done away with in this particular bill. In fact, the mandate changes to say that it is more in the interests of industry than it is in those of primary producers. Again, I think that goes to my original point and my earlier question to the parliamentary secretary, which was that the government has a record of failure when it comes to the farm community. It is even extending it into this bill by making the point that it is taking away primary producers as the main interest of the mandate.

The president of the National Farmers Union, Stewart Wells, made a few key points that I want to put on the record in terms of what this bill would do to the farm community. He says in his correspondence, "The amendments will remove the requirement that the CGC operate as a public interest watchdog that regulates the overall grain industry 'in the interests of producers'. If this bill passes, the grain industry would become virtually self-regulating, and the CGC's role will be reduced to being a passive 'service provider' that provides grading, weighing and inspection services to grain companies on a fee-for-service basis. Farmers' protections will be reduced to a minimal level, while the legislation leaves the door open for companies to be able to circumvent those limited protections".

He goes on to say:

Canadian farmers have not advocated any weakening of the CGC regulatory role. At a time when grain companies like Viterra, ADM and Cargill are consolidating their hold over the market, it is obvious there needs to be a mechanism in place to provide farmers with protection.

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I would make the point that the Government of Canada is undermining that protection in this instance.

Mr. Wells goes on to say:

The current system allows grain inspectors to catch contaminated, off-condition or incorrectly represented carloads while they are being emptied, weighed, and elevated, and before they are mixed with large quantities of other grain. Eliminating this provision will have a negative effect on farmers' bottom line.

The amendments also call for eliminating the provision that grain dealers post a security bond before they can be licensed by the CGC. This provision was put in place to protect farmers who would be left holding the bag if the grain company goes bankrupt. The last point Mr. Wells makes is this:

Eliminating this requirement will not save farmers any money. It will, however, greatly increase their risk.

This is the end of Mr. Wells' comments, but they are all valid. They show a weakening of farmers' protection.

The amendments weakening farmers' relative position have been part of the minister's overall record of failure. In his December 13, 2007, introduction to the Canadian Grain Commission's performance report, the minister said that he introduced Bill C-39, an Act to amend the Canadian Grain Act to Parliament. He went on to talk about how his proposed reforms were consistent with the goals expressed in the so-called Growing Forward framework.

I am worried about Growing Forward. I mentioned earlier, in my questions to the parliamentary secretary, that if Growing Forward is the example the minister is using for the government's position, then farmers are in trouble in this country. We have seen 3,600 farmers go out of business each year. We have seen the debt load of farmers go up to \$54 billion, four times what it is per farm in the United States. We have seen the government cancel the cost of production program, a commitment by the Prime Minister in the 2006 election. He broke his word, violated his word, and cancelled cost of production in the estimates this time. That is part of Growing Forward.

● (1345)

We know that in times of declining income, AgriInvest and AgriStability in fact pay out less money than the old CAIS program that the Prime Minister hated so much.

If Growing Forward is the way and this is another example of Growing Forward, I say to the farm community, "Wake up and smell the roses", because it is a decline. It is an undermining and a deteriorating of farmers' protective measures in this country.

As I said, farmers should be worried. Let me point out some of the flaws in this particular bill. Clearly Bill C-13 does not reflect the unanimous recommendations of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food. For the minister to imply otherwise is misleading.

Why is there this contempt for the committee, and why is there this contempt by the minister for his own Conservative colleagues on that committee? His own signature was on it. Therefore, does he even undermine his own integrity?

Government Orders

The fifth recommendation in the committee report called for a cost-benefit analysis. No cost-benefit analysis has been done on the impact of Bill C-13 with respect to the contracting out of grain inspections called for in that report. In fact, the government response tabled to the original standing committee report said this:

The government considers that inspection and weighing services performed by CGC employees played a considerable role in enhancing the marketability and reputation of Canadian grain. With this in mind, we need to be cautious to ensure the benefits of any changes in the weighing and inspection services are greater than the costs this may impose on the system. The Government agrees that a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted to assess the advantages and costs that would be associated with contracting out these services.

In its response to the committee, the government admitted itself that a cost-benefit analysis should be done, yet no such cost-benefit analysis is provided. Why?

A good friend of the minister is now the chief commissioner of the CGC. He made a couple of points on this issue, and they worry me as well. He said that even without the legislation, the chief commissioner and the Canadian Grain Commission were moving ahead with changes. They have decided to end inspection services at prairie primary elevators this summer, close three prairie service centres and reduce staff.

The chief commissioner said, “The transition away from on-site inspection services means that the CGC will no longer provide official grading and weighing on grain shipments from the Prairies' terminal facilities, nor for export shipments to the United States or domestic mills”.

That is worrisome, because the chief commissioner, prior to the legislation coming in, is already making changes that will undermine our ability to ship the high-quality grain we have become noted for as a country.

I would close by saying this: we believe improvements can be made to the Canadian Grain Commission; however, major amendments will be required of the bill before us. We look forward to that discussion, and I plead with the government to listen to producers this time.

• (1350)

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two questions for the hon. member for Malpeque.

The first is, how soon can we enjoy some of the world's best oysters in Malpeque together?

The second question is even more pressing. Building on the member's comments, there are at least three problems with the grain act. The first problem is that, if I understand it correctly, it appears we are going to lose about 100 grain inspectors, about half of whom protect and inspect the grain in the port of Thunder Bay, which is in my riding. The loss of those professionals and their expertise is further evidence of a government that does not believe in inspection or regulation, but believes that little or no government is best.

The member already mentioned the second problem. You had a letter which said that the grain will not be inspected and that will be a problem in the U.S. and world markets. That is totally true. We have the best grain in the world and we need to be able to prove it.

The third problem is that we will no longer be protecting our own public in terms of food safety, which, as we know, has been an ongoing problem throughout Canada with listeria.

Hon. member for Malpeque, would you care to comment?

• (1355)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North to address his comments to the Chair and not directly to other members.

The hon. member for Malpeque.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, there were several questions but let me start off by saying that his question on oysters is a valid one. We believe that we produce the best oysters in the world in the riding of Malpeque. Everyone is invited to that wonderful riding in P.E.I. any time to enjoy some of the shellfish and seafood.

The member mentioned the loss of 100 jobs in Thunder Bay. Yes, it is 100 jobs in Thunder Bay that the unions are telling us will be lost, but it is more like 200 jobs and possibly even higher across the system. Those are individuals who are on site looking after the quality of Canadian grains. They are individuals who are on site ensuring that an elevator is treating farmers fairly, that there are no overages or underages in terms of the weight, that the weigh scales are weighing properly, that they are not being abused in terms of the quality and grade of the grains.

The job loss is very serious, but as great a loss is the protection of farmers' interests and the quality control within our grain system. People have to understand that Canada is a quality seller in the world because of the Canadian Grain Commission and the work it does as compared to the United States, which is a residual seller.

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the member on his comments. He is well read and understands.

One of the issues that really concerns me is this mantra of self-regulation. It has gone on for years now. The government wants to bring self-regulation to everything that goes on.

I know of the experience in Ontario. When I think of self-regulation in Ontario, I think of Walkerton, Maple Leaf Foods and the BSE issue. There are many potential impacts this legislation could have, particularly with respect to bonding on the grain handlers and inward inspection. We are leaving it wide open and allowing farmers to be left open to the whim of large corporations that could do whatever they want.

My question is twofold. The removal of the bonding without any viable alternative being offered is one issue, but the other issue is the safety of the food. I would like the member to comment on both of those issues.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points here.

It is interesting these days that the Prime Minister goes around the world and talks about how secure Canada's banking system is. That banking system is secure because in the previous government, I and other members on this side happened to sit on the committee which recommended that the banking system in Canada not go the same way and deregulate itself and allow foreign ownership, as happened in the United States. That is good regulatory protection in our banking system and that is why our banking system is working very well.

However, the Prime Minister's mantra has been to deregulate and that is in fact what the government is doing with the Canadian Grain Commission. The government is taking away that protection that is there for the Canadian grain producers, for our exporters and for our industry, that protection of the system with tough regulations in bonding that would ensure there is protection for the farm community and industry. The member is absolutely right. This bill will undermine those regulations and those protections for Canadians.

The Speaker: When debate resumes, there will be four minutes remaining in the time allotted for questions and comments for the hon. member for Malpeque.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

EXCISE TAX

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has an important mining sector, which includes diamond and precious metal mining in a dynamic value-added jewellery sector.

In 2005, despite aggressive resistance from the Liberal government, my private member's bill to remove the excise tax on jewellery received royal assent. This tax was discriminatory and very counterproductive for Canadian jobs.

The Liberal government of the day chose to use a technicality to avoid eliminating the unfair tax. Instead, it offered a long-term phase-out. Today is significant because this is the first day that this tax would have been gone under the Liberal plan.

Contrast this with the actions of the Conservative government elected in January 2006. The tax was removed immediately, more than three years ago.

This is another example where, once again, the Conservatives took immediate action to help Canadians, while the Liberals dragged their feet. Shame.

* * *

INNIS CHRISTIE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Nova Scotians were saddened recently by the loss of a devoted family man, respected law professor, author and arbitrator. Innis Christie was an inspirational teacher who loved moulding young minds

Statements by Members

almost as much as the time he spent at the Amherst shore with family and friends.

The former Dalhousie law school dean's dedication to the law and to public service is legendary in my home province. His students are now scattered around the world, including several who sit in this place. We all recognize how fortunate we were to witness Innis Christie's wisdom, good humour and sound judgment.

I ask the House to join me in extending condolences to the Christie family and in saluting a great Nova Scotian whose memory will live on.

* * *

[Translation]

JEAN-PHILIPPE PRÉVOST-ROBERT

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Jean-Philippe Prévost-Robert, of Laval's Collège Montmorency, was ranked first for the second year in a row in Pontpop ÉTS, Quebec's foremost bridge-building competition. On February 21 and 23, over 300 high school and college students from all over Quebec gathered at the École de technologie supérieure to participate in this, the biggest competition of its kind.

The students had to use popsicle sticks, toothpicks, dental floss and white glue to build bridges that were both aesthetically pleasing and strong enough to hold up to two tonnes. The judges were industry professionals and professors from the ÉTS's construction engineering department. Jean-Philippe was awarded first prize at the college level and went home with a \$750 scholarship and a \$500 prize.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would like to congratulate Jean-Philippe on his remarkable achievement.

* * *

[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people across northern Ontario have heard the government is prepared to move heaven and earth to get badly needed stimulus cash out the door and into the hands of communities so that they can pursue much needed improvements to their infrastructure. Elected officials in these same communities are now wondering what it is going to take to actually get their hands on that money.

The town of Espanola in my constituency is a prime example of what has gone wrong. Faced with a brown water problem, Espanola has done the necessary legwork to pursue a fix. It has gone through the application process and waited, shovel ready, for the federal government to pony up its share of the project funding through the building Canada fund.

Despite seeming to match all the criteria for a project to be able to draw funds from that program, Espanola has been denied funding again.

Statements by Members

The outcome is difficult enough to accept. For a small community, the application process is daunting. Espanola spent \$80,000 from its relatively small tax base to pursue assistance for this persistent problem. Not only was it denied funding, but it received no feedback to indicate—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today the presidents and CEOs representing Canada's cement industry, including the Essroc Cement plant in Picton in my riding, are visiting Parliament.

The cement industry wishes to pass along to the House its congratulations to the Government of Canada for the government's swift action to accelerate the delivery of infrastructure investment and getting shovel-ready projects under way.

The cement industry will play a very important role in the infrastructure investments detailed in Canada's economic action plan. Cement is the critical ingredient in concrete and is an essential construction material designed for building sustainable infrastructure across Canada.

As cement is used in concrete to lay a rock-solid foundation to buildings, bridges and highways, so has this Government of Canada laid a solid foundation with its infrastructure investments in the economic action plan. It is a foundation that will protect the prosperity and lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

• (1405)

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the umbrella of free speech, some groups are using university campuses, like York, to undermine the fabric of civil discourse with events they have entitled "Israel Apartheid Week".

Such events will inevitably sow discord, promote negative stereotyping and fuel hatred.

One might well ask what motivates groups like the Canadian Arab Federation, CUPE Ontario and CUPW in their endorsement and organization of "Israel Apartheid Week".

The safety and security of Jewish students and their instructors will be unnecessarily placed in danger by these demonstrations. The cause of peace in the Middle East will not be advanced by eroding the principles of freedom in Canadian universities.

I invite the House to join me in condemning these "Israel Apartheid Week" activities and in encouraging university administrations to take steps to stop anti-Semitism and the dissemination of hatred.

MAYERTHORPE TRAGEDY

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise in the House today to acknowledge the tragic incident that took place in Mayerthorpe, Alberta on March 3, 2005, when four RCMP constables, Peter Schiemann, Anthony Gordon, Leo Johnston and Brock Myrol were fatally shot in the line of duty.

As a sergeant and a police officer for more than 18 years with the Winnipeg Police Service, I belong to a law enforcement family and we are always saddened and shocked when a colleague, sister or brother, loses their life while protecting our citizens.

The commitment of our law enforcement is one that is taken very seriously. We recognize every day that our police services and RCMP put themselves at risk to protect others. Their sacrifice to make our communities safe and secure is truly appreciated.

I want to express my deepest sympathies and admiration to each of the families of the courageous fallen four. Our hearts remain heavy with the burden of their loss and the burden of our loss. Know that the four constables who sacrificed their lives four years ago today will be remembered in the hearts of all Canadians.

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[*Translation*]

LAURENT PELLERIN

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week Laurent Pellerin was elected president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. He is the first Quebecker to take the presidency of that organization, which represents over 200,000 agricultural producers.

Mr. Pellerin owns a family farm in the Centre-du-Québec region and served as president of the Union des producteurs agricoles for 14 years.

Devoted to the cause of agriculture in Quebec, he was instrumental in the creation of the Financière agricole du Québec and the establishment of agri-environmental advisory clubs. He has also been a great ambassador at every opportunity, particularly with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, and at Europe-America agriculture conferences. It was also under his watch that UPA Développement international came into being. This agency has staff in a dozen developing countries working to introduce a Quebec-inspired collective model.

In 2005, he was recognized for his remarkable achievements by the Quebec government, which awarded him its highest distinction, the designation of Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Québec.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to congratulate Mr. Pellerin.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is International Women's Week.

The Conservative Party has a long tradition of supporting all women. After all, the first female justice minister, minister of defence and prime minister of Canada was from the Conservative Party.

Today, on Parliament Hill, there is a group of girls and boys who are observing the democratic process in action and engaging with parliamentarians.

The girls in this group are here, thanks to Equal Voice, to which the Minister of State for the Status of Women recently announced funding of \$1.2 million for “Experiences”, a project that will increase the democratic participation of these girls and other young women by pairing them with mentors. I hope some of them will be hon. members in the House one day.

Today, in Canada, there is very little that a woman cannot do. As we observe International Women's Day and Week, we can truly celebrate the strong women and girls who help make Canada a land of opportunity for all citizens.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

CARMELITA SIDECO

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the people of my riding, Mount Royal, and the Filipino community in Quebec and Canada were deeply saddened to learn of the recent death of Filipino humanitarian leader Carmelita Sideco.

[English]

Carmelita made an enormous contribution to the Filipino community as the first female president and ongoing leader of FAMAS, the Filipino Nurses Association and of the Federation of Philippine Canadian Association of Quebec, to name a few.

Indeed, her leadership and engagement went beyond the Filipino community, involved as she was in a myriad of intercultural, university, artistic and political organizations and projects, all of which benefited from her seemingly endless generosity, courage and energy.

She was one of the great and beloved pillars, not only of the Filipino community but of the larger community of Quebecers and Canadians. She personified the best of Filipino values of commitment, compassion, community service and selfless giving of herself for the well-being of others.

She will be sorely missed by all who knew her, by my family and myself and all those whose lives she touched for so many years.

* * *

MICHAEL BAKER

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I deeply regret to inform the House that the Hon. Michael Baker, Nova Scotia's minister of finance, passed away last night at his home in Lunenburg, surrounded by his family.

Michael Baker would never allow his cancer to stop him from being a good husband, father and servant of the people of Nova

Statements by Members

Scotia. As he continued to grow ill, he continued to be the man he always was, hardworking, dedicated and a loving family man.

Michael Baker served in many portfolios in his 10 years in cabinet, making his mark on a number of issues. Most notably, in 2004, after a teenager in a stolen car hit and killed a teacher's aide, Michael led the province's fight to change the youth justice system. As minister of finance, Michael was able to deliver a series of balanced budgets and was currently working on the province's budget for the spring when he died.

Our deepest condolences to his wife, Cynthia, and their sons, Matthew and Daniel. He will be missed.

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FEDERAL GAS TAX

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, have you ever waited for a street car on the windy, cold, icy winter street corners of Toronto? Well, the wait will soon be a lot shorter.

Toronto is buying 204 new street cars. My constituents who ride the TTC on Queens Quay, Spadina, King, Queen, Dundas, College and Bathurst will all benefit from this purchase. Shorter waits means fewer people will drive.

Not only is riding the red rocket the better way, building new street cars creates 300 jobs over 10 years.

The federal government should send its \$450 million to Toronto so the TTC street car contract can be signed by April 27. The Conservatives, however, refuse to adopt a gas tax formula that reflects Toronto's priorities. As a result funds have been mired in red tape for years.

When will Torontonians finally see some of their tax money back in town?

* * *

[Translation]

BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc used its parliamentary budget, taxpayers' money, to fund a newspaper that prints extremist rhetoric and preaches intolerance. The Réseau de résistance du Québécois showed its contempt for democracy during the debate around the commemoration of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, using fear, intimidation and calls for violence.

How does the Bloc plan to compensate the Quebec City area for the losses caused by the cancellation of the historical re-enactment, losses the city's tourism office estimates at more than \$3 million? More importantly, why is the Bloc aiding and abetting splinter groups that are trying to deny a defining event in our history? As Quebec's motto states, “Je me souviens”, I remember, and as a Quebecker, I condemn the narrow-mindedness and self-centredness of the Bloc Québécois, which is mortgaging Quebec's future by denying its past.

*Oral Questions***QUEBEC'S CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS**

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, an article by Chantal Hébert in the *Hill Times* and in the *Toronto Star* earlier this month was quite insightful as to the lack of judgment on the part of Conservative Quebecers in the matter of the re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham.

The article focused on the fact that common sense would dictate that sensitive founding myths be handled with care, and described the Quebec Conservative caucus's failure to do as insensitive.

What is even more interesting is that the same article acknowledged the talent of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for throwing oil on the fire she is vainly attempting to extinguish. In addition to citing the recent case of the re-enactment of the battle of the Plains of Abraham, the article also refers to the cuts to culture that were so badly managed by the minister that she was given another portfolio.

Ms. Hébert's conclusion: it is a fiasco she and her Quebec colleagues seem destined to re-enact in the next election.

* * *

• (1415)

[*English*]

MICHAEL BAKER

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Nova Scotians mourn the passing of Michael Baker, who served in a number of provincial cabinet posts, most notably as minister of finance.

We have all been touched by cancer, we have all lost family or friends, but Michael Baker showed us that it does not have to take away our courage, our will or our ability to contribute to a better world.

We watched him continue his work and we marvelled at his strength as he refused to let cancer sideline him. In fact, by keeping his busy schedule and through his boundless energy, it can truly be said that he beat cancer even though it did in the end take his life.

Recently a new justice centre in his honour was opened in Bridgewater. The impact of his life goes far beyond bricks and mortar. His legacy will be his love of the law, his dedication to his community, his commitment to family and his courage through difficult times. He was a remarkable man.

We offer condolences to his family and we hope it finds comfort in the affection and respect that Michael Baker earned from Nova Scotians from across the province and from across the political spectrum. He has earned a special place in our history and in our hearts.

* * *

LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader is out of touch with real Canadians. More specifically, he is out of touch with rural Canadians, most recently demonstrating this by his opposition to the Canadian seal hunt, all the while supporting a punitive carbon tax.

He claimed during the 2006 Liberal leadership race and during last year's election that a carbon tax was a good thing for Canada and a good thing for our economy. He said that we needed to burden other Canadians who were able to bear the energy costs, never asking rural Canadians if they could burden the extra costs.

To exacerbate his attack on rural Canadians, he is now trying to cut off the livelihoods of traditional sealers because his European friends think that it is a good idea. His party will introduce legislation today, supported by the controversial IFAW, to ban the Canadian seal hunt.

The Liberal leader does not support Canadian sealers. The Liberal leader does not support rural Canadians. When will the Liberal leader quit his assault on rural Canadians?

* * *

HON. GILBERT PARENT

The Speaker: I wish to advise the House of the death last night of my predecessor, former Speaker of the House of Commons, the Hon. Gilbert Parent.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a clear message from their Prime Minister about this economic crisis. Sometimes he says we are in a recession, sometimes it is a depression. In September it was not going to happen at all.

This weekend on CNN the Prime Minister called it “—a cyclical downturn, but nothing that requires major government intervention”. We supported \$40 billion worth of stimulus because we believe this is a serious economic crisis.

Does the Prime Minister now feel a little differently?

[*Translation*]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to offer our sincere condolences to the family of former Speaker of the House, Gilbert Parent.

[*English*]

If the hon. member were to look closely at the transcript of that interview, he would see that I was speaking specifically of the mortgage sector. In the United States tens of billions of dollars are being spent to deal with the problems in the mortgage sector. We do have a cyclical downturn in our mortgage sector but nothing that requires a massive government bailout package for that particular sector.

Notwithstanding the economic difficulties, that is one of the many strengths this country has over the United States.

Oral Questions

•(1420)

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are still awaiting a clear statement and definition of what this crisis amounts to and how the Prime Minister defines it will help Canadians to get through it.

Let me ask again, does he regard this as a cyclical downturn, a recession, or a depression? A clear answer will give Canadians guidance.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the economic plan of the Minister of Finance has spoken very clearly about the government's views on this and our action plan to deal with it. We have no plan whatsoever, or no proposals whatsoever, from the leader opposite.

This gentleman talks about contradictions. Last week the Liberals wanted to delay passage of the estimates, now they say they should be passed as quickly as possible. At least they have it right the second time.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is asking for our support in voting for an additional \$3 billion to stimulate the economy. There is one problem: it is not giving Canadians any idea how it will spend that money. We cannot sign a blank cheque.

Will the Prime Minister tell us before the vote what specific programs are being targeted by this additional \$3 billion?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these funds are obviously for the implementation of budget 2009, including infrastructure funding for the summer construction period. This House must act quickly. I urge the Leader of the Opposition to stop changing positions and to support these measures and funds, which are so important to the Canadian economy.

[*English*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is a hand on the tiller more wobbly than the Prime Minister's, it can only belong to the Finance Minister. When he says Ontario is the last place to invest, when he lurches from claims of balanced budgets in November, which nobody believed, to \$84 billion in deficits two months later, how can he possibly instill Canadians with a much needed sense of confidence at this moment of economic crisis?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his warm remarks. It is March now.

The biggest budget in recent Canadian history was introduced on January 27. The Liberal opposition members said they were going to support it. The budget implementation bill is still in the House today on March 3. Not one penny of stimulus has gone out to the Canadians who need the help—

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Your House leader has scheduled a vote this afternoon.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: —including the Canadians who live in Wascana.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister, of all people, ought to know that a

penny of fiscal stimulus before April 1 is illegal. The act will be passed in plenty of time.

He has treated his previous statements as mini budgets. Last fall, with job losses mounting in Canada in the midst of its worst economic performance in decades, the minister tabled an economic statement that did nothing at all. And just today he described it as “—just that: an economic statement. It was not a budget. It was not an economic plan”.

Why did he have no plan when Canada needed it most?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of a severe global recession and Canada is doing better than most countries. However, Canada is significantly affected by this recession. It is important that we get the money out there working for Canadians.

I am very heartened by the fact that the opposition critic for finance now says the act will be passed in time. I am sure that is the message that he will give to the Liberal senators in the Senate to make sure the bill is passed promptly when it goes to the Senate, I hope within a few days.

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[*Translation*]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the economic crisis is deepening but the government still refuses to help the forestry industry, which is in serious difficulty. The government has given billions of dollars to the automobile industry but only \$170 million to forestry. This is only enough to continue funding programs that already exist. There are no loan guarantees for the companies on the pretext that they are illegal. But that is not true.

Could the Prime Minister tell us which article in the softwood lumber agreement forbids him to provide loan guarantees to industries?

•(1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the Bloc should know that the agreement with the United States forbids direct subsidies to companies in this industry. That is why we have been helping it with incentives to promote renewable energy and innovation as well as measures to assist the working people in these communities. The industry is very disappointed with the Bloc's opposition to these measures that are so important for it and for these communities.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should know that loan guarantees are not subsidies. Canada's export assistance is based on loan guarantees. He did not cite the article because he knows it does not exist.

Oral Questions

Still regarding the softwood lumber agreement, the London tribunal has ruled that eastern Canada—including Quebec and Ontario—exported too much wood in the first six months of 2007. It turns out that Ontario was mostly responsible for exceeding the quotas during this period, with 60% of the excess. Ontario should therefore assume 60% of the penalties.

Will the Prime Minister promise to make Ontario pay its fair share of the penalties so that Quebec is not unfairly disadvantaged?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the Bloc is trying to divide Canadians, setting Ontario against Quebec. That is the real purpose of this question. It is not really to help the forest industry but just another way to sow division and discord. That is what Canadians have learned to expect from an extremist party like that.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in January alone, 129,000 jobs were lost. That means an additional 4,000 unemployed people every day. It is urgent that the government help these people, and lowering taxes is not the answer. Eliminating the employment insurance waiting period would immediately put money into the pockets of the unemployed while contributing to stimulating the economy.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to get rid of this unfair penalty?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained many times to the hon. member, we held cross-country consultations before preparing the budget. We asked employees and employers what they wanted to see in the budget in terms of employment insurance, and they told us that they wanted a longer eligibility period. That is what we did. We have provided these additional five weeks in response to their request. Why can he not accept these five weeks as an answer?

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister should tell us who she consulted. Eliminating the waiting period would, in our opinion, be a simple and effective measure. It would correct an injustice against those who are victims of the crisis.

After skimming \$54 billion from the employment insurance fund, does the government understand the moral obligation it has to implement this measure?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very simple: people who have the biggest need should have the most benefits. That is why we have added five weeks at the end of the employment insurance benefit period. It means that those with the biggest need will have benefits for a longer time, just when they need it most.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is using the economic crisis to create its own secret fund similar to the one denounced by the Auditor General and Justice Gomery. The government refuses to provide an investment plan for the \$3 billion. There are no objectives, conditions or regulations. The

Conservatives want to have carte blanche. It is the same recipe that led to the sponsorship scandal.

Why does the Prime Minister not want the people to know what he will do with the \$3 billion?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these funds will be used to implement the 2009 budget. Canadians are waiting for this budget and these monies. The New Democratic Party decided to vote against the budget before reading it. That is an irresponsible position.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, accountability is one of the cornerstones of democracy. Yet, here we see a prime minister who is circumventing Parliament. He is ignoring past auditor general reports. He is breaking all the lessons that were learned under the sponsorship scandal. Frankly, Canadians do not trust the Conservative government with a \$3 billion slush fund. Reporting the mistakes after the fact just does not cut it.

Is the Prime Minister willing to table some accountability mechanisms right here in the House and put them in place to ensure that the hard-earned dollars of Canadian taxpayers do not become a Conservative slush fund?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a member of Parliament who wanted to overturn the results of the election in order that Parliament would not get our budget. This is a member of Parliament who said he would vote against the budget no matter what was in it. Now, this is a member of Parliament who alleges there is a slush fund, when not a single dime of government money has actually been spent yet.

Mr. Speaker, this tells you how irresponsible and ridiculous the positions of the New Democratic Party have become. There used to be a day when that party actually stood for something. Now it is just against everything.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, spending taxpayers' money is not a matter of speed or accountability. Canadians want both. We had years of Liberal scandal and Canadians were expecting this Prime Minister to approach things a little bit differently. Instead, he is running what we can only call an accountability deficit.

What is he afraid of? Why not, for example, seek the Auditor General's advice first, or direct the President of the Treasury Board to get pre-approval from public accounts, or invite the public to track the money the way it is done in the U.S.? Speed is one thing. Canadians want accountability for their dollar.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one thing is for sure, they get neither from the NDP. The fact of the matter is that we have consulted the Auditor General. We will be fully accountable for this money. This money is necessary to make sure that we take full advantage of the upcoming construction season. I urge the NDP to stop its ridiculous opposition to programs that are clearly in the interests of not only all Canadians but even in the interests of those poor Canadians who voted NDP.

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[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as recently as February, the Minister of National Defence said that Canada could not abandon its leadership role in Afghanistan until the country was capable of governing itself, free of the shadows of Taliban terror.

Does the minister still believe that?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I stand by that statement. Our government is taking a comprehensive, government-wide, all-department approach to improving national army and security forces capabilities in Afghanistan.

At the same time, we have to find a way to work with others to support certain Afghan government departments in reconstructing and rebuilding communities and strengthening governance. Ours is a comprehensive approach.

[English]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister would not agree that it is hard for many Canadians to reconcile the kind of rhetoric, which the government has used for a long time, rhetoric that was contained in the minister's speech that I quoted in English where he said that Canada could not abandon its role until Afghanistan was free of the shadows of Taliban terror.

Does he not understand that it is very difficult for Canadians to reconcile that with the statement of the Prime Minister who is now prompting the minister? If the Prime Minister ever wants to answer a question from me I would be quite happy.

• (1435)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to answer.

It is quite ironic to have a member of Parliament who was demanding that Canada pull out of Afghanistan last year now wondering why we are pulling out three years from now.

The truth of the matter is this. Our soldiers, our diplomats and our development workers are doing a great job on the ground to ensure we can make this transition toward a mission more focused on development, where the Afghans handle their own responsibility.

That is what they are doing and the member should look at his own record on this issue before answering.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is totally false and the Prime Minister knows it. Let us try again.

In February 2008, the Minister of National Defence said:

This is why we cannot abandon the vital leadership role that we have been assuming in Afghanistan until we reach that critical tipping point....

Since the Prime Minister abdicated, what is our new critical tipping point now in Afghanistan?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is more than a little irony and cynicism coming from the members opposite. The feigned indignation belies the fact that the member and members of the Liberal Party voted to support the extension of the mission.

We need to remind ourselves that what we are doing in Afghanistan today is building the capacity of the government of Afghanistan, its national security forces and its government departments to provide for its own people. That is our humanitarian, diplomatic and military obligation there as part of a UN-backed, NATO-led, Afghan-invitation mission.

[Translation]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Minister of National Defence has abandoned our troops.

The Prime Minister's about-face on the Afghan mission came as a shock to our troops, and especially to families who have lost one of their own. We hope that the 1,600 soldiers who will be leaving Valcartier for Afghanistan in the coming weeks have been informed about the Conservative government's about-face and capitulation.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Hon. Denis Coderre: I am talking to the Prime Minister.

What does the Prime Minister have to say to Guy Roberge, father of Chief Warrant Officer Gaétan Roberge, who was killed last December, who wants to know what our troops will be doing there until 2011 now that the Prime Minister has given up the fight?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister supports the mission in Afghanistan. He supports our soldiers. I am very pleased with the abilities of the soldiers serving our country on the ground in Afghanistan today, and I am confident that they can do the job.

Of course, the mission will go on once the soldiers' work is done. Our support is needed. Canadians are proud of our efforts in Afghanistan, which are comprehensive and government-wide.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while six European countries are calling for sanctions against tax havens, the Minister of Finance is doing the exact opposite by allowing companies to use them to twice deduct interest on their loans.

At a time when his government is refusing to help industries in difficulty and the unemployed, how can the minister give greater access to tax havens and encourage tax leakage?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as is well-known, we commissioned a report, led by Peter Godsoe, the former CEO of the Bank of Nova Scotia, on this subject and the budget follows the recommendations of the report.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister is using this report and competitiveness as an excuse. What sort of competitiveness is he talking about, when France, Great Britain and the United States are opposed to double deductions? Will the minister admit that his budget choices are proof, yet again, of his indifference to the victims of the crisis and his desire to please his Bay Street buddies?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Godsoe panel took the time to examine what is in fact the practice of different countries worldwide and recommended to the government, particularly, in this time of recession, that the government take the action, which we did in the budget, in the best interests of the competitive position of Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is finally admitting that there will be no military victory in Afghanistan. Moreover, as the Secretary General of the UN has said, the security and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating, and this requires a real refocussing of the mission itself, not just a bunch of empty words like we have had so often from this government.

Given this realization, does the Prime Minister intend to raise this issue at the coming NATO summit in Strasbourg and to call upon that body to review its whole intervention in Afghanistan, as we called for in 2007?

• (1440)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is in Afghanistan in response to the request by the democratically elected government of Afghanistan, in order to help the Afghans to rebuild the country into a stable, democratic and self-sufficient society.

According to Rémi Landry of the Université de Montréal, the Canadian troops share this point of view. This is very clear in the very name of the NATO mission, which indicates that the troops are there to offer assistance and not to do the job of the Afghans.

This is the same position as our government's.

* * *

NATO

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the next NATO summit should also be the occasion for throwing out the idea of an international summit on Afghanistan, which would go beyond the limited

framework of NATO. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, made up of China, Russia and five former central Asian soviet republics, could be included.

Does the Prime Minister intend to take such a proposal to his NATO partners?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. It is a good question. I am confident about the coming NATO meeting. It is an opportunity to hold a clear and very important discussion in order to attract more support for this mission. That can perhaps include certain states in that region in order to support our mission and support the pan-governmental approach. Our government is learning, and this is a good question.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday the London Court of International Arbitration imposed an additional 10% tax on Quebec and Ontario softwood lumber being exported to the United States.

This decision is a direct result of the softwood sell-out deal that the Conservatives signed with the Americans.

How will the Conservatives explain to forestry workers who have lost their jobs that \$68 million in taxes has to be paid before they can even be rehired?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have an agreement with the United States. From time to time, either country can table a subject for discussion if there is a disagreement. There is always a ruling afterwards. That is important. Sometimes we win, other times the ruling is against us. It is important that we respect our agreement.

[English]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Friday, the London Court of International Arbitration imposed a 10% tax on Quebec and Ontario softwood lumber exports to the United States. This decision is a direct result of the flawed Conservative softwood lumber deal signed with the Americans.

How can the Conservatives possibly explain to unemployed Quebec and Ontario forestry workers that even before they can be rehired, \$68 million in export taxes need to be paid?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the softwood lumber agreement was in place there were constant court battles and constant quota assessments going against Canada. We have an agreement now that has huge support from the industry.

When we have an agreement like this, there is a dispute settlement mechanism. If one side goes to the referee and the referee says that the other side has to pay or is offside on it, then we must live up to the agreement. We intend to do that and we intend to work with the provinces to see how this can be repaid in a way that does not hurt them.

Oral Questions

We must keep in mind that \$5 billion was returned to the Canada side of this agreement.

* * *

• (1445)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, thousands of unemployed construction workers and their families are waiting for the Conservative government to do what it has so far failed to do: deliver infrastructure funding responsibly, quickly and fairly.

In fact, the government has failed and has delivered only 5% of what it promised, costing tens of thousands of jobs. The government promises that it can distribute \$7 billion this year using the same methods.

Given the vital importance of actually getting jobs into our communities, will the government now change its ways?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the member's province we are moving very aggressively to get infrastructure projects started. We were able to announce 289 different projects in every corner of the province at more than \$1 billion worth of spending.

We were supposed to allocate money for \$300 million worth of projects and we more than tripled that. Just two weeks ago, in the member's own constituency, the Prime Minister and my premier made another announcement for \$500 million to help GO public transit.

Step by step we are getting the job done.

[Translation]

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister used the same old trick, repeatedly announcing projects that will not create any jobs. Today, we will vote on the Liberal motion to transfer half of the infrastructure funds more efficiently, along the lines of the gas tax.

Will the Conservative government renounce its old political habits and finally act in the interests of Canadians?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will be working constructively with the provinces.

What the member opposite would like us to do is simply shove aside the Premier of Ontario and go directly to municipalities.

The member ran against Dalton McGuinty. He has never been supportive of him. We are committed to working with him. We are committed to a partnership and to getting the job done.

* * *

ISRAEL

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jewish students across the country are under siege as anti-Semites unveil their plans for Israel Apartheid Week. Liberal MPs have been quoted in the media and even today in the

immigration committee saying that anti-Semitic organizations like the Canadian Arab Federation should receive taxpayer support.

Will the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism explain why the government believes that Israel Apartheid Week is anti-Semitic?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are free to express different views about the policies of foreign government but Israel Apartheid Week is not about that. It is about a systematic effort to delegitimize the democratic homeland of the Jewish people, a country born out of the Holocaust.

We find very troubling this resurgence of the old slander that Zionism is racism. That is the notion that lies at the heart of Israel Apartheid Week.

Jewish students at campuses across the country are subsequently feeling increasingly vulnerable. We condemn these efforts to single out and attack the Jewish people and their homeland in this terrible way.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the duplicity of the Conservatives astounds Canadians. First nations were working on accountability measures before the government was elected but the Conservatives stopped that work in its tracks.

Now the Conservatives want to change band council elections and band funding with little or no consultation and the Conservatives will cut the budget for talks by more than two-thirds.

Accountability is a two-way street. Since the Conservatives are not talking to first nations, are they ignoring their own responsibilities?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure what the member is talking about. It is true that we are working with first nations on the Indian government support programs. There is, for example, an advisory panel that has been set up. It involves financial officers from aboriginal communities, the AFN, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and others.

They have a meeting today, very secretive of course, everyone has been invited publicly. I have sent a letter to every single chief and council in the country talking to them about this. There is another meeting. If members want to know about another secret one, it is this Friday in Atlantic Canada.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to leaked documents, the main reason the Conservatives want to modify how they provide money to band councils is to change how pensions are managed. It is an attempt by the Conservatives to rid the government of liability for the underfunding of pensions. The Conservatives want to force change on band councils to cover up the government's own liability for mismanagement.

Why does the government not come clean on its real intentions and stop misleading first nations?

• (1450)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, maybe I should speak in even more of a whisper to talk about the secrets. Here is the secret. We are working with first nations, including the Assembly of First Nations, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoulin Tribal Council and many others. They are sitting on a panel. They are sitting with us to talk about how, when the renewals come up for the Indian government support programs a year from now, we might be able to do it better so that it is better for first nations, better for accountability, better for the people they are trying to serve.

That is no secret. That is what first nations want to do and that is what we want to do working with them.

* * *

[Translation]

SEAL HUNT

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the European Commission's Internal Market Directorate General recently supported a regulation that would impose a partial embargo on seal products. This embargo would have a serious impact on hunters who make a living from this honourable traditional hunt. European decision-makers will vote on the final bill very soon.

What does the government plan to do to oppose this new attack on the seal hunt?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government will continue to defend the rights of Canadian sealers to provide a livelihood for their families through a lawful, sustainable and humane hunt. We will continue to inform international discussions with factual material.

We will stand up for Canadian sealers, unlike the Liberal Party of Canada, which has attacked them.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the current government's inaction is giving free rein to abolitionist groups to spread falsehoods. These abolitionists include a Liberal senator, Mac Harb, who is calling for an end to the seal hunt.

What is the government waiting for to launch an international information campaign to promote the expansion of markets for seal

products and make this industry viable through measures such as expanding the hunt?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has spent much time and resources defending the Canadian seal hunt abroad and here at home, which we were disappointed that we had to do. The hunt came under attack in Europe and now it is under attack right here in Canada.

We will continue to support our Canadian sealers. We will continue our efforts in Europe to ensure that the facts are known about the Canadian seal hunt and that our sealers are supported 100%.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I heard the minister's answer. He tries to play first nations like a fiddle but he is only step dancing around the whole damn issue.

The Conservatives have slashed the budget for consultation and they keep their communications "low profile". Those are his words from his own documents.

Why is he excluding first nations from meaningful consultation? Why is it that he said one thing in June about the apology and did another thing through his actions? Why will he not come clean with the first nations people of this country?

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have never seen the document that the member is talking about. I have never seen it and I do not know where it came from.

What I do know is that we have an open policy of working with first nations across the country. An advisory panel has been set up. We have meetings planned from beginning to end.

This Friday there is a meeting with the Atlantic Policy Congress. At that meeting, one of the questions that will be asked of the member is does he support Warren Kinsella and the position that a Liberal Party senator holds to ban the seal hunt in Canada? That is what we want to know from the member. He says he supports the seal hunt. Let us find out.

Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, maybe I could ask the minister to join me on the ice floes which I have done for the last two springs. I am going there again this spring. He should join me.

According to the minister's own internal documents, the changes he is proposing to come into force would not be optional. At the same time as the first nations communities are being stripped of their options, they are being denied input and access to the decision making process.

It is pretty rich to hear the minister talk about accountability when he does not apply it to himself. Will he open the doors and let the first nations in?

•(1455)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is that old saying on the preacher's note, "unsure of point, must yell louder".

Here are the facts. I will go through them again slowly for him. There is an advisory panel set up with the Assembly of First Nations and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. The Atlantic Policy Congress is welcome. Every chief in the country has received a letter on this. The financial administration officers of every first nation in the country are going to be invited to meetings over the next year to discuss it. That is the big secret.

What I want to know is, when the member goes to the ice floe, would he take Mac Harb with him?

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while we in the NDP do recognize and thank the government for its announcement yesterday on coordinating those efforts to help injured soldiers and their families, there is a very serious problem out there for soldiers who leave the military voluntarily and who are waiting for a pension cheque.

The reality is these men and women who serve our country have to wait many months before they get a pension cheque. That is putting everything in jeopardy, their mortgages and other bills.

When will the government clean up its act and get out these pension cheques which the members of the military so rightfully deserve?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his kind words yesterday in support of the joint personnel support units that we are putting in place across the country.

Similarly on this point, we have taken on additional staff. Very dedicated public servants are working overtime to see that we deal with the backlog. Because of the demographics of the Canadian Forces there was a backlog that we are attempting to deal with in a very efficient way. That does take time. We have people working very hard on that.

What I would ask from the member is that on the budget, for the first time would he vote for the Canadian Forces rather than slink out of the House?

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is hurry up and wait. It is not only veterans who are being made to wait by that cold and mean-spirited government; it is also the unemployed.

In Atlantic Canada 30,000 families are waiting for their EI applications to be processed. Over 8,000 of these families have been waiting for more than six weeks; that means about a month and a

Oral Questions

half without any money for groceries, to pay the rent or mortgage, or to pay for the heat and lights.

When will the minister tell the House what she is going to do about EI wait times?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have always believed that using the wrong statistics is nothing but scaremongering. That is totally unacceptable.

What we also find unacceptable is that anyone should have to wait for his or her EI benefits. That is why we are dealing with record numbers of applications by bringing back recent retirees. We are pulling back people from other departments. We have extended our operating hours for the call centre. We are working overtime. We are increasing automation. We want these people to get the money that they need and deserve.

* * *

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has made a strong commitment to fight back against gangs and other organized criminal groups by introducing new laws that target drugs, gangs and organized crime. It is important that we stop drugs from hitting our streets in the first place.

Can the minister tell the House, do the Canadian Forces play a role in ensuring that illegal drugs do not find their way into the hands of organized crime and into the streets of our communities?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed they do. Since 2006 the Canadian Forces have played an important role in Canadian counter-drug operations, as well as working off the southern approaches of North America to stop illegal drugs from hitting our streets.

Recently we supported a multinational operation that prevented some 272 million dollars' worth of cocaine from arriving here. As well, the Halifax based frigate, HMCS *Montreal* helped a French warship in the Caribbean recently intercept a drug smuggler carrying a boatload of cocaine. In another instance, a Canadian Forces Aurora plane spotted and tracked a semi-submersible operating in international waters.

This ongoing work of the Canadian Forces is something we can all be proud of.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, approximately 27,000 first nations children are in first nations and provincial agency care. That is three times the number of children who were in residential schools at their peak.

The matter has been brought before the Canadian Human Rights Commission and now the government has attempted to dismiss the case through the Federal Court because the Conservatives just do not seem to care. Are they afraid of what might be found?

Reconciliation is about much more than just saying sorry.

Business of Supply

•(1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we found when we came to office was that there was not a single child and family service agreement with the provinces and first nations in this country. The Liberals had been talking about it for 13 years, but there was not a single agreement on how to move from an apprehension model to a preventive model for child and family services.

That is why we signed the first child and family service agreement with first nations in Alberta. We have expanded that across the country in budget 2009. We have money now to add two more provinces.

We keep moving ahead systematically, because it is important that we look after the children especially, and that is why we thank the hon. member for her support of the budget.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question raised by the Bloc Québécois yesterday about a cigarette manufacturing permit given to a man now accused of drug trafficking, the Minister of National Revenue said that there were confidentiality issues to consider. But the court hearings are being held publicly and the story was published in a Quebec daily paper on Monday, so there is nothing confidential about it.

The minister has recognized that he has the power to act, so what is he waiting for? He should suspend the permit until the legal proceedings are done.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I want to point out that, before issuing a tobacco sales permit, we check to see if the individual has a criminal record. If so, then we simply do not issue the permit. As I said before, if the member had taken the time to find out more about the issue, he might not be asking the same question. If we find out that there is a criminal record, the minister has the power to revoke the permit.

* * *

[English]

INDUSTRY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's inaction with the illegal Xstrata job cuts has set a dangerous precedent.

Today, Brazilian-based Vale Inco is cutting 423 jobs across Canada, 261 of them in Sudbury and Nickel Belt, but it has an agreement with the government not to cut jobs until October 2009.

After the Xstrata fiasco, companies now see that no layoff agreements mean nothing, because the Conservative government ignores them without consequence.

When will the government finally stand up for workers and enforce the no layoff agreements?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess one has to be a member of the NDP caucus to think \$300 million of extra investment is somehow a disaster for Sudbury and for miners.

In the case of Vale Inco and the announcement that was made today, our hearts go out to the workers and their families who are affected by this. I can tell the hon. member that we are watching the situation closely. We are reviewing the Investment Canada Act provisions and how they pertain to Vale Inco.

We expect Vale Inco to measure up, to honour the commitments it has made to the Government of Canada and the people of Canada. We will be examining the situation closely.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is International Women's Week, culminating in International Women's Day on March 8.

This government has a strong record on supporting women. The Prime Minister recently appointed the highest percentage of women to cabinet, as well as the first Minister of State solely dedicated to the Status of Women.

Could the Minister of State for the Status of Women please tell the House what she is doing this week to mark International Women's Week?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the good work and support of the member as we develop our action plan for women's equality.

One of the pillars is economic security. Last evening I was honoured to announce a partnership project with WEConnect Canada, which is a women's business network organization that will provide market access to global supply chains for Canadian businesswomen. The supplier diversity program will provide opportunities for Canadian businesswomen to grow their businesses and succeed.

In addition, I am proud to be leading the Canadian delegation to the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The House resumed from February 26 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: It being 3:05 p.m., pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 26 the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion relating to the business of supply.

Call in the members.

Business of Supply

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

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

(Division No. 14)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Beaudin	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brison	Brunelle
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Casey	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coady	Coderre
Comartin	Cotler
Crête	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Faillie
Foote	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Garneau	Gaudet
Goodale	Gravelle
Guarnieri	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
Lee	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Mendes
Minna	Mulcair
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Murray
Nadeau	Neville
Oliphant	Ouellet
Pacetti	Paillé
Paquette	Patry
Pearson	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Proulx
Rae	Rafferty
Ratansi	Regan
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sgro

Siksay
 Simms
 St-Cyr
 Szabo
 Thibeault
 Trudeau
 Vincent
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Wrzesnewskij

Silva
 Simson
 Stoffer
 Thi Lac
 Tonks
 Valeriote
 Volpe
 Willfert
 Zarac — 154

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Angus	Albrecht
Aglukkaq	Allison
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Anders
Ambrose	Arthur
Anderson	Baird
Ashfield	Bernier
Benoit	Blackburn
Bezan	Block
Blaney	Braid
Boughen	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Breitkreuz	Brown (Barrie)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Cadman
Bruinooge	Calkins
Calandra	Carrie
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Chong
Casson	Clement
Clarke	Davidson
Cummins	Dechert
Day	Devolin
Del Mastro	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dreeshen	Fast
Dykstra	Flaherty
Finley	Galipeau
Fletcher	Glover
Gallant	Goodyear
Goldring	Grewal
Gourde	Harper
Guergis	Hawn
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hill
Hiebert	Hoeppner
Hoback	Jean
Holder	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kerr
Kent	Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Komarnicki	Lauzon
Lake	Lemieux
Lebel	Lukiwski
Lobb	Lunny
Lunn	MacKenzie
MacKay (Central Nova)	Mayer
Mark	McLeod
McColeman	Miller
Menzies	
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Uppal
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Sky Country)	
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young — 136

Government Orders

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made earlier today the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-10. The question is on Motion No. 1.

• (1520)

[Translation]

(The House divided on Motion No. 1, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 15)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faillie	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paillé
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Vincent

Wasylycia-Leis— 81

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Dei Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guamieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi

Rathgeber
Reid
Richardson
Rodriguez
Russell
Saxton
Scheer
Sgro
Shipley
Silva
Simson
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Thompson
Toews
Trost
Tweed
Valeriotte
Van Loan
Volpe
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Wilfert
Woodworth
Yelich
Zarac— 209

Regan
Richards
Rickford
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Simms
Smith
Stanton
Strahl
Szabo
Tilson
Tonks
Trudeau
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wong
Wrzesnewskyj
Young

Lévesque
Maloway
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Mulcair
Ouellet
Paquette
Pomerleau
Roy
Siksay
Stoffler
Thibeault
Wasylycia-Leis— 81

Government Orders

Malo
Marston
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau
Paillé
Plamondon
Rafferty
Savoie
St-Cyr
Thi Lac
Vincent

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 2. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 3 to 6.

• (1530)

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 16)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faïlle	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard

Abbott
Aglukkaq
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Bennett
Bernier
Bezan
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Calandra
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Carrie
Casson
Clarke
Coady
Cotler
Cummins
D'Amours
Day
Del Mastro
Dhaliwal
Dosanjh
Dryden
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter
Fast
Flaherty
Foote
Galipeau
Gameau
Goldring
Goodyear
Grewal
Guergis
Harper
Hawn
Hill
Hoepfner
Holland
Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lee
Lobb
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mark
Mayes
McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Menzies

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Albrecht
Allison
Anders
Andrews
Ashfield
Bains
Bélanger
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Blackburn
Block
Braid
Brisson
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Cadman
Calkins
Cannis
Casey
Chong
Clement
Coderre
Crombie
Cuzner
Davidson
Dechert
Devolin
Dion
Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra
Eyking
Finley
Fletcher
Fry
Gallant
Glover
Goodale
Gourde
Guarmieri
Hall Findlay
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Ignatieff
Jennings
Kania
Kennedy
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Lemieux
Lukiwski
Lunny
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum
McGuinty
McLeod
Mendes
Miller

Government Orders

Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Sgro	Shea
ShIPLEY	Shory
Silva	Simms
Simson	Smith
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Szabo
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tonks
Trost	Trudeau
Tweed	Uppal
Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Volpe	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Wilfert	Wong
Woodworth	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Young
Zarac — 209	

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John) — 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 2 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 3 to 6 lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 66. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 67 to 86.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I believe there is an impasse with the party leaders. If you would seek it, you may get unanimous consent to apply the vote from the previous vote to this vote.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1540)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 66, which was negated on the following division:)

*(Division No. 17)***YEAS**

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faillie	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelega)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paillet
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis — 81	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooog
Byme	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannon (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeschen

Government Orders

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 66 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 67 to 86 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 7 of Group No. 2. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 8 to 31.

● (1550)

(The House divided on Motion No. 7, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 18)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Leslie	Lessard
Lévesque	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mulcair	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paillé
Paquette	Plamondon
Pomerleau	Rafferty
Roy	Savoie
Siksay	St-Cyr
Stoffer	Thi Lac
Thibeault	Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis— 81	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruninooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins

Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Footé	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raït
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shiple
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriote
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Wilfert	
Wong	Woodworth
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Young	Zarac— 208

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John)— 8

Government Orders

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Carrie
 Casson
 Clarke
 Coady
 Cotler
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Day
 Del Mastro
 Dhaliwal
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Foote
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Lee
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Mark
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Menzies
 Minna
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murray
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 O'Neil
 Oliphant
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Preston
 Rae
 Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Rodriguez
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Shea
 Shory
 Simms
 Smith
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Wilfert

Cannis
 Casey
 Chong
 Clement
 Coderre
 Crombie
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Dion
 Dreeshen
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Fry
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Hall Findlay
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Ignatieff
 Jennings
 Kania
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Lemieux
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Mendes
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Murray
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Pacetti
 Patry
 Pearson
 Poilievre
 Proulx
 Raitt
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Silva
 Simson
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thompson
 Toews
 Frost
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Watson

Wong
 Wrzesnewskyj
 Young

Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac — 208

PAIRED

Members

Demers
 Lalonde
 Prentice
 Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 7 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 8 to 31 lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 32. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 33 to 42.

● (1555)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on Motion No. 32, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 19*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Ashton
 Bevington
 Charlton
 Christopherson
 Crowder
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Dewar
 Gravelle
 Hughes
 Julian
 Leslie
 Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 Neville
 Rafferty
 Siksay
 Thibeault

Angus
 Atamanenko
 Black
 Chow
 Comartin
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hyer
 Layton
 Maloway
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Mulcair
 Savoie
 Stoffer
 Wasylcia-Leis — 36

NAYS

Members

Abbott
 Aglukkaq
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambrose
 Anderson
 Andrews
 Ashfield
 Bachand
 Bains
 Beaudin
 Bellavance
 Benoit
 Bevilacqua
 Bigras
 Blais
 Block
 Bouchard
 Bourgeois
 Breitreuz
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Brunelle
 Cadman
 Calkins
 Cannis
 Carrie
 Casey

Ablonczy
 Albrecht
 Allison
 Anders
 André
 Arthur
 Asselin
 Bagnell
 Baird
 Bélanger
 Bennett
 Bernier
 Bezan
 Blackburn
 Blaney
 Bonsant
 Boughen
 Braid
 Brisson
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooge
 Byrne
 Calandra
 Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Cardin
 Carrier
 Casson

Government Orders

Chong
 Clement
 Coderre
 Crête
 Cummins
 D'Amours
 Day
 Dechert
 Deschamps
 Devolin
 Dion
 Dosanjh
 Dryden
 Dufour
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Easter
 Faille
 Finley
 Fletcher
 Freeman
 Gagnon
 Gallant
 Gaudet
 Goldring
 Goodyear
 Grewal
 Guergis
 Basques)
 Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)
 Hall Findlay
 Harper
 Hawn
 Hill
 Hoepfner
 Holland
 Jean
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Karygiannis
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Laframboise
 Lauzon
 Lebel
 Lemay
 Lessard
 Lobb
 Lunn
 MacAulay
 MacKenzie
 Malo
 Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
 McCallum
 McGuinty
 McLeod
 Ménard (Hochelaga)
 Mendes
 Miller
 Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Murphy (Charlottetown)
 Nadeau
 Nicholson
 O'Connor
 Obhrai
 Oliphant
 Pacetti
 Paquette
 Patry
 Pearson
 Plamondon
 Pomerleau
 Proulx
 Raitt
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Richards
 Rickford
 Rota
 Russell
 Saxton
 Scheer
 Shea
 Shory

Clarke
 Coady
 Cotler
 Crombie
 Cuzner
 Davidson
 DeBellefeuille
 Del Mastro
 Desnoyers
 Dhaliwal
 Dorion
 Dreeshen
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Dykstra
 Eyking
 Fast
 Flaherty
 Foote
 Fry
 Galipeau
 Garneau
 Glover
 Goodale
 Gourde
 Guarnieri
 Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 Holder
 Ignatieff
 Jennings
 Kania
 Kennedy
 Kent
 Komarnicki
 Laforest
 Lake
 Lavallée
 Lee
 Lemieux
 Lévesque
 Lukiwski
 Lunney
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Malhi
 Mark
 Mayes
 McColeman
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 McTeague
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Menzies
 Minna
 Murray
 Neville
 Norlock
 O'Neill-Gordon
 Oda
 Ouellet
 Paillé
 Paradis
 Payne
 Petit
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Rae
 Rajotte
 Rathgeber
 Reid
 Richardson
 Rodriguez
 Roy
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schellenberger
 Shipley
 Silva

Simms
 Smith
 St-Cyr
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Thi Lac
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Trudeau
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Volpe
 Warawa
 Watson
 Sky Country)
 Wilfert
 Woodworth
 Yelich
 Zarac— 253

Simon
 Sorenson
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Szabo
 Thompson
 Toews
 Trost
 Tweed
 Valeriote
 Van Loan
 Vincent
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
 Wong
 Wrzesnewskij
 Young

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)
 Guay
 Mourani
 Ritz

Demers
 Lalonde
 Prentice
 Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 32 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 33 to 42 lost.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 43. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 44 to 52.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Mr. Speaker, I would ask in another official language if there is unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to this motion.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

● (1605)

(The House divided on Motion No. 43, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 20*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Asselin
 Bachand
 Bellavance
 Bigras
 Blais
 Bouchard
 Brunelle
 Carrier
 Chow
 Comartin
 Crowder
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 DeBellefeuille
 Desnoyers
 Dorion
 Dufour
 Faille
 Gagnon

André
 Ashton
 Atamanenko
 Beaudin
 Bevington
 Black
 Bonsant
 Bourgeois
 Cardin
 Charlon
 Christopherson
 Crête
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Deschamps
 Dewar
 Duceppe
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Freeman
 Gaudet

Government Orders

Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les	Lunn	Lunney
Basques)		MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)		MacKenzie	Malhi
Harris (St. John's East)		Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Hughes	Hyer	Mayes	McCallum
Julian	Laforest	McColeman	McGuinty
Laframboise	Lavallée	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Layton	Lemay	McTeague	Mendes
Leslie	Lessard	Menzies	Miller
Lévesque	Malo	Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Maloway	Marston	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Murray	Neville
Masse	Mathysen	Nicholson	Norlock
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Mulcair	Nadeau	Obhrai	Oda
Ouellet	Paillé	Oliphant	Pacetti
Paquette	Plamondon	Paradis	Patry
Pomerleau	Rafferty	Payne	Pearson
Roy	Savoie	Petit	Poilevre
Siksay	St-Cyr	Preston	Proulx
Stoffer	Thi Lac	Rae	Raïtt
Thibeault	Vincent	Rajotte	Ratansi
Wasylycia-Leis— 81		Rathgeber	Regan

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski

Richardson	Rodriguez	Russell	Saxton	Scheer	Shea	Shory	Simms	Smith	Stanton	Strahl	Szabo	Tilson	Tonks	Trudeau	Uppal	Van Kesteren	Vellacott	Wallace	Warkentin	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Wilfert	Wong	Wrzesnewskyj	Young
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PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 43 lost. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 44 to 52 lost.

The next question is on Motion No. 53. A vote on this motion also applies to Motions Nos. 54 to 65.

● (1615)

(The House divided on Motion No. 53, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 21)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant

Government Orders

Bouchard	Bourgeois	Hawn	Hiebert
Brunelle	Cardin	Hill	Hoback
Carrier	Charlton	Hoepfner	Holder
Chow	Christopherson	Holland	Ignatieff
Comartin	Crête	Jean	Jennings
Crowder	Cullen	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)	Karygiannis	Kennedy
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Desnoyers	Dewar	Kerr	Komarnicki
Dorion	Duceppe	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Lauzon	Lebel
Faillie	Freeman	Lee	Lemieux
Gagnon	Gaudet	Lobb	Lukiwski
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les	Lunn	Lunney
Basques)		MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)		MacKenzie	Malhi
Harris (St. John's East)		Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Hughes	Hyer	Mayes	McCallum
Julian	Laforest	McColeman	McGuinity
Laframboise	Lavallée	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Layton	Lemay	McTeague	Mendes
Leslie	Lessard	Menzies	Miller
Lévesque	Malo	Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Maloway	Marston	Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Murray	Neville
Masse	Mathysen	Nicholson	Norlock
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Mulcair	Nadeau	Obhrai	Oda
Ouellet	Paillé	Oliphant	Pacetti
Paquette	Plamondon	Paradis	Patry
Pomerleau	Rafferty	Payne	Pearson
Roy	Savoie	Petit	Poillievre
Siksay	St-Cyr	Preston	Proulx
Stoffier	Thi Lac	Rae	Raitt
Thibeault	Vincent	Rajotte	Ratansi
Wasylycia-Leis— 81		Rathgeber	Regan
		Reid	Richards
		Richardson	Rickford
		Rodriguez	Rota
		Russell	Savage
		Saxton	Scarpaleggia
		Scheer	Schellenberger
		Shea	Shiple
		Shory	Silva
		Simms	Simson
		Smith	Sorenson
		Stanton	Storseth
		Strahl	Sweet
		Szabo	Thompson
		Tilson	Toews
		Tonks	Trost
		Trudeau	Tweed
		Uppal	Valeriote
		Van Kesteren	Van Loan
		Vellacott	Volpe
		Wallace	Warawa
		Warkentin	Watson
		Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
		Wilfert	
		Wong	Woodworth
		Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
		Young	Zarac— 208

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélanger
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Canman (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)	Demers
Guay	Lalonde
Mourani	Prentice
Ritz	Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 53 lost.

[*English*]

I therefore declare Motions Nos. 54 to 65 lost.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Government Orders

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1620)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 22*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Arthur	Ashfield
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinoooge
Byrne	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Coady	Coderre
Cotler	Crombie
Cummins	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dhaliwal	Dion
Dosanjh	Dreeshen
Dryden	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Flaherty	Fletcher
Foote	Fry
Galipeau	Gallant
Garneau	Glover
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hall Findlay
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoepfner	Holder
Holland	Ignatieff
Jean	Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Kania
Karygiannis	Kennedy
Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake

Lauzon	Lebel
Lee	Lemieux
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunny
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Mark	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Mayes	McCallum
McColeman	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
McTeague	Mendes
Menzies	Miller
Minna	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Murray	Neville
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Oliphant	Pacetti
Paradis	Patry
Payne	Pearson
Petit	Poilievre
Preston	Proulx
Rae	Raiitt
Rajotte	Ratansi
Rathgeber	Regan
Reid	Richards
Richardson	Rickford
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Scheer	Schellenberger
Shea	Shibley
Shory	Silva
Simms	Simson
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Szabo	Thompson
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Trudeau	Tweed
Uppal	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Wilfert	Woodworth
Wong	Yelich
Wrzesnewskyj	Zarac — 208
Young	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Angus	Ashton
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Beaudin
Bellavance	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Comartin	Crête
Crowder	Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Deschamps
Desnoyers	Dewar
Dorion	Deuceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gravelle	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Harris (St. John's East)	
Hughes	Hyer
Julian	Laforest
Laframboise	Lavallée

Points of Order

Layton
 Leslie
 Lévesque
 Maloway
 Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
 Masse
 Ménard (Hochelaga)
 Mulcair
 Ouellet
 Paquette
 Pomerleau
 Roy
 Siksany
 Stoffer
 Thibeault
 Wasylycia-Leis— 81

Lemay
 Lessard
 Malo
 Marston
 Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
 Mathysen
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Nadeau
 Paillé
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Savoie
 St-Cyr
 Thi Lac
 Vincent

PAIRED

Members

Cannon (Pontiac)
 Guay
 Mourani
 Ritz

Demers
 Lalonde
 Prentice
 Weston (Saint John)— 8

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[English]

When shall the bill be read a third time? Pursuant to order made earlier this day, later this day.

I wish to inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 1 hour and 19 minutes.

* * *

[Translation]

POINTS OF ORDER

PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL C-241

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons spoke in this House to indicate to you that Bill C-241 to remove the waiting period imposed on employment insurance recipients requires royal recommendation. You will not be surprised to hear that I not share that opinion at all.

Although I do recognize, as the parliamentary secretary has said, that you ruled on this matter during the 39th Parliament concerning Bill C-269, which also contained provisions for elimination of the waiting period, I am of the opinion that there are some new elements that need to be drawn to your attention.

In fact, there have been many changes since that ruling. In my opinion, it ought to be reviewed because the legislation surrounding the funding of employment insurance has changed. Bill C-50 to implement the February 26, 2008 budget, which was given royal assent on June 18, 2008, enacted the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board Act.

In order to properly explain the purpose of that act, I would like to quote an excerpt from page 71 of the 2008 budget plan.

To enhance the independence of premium rate setting and to ensure that EI premiums are used exclusively for the EI program, the government is creating a new, independent Crown corporation, the Canada Employment Insurance Financing Board (CEIFB). It will have the following key responsibilities:

Managing a separate bank account. Any annual EI surpluses going forward will be held and invested until they are needed for EI program costs.

Then, further down on page 71:

The CEIFB will be structured as a Crown corporation that will report to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. It will have an independent board of directors and be staffed with the experts needed to manage the financing of the EI program.

I would like to now draw your attention to a ruling by the Deputy Speaker of the House on October 3, 2005 concerning a bill which dealt with the use of the surplus in the reserve fund of the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I will quote an excerpt from that ruling if I may:

Bill C-363 proposes that monies within the control of CMHC—not the Crown—be dedicated for a particular purpose. A royal recommendation is required when a bill seeks an authorization to withdraw monies from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Is Bill C-363 seeking to withdraw monies from the Consolidated Revenue Fund? I would conclude that it is not. Bill C-363 is preventing CMHC monies from being placed in the Consolidated Revenue Fund by having them used for another purpose. The transfer of monies from the CMHC reserve fund to the Consolidated Revenue Fund—or in this case to the provinces—is not a matter relating to the appropriation of monies from the Crown. Therefore, Bill C-363 does not infringe on the financial initiative of the Crown.

The parliamentary secretary also cited a May 9, 2005 ruling, which among other things addressed the objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications of the royal recommendation. He argued that Bill C-363 is adding a new purpose which was not contemplated in the original legislation establishing CMHC and would therefore need a new royal recommendation. Again I wish to stress that the original royal recommendation strictly applied to matters concerning the objects, purposes, conditions and qualifications of an appropriation of monies within the control of the Crown; that is not the case with Bill C-363. As Bill C-363 does not appropriate from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, it cannot be considered as altering the purpose of the original royal recommendation.

This precedent is extremely relevant in this case. We have already noted that the government's aim in creating the Canada employment insurance financing board was to set up a separate bank account in order to make sure that contributions would be used exclusively for the employment insurance program. Therefore, by the government's own admission, the purpose of creating the Canada employment insurance financing board is to make sure that the monies in this account are no longer available to the Crown for general appropriations.

Once this has been established, we must conclude that a royal recommendation cannot apply to Bill C-241, because it does not have to do with monies within the control of the Crown. The monies in question here are within the control of the Canada employment insurance financing board. Consequently, in our opinion, this bill does not require a royal recommendation.

● (1625)

The Speaker: I thank the member for Joliette for the explanation. I will consider the matter when I have the opportunity to examine the bill.

Does the member for Joliette have another point of order?

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion: That the House acknowledge the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and the 150th anniversary of the publication *On the Origin of Species by Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, which launched the theory of evolution, the only proven and recognized scientific explanation for the origin of man. I believe you will find unanimous consent for adoption of this motion.

Government Orders

• (1630)

The Speaker: Does the member for Joliette have the unanimous consent of this House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Yes.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

* * *

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009

Hon. Jay Hill (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-10, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and related fiscal measures, be read the third time and passed.

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful that stage of the bill is now over. It was almost painful. If that is what the opposition suggests is speeding legislation through, I hope Canadians were not watching. It is pretty pathetic and painful to hold up the money that Canadians need.

This is a great opportunity to speak to Bill C-10 at third reading, which is the budget implementation act, 2009. Hopefully this will be a very brief debate that will allow us to move quickly to a vote.

I note for Canadians watching at home that even after the House of Commons approves this bill at third reading, the vital measures in Bill C-10, which are integral parts of Canada's economic action plan, ranging from extended EI benefits to nearly \$6 billion for job-creating stimulus investments in housing, as well as infrastructure and more, to initiatives to help improve credit availability for businesses and much more than that, still cannot move forward.

Once done in the House of Commons, the bill has to start the same legislative process in the Senate, from second reading, referral to the Senate national finance committee for study, report stage and ultimately third reading. Only after all these steps are completed, will the bill receive royal assent and become law.

On the government side, with the support of the official opposition, we have made the case that, due to the fragile state of the Canadian economy, Bill C-10 and its vital measures must be approved by Parliament as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, these pleas are largely being ignored by the NDP and Bloc members, who have thrown up roadblock after roadblock to delay Bill C-10 from passing in any form of expedited manner.

What is worse, we are now hearing some of the senators vowing to delay this bill for weeks on end for no other reason than because they can.

Bill C-10 was introduced on February 6 for debate. A month later we are still debating it in the House of Commons. How does a month of debate qualify as passing a bill as quickly as possible? It does not.

Seemingly unaware of the urgency of the situation facing the Canadian economy, the Senate is now musing about further delay so it can engage in, to be frank, abstract and irrelevant debate on the bill, likely the exact same debates we have already had here in the

House for a month. We need to acknowledge the gravity of the situation.

Listen to Bank of Montreal economist Doug Porter, who stated:

Over the last month I'd be very hard pressed to point to a Canadian indicator that came in higher than expected or even as expected. Most have been not only below expectations, but far below.

Clearly, now is the time for urgent action. For those members or senators who would argue for more debate now instead of action, let me remind them that prior to tabling this budget, we undertook the widest and most inclusive prebudget consultations in history, open to all. This was during the months of December and January. That was the time for ideas and discussion. That time has passed. Parliament must act now.

Again, we could, as some suggest, debate Bill C-10 for weeks or months on end. We could engage in abstract discussions about the bill. We could treat this as an academic exercise divorced from the reality of today, but we would do so completely deaf to the plight of Canadians and blind to the economic challenges we now face.

It is easy for MPs, especially senators, to drag out debate and delay action for another month or so. They know when and from where their next paycheque is coming. No such luxury exists for the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who have recently lost their jobs. This is not time for politics as usual. We need to demand better of ourselves. Canadians are depending on it.

• (1635)

Stalling urgent economic stimulus for weeks or months is the height of irresponsibility. It will only hurt the most vulnerable in Canada.

For the NDP, the Bloc and those senators who would stall the bill, they should listen carefully to Canadians and reconsider. If they do not, we will ensure it is known that their inaction, their delay and their ignorance of the pressing challenges facing the Canadian economy are at fault here. This is not about a genuine debate on the issues for these parliamentarians threatening delay. This is not about some profound opposition to measures within the bill. This is politics for the sake of partisan gain and delay for the sake of delay.

While those members claim a lengthy delay of the bill is necessary for a proper debate to allow them to do their job, their actions prove otherwise.

First, content is not and was never important to them. For instance, the NDP members, weeks before seeing the budget, proudly and publicly said that they would defeat it. Reading from a news story dated December 13, 2008, approximately six weeks before the budget was tabled, it said:

Regardless of what stimulus package appears in the [Prime Minister's] January budget, NDP finance critic the [member for Outremont] said the NDP will be looking to topple the Tory government.

Government Orders

Second, understanding the issues is not and was never important either. For instance, we held a briefing for all members of Parliament and senators shortly after introducing Bill C-10. This four hour briefing was an opportunity for all parliamentarians to ask factual and substantive questions. We had over 36 members of the public service at that meeting to provide answers. There was not an NDP or a Bloc member in the audience.

This allowed them questions that would have allowed a better understanding of the bill. It would have allowed for more informed discussion in Parliament. Unfortunately, no NDP or Bloc MPs attended and only a few senators bothered to attend the briefing. Does this sound like a group genuinely interested in the content of the bill? Does this sound like a group that is really interested in doing its job? No, it clearly does not.

I ask and plead with the NDP and the Bloc members as well as those senators to stop the charade. Bill C-10 has been before Parliament for roughly a month. We know it will pass. We cannot wait another month. Stop the roadblocks, stop the delay and let Bill C-10 pass before Parliament rises for the next constituency week in mid-March.

For our senators, acknowledge the reality of the situation. Sit night and day, around the clock, if needed. Make it happen.

Why do we need to make it happen? How will Bill C-10 legislating vital parts of Canada's economic action plan help those hardest hit by the current recession? How will it help create and maintain jobs? Let me provide a quick overview of what is being legislated in Bill C-10 and why it merits quick passage.

To begin, numerous measures outlined in budget 2009 to lower the tax burden for Canadians are included in the bill. This tax relief will leave more money in the pockets of hardworking Canadians, while also taking 265,000 low-income Canadians completely off the tax rolls. These tax measures include, but are not limited to, personal tax relief: by raising the age credit amount by \$1,000 to help seniors; by increasing the amount that can be withdrawn under the homebuyers' plan to \$25,000; by increasing the basic personal amount that all Canadians can earn before paying income tax and the two lowest personal income tax brackets.

This package also includes business tax relief such as extending the mineral exploration tax credit and raising the threshold for businesses to qualify for the reduced 11% small business tax rate to \$500,000. I note that a wide range of public interest groups heralded this collection of tax changes. The Retail Council of Canada, for instance, called them:

—positive steps to rebuilding consumer confidence. “These tax changes will put money back in the pockets of Canadians, boosting confidence and encouraging spending, which is critical to the retail sector and Canada's overall economic recovery”...

● (1640)

This legislation also seeks to help struggling Canadians who are suffering lost employment as a result of this global recession.

Bill C-10 will provide an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits and increase the maximum duration of benefits to 50 weeks from 45 weeks for the unemployed. As B.C. finance minister Colin Hansen remarked:

—[the] extension of EI benefits...are going to be very important. Certainly as I've travelled around British Columbia, I've talked to many laid-off forest workers who were getting anxious about when their EI benefits might run out, and so the extension will help them.

As I am sure all members have been made aware by the numerous letters and calls they have received from worried constituents, these increased EI benefits cannot come into effect until Parliament allows the bill to pass.

Bill C-10 also brings forward measures to improve access to credit for businesses. As we have heard extensively in recent months, access to credit has been severely restricted during the current economic downturn. That is negatively impacting businesses and their ability to grow, and often even retain existing employees.

Our economic action plan sought to help address the situation through our extraordinary financing framework. Many of the measures from that framework are legislated in Bill C-10. For instance, it allows EDC and BDC to extend additional financing to Canadian businesses. It also increases the maximum amount for loans made by Canada small business financing program. As the Forest Products Association of Canada noted:

Access to credit is the number one issue for our industry. We are very encouraged by the Budget measures aimed at ensuring access to credit for Canadian businesses, particularly the expansion of the powers and financing authorities of the EDC...

The bill also authorizes nearly \$6 billion for needed long-term investment in infrastructure, community adjustment, housing and electronic health records, investments that will not only lead to new jobs in the short term, but will also help strengthen Canada's ability to succeed when competing in the global economy. This includes \$4 billion in investments to pave roads, renew our universities and colleges, fix waste water systems and repair our bridges. As the Caledon Institute of Social Policy observed:

The call for infrastructure spending...clearly was heard in Budget 2009...the substantial funding for infrastructure was welcome from the perspective of short-term employment and long-term investment in the quality of life in communities.

This also includes \$500 million to help implement electronic health record systems across the country through Canada Health Infoway. Not only will this investment help create thousands of sustainable jobs throughout Canada's health and information technology industries, it will reduce errors, dramatically improve patient safety and produce cost savings. It has the potential to save countless lives. As the Association of Canadian Academic Health Care Organizations stated, this investment will “have a powerful and transformative impact on the health system”.

Government Orders

This constitutes only a few highlights of the many urgent measures included in Bill C-10.

Time precludes me from delving further into initiatives to help the move toward a Canadian securities regulator with willing provinces and territories, initiatives to encourage new investments and the jobs they will produce through modernizing the Investment Canada Act, initiatives to protect consumers from anti-competitive and unscrupulous business practices by adding new provisions to the Competition Act, and much more.

Before moving on, though, let me pass along to the House a sample of the strong support we heard during finance committee's consideration of Bill C-10 for the Competition Act changes. As Options consommateurs and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre noted in a joint presentation:

• (1645)

...the proposed amendments are quite comprehensive, they have certainly been the subject of considerable past discussion among stakeholders and represent a fairly balanced take on necessary refinements to the Act.

...this package of amendments places appropriate emphasis on the importance of deterring anti-competitive conduct, particularly in the current difficult financial environment that all Canadians are experiencing.

We all know what is in Bill C-10. We have had a month to read, review and discuss it, more than enough time, and, for those in need of urgent assistance, perhaps too much time. On balance, a fair-minded individual would have to agree that it is the right plan for Canada's renewed prosperity and the right plan to ensure that Canada exits this current global economic downturn in the same way it entered it: the strongest.

Let us get Canada's economic action plan working. Let us help those hardest hit by the current recession. Let us create jobs today by making investments now that will help create the jobs of tomorrow. Let us pass Bill C-10 without delay. In the words of Global Insight economist, Dale Orr, he said that the budget overall was a pretty reasonable compromise and that the best thing to do was pass it, get on with it and get things moving as quickly as possible.

I ask the NDP, the Bloc and those senators to heed that advice: do not delay, act and let us make it happen.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary and many of the people in his own party are refining the process of insinuating things that are not true. We saw an example of that during question period when the Minister of Finance was boasting about not being able to spend a dollar until we pass this budget.

That is true but the full truth is that it is illegal for any dollar to be spent until April 1. The member then said that we had the broadest and widest consultation but that is not true because the finance committee did not go across Canada. In fact, if the government is boasting about how good it consults, where the hell was the consultation on the November economic statement? Why is it that between November 8, 2008 and January 27, 2009 a global financial crisis miraculously occurred?

This is so ridiculous. Will the member confirm to the House the earliest date on which one dollar can flow after the bill's passage at all stages, including the other place and royal assent?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of less than truths in the statement the hon. member made. I take a little bit of exception. If I am not telling the truth, is he then insinuating that I am lying? I am sure that he would not insinuate that of any hon. member in the House.

I would bluntly and blatantly argue that the prebudget consultation process that took place, in probably the shortest timeframe in history, was the broadest that has ever happened. The finance committee did not travel but there were meetings held here. People were invited to Ottawa and to many cities across this country. It was the broadest online consultation that has ever happened. We had an incredible amount of submissions that actually put forward ideas.

Speaking of ideas, we did not receive one idea from the Liberal Party of Canada. We did from some of its members but, unfortunately, some of its members did not get the message to their leader.

• (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. 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 Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Equalization Payments.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member opposite tell the Liberal member that consultations were held by the Standing Committee on Finance during December and January. I would remind him that the House was prorogued and therefore the Standing Committee on Finance did not sit. So, what consultations is he talking about? The Conservative members appointed originally to the committee may have sat, but Parliament could not have.

I would also like to ask him a question. He referred to the establishment of a single securities commission, which the Conservative government seems very proud of. It also seems in a hurry to establish it as well, injecting \$150 million into it. How is it going to go about it, given the very strong opposition in Quebec, in particular concerning the constitutionality of this measure? Currently, the Constitution provides very clearly that the provinces have jurisdiction in this matter.

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, by all means we will recognize Quebec's jurisdiction and the jurisdiction of all provinces in implementing a voluntary, and I emphasize voluntary, common securities regulator.

Government Orders

This is an interesting question considering that the witnesses who appeared before the finance committee this morning reminded us that we were the only industrialized country that does not have a common securities regulator. We had a long discussion about those people who were impacted through non-bank asset backed commercial paper. We are not certain that a common securities regulator would have prevented that frozen asset problem but could have.

We owe it to Canadians to put in place what could help protect the savings of Canadians. That is more important to us than anything we can do. We are in a financial situation where seniors and investors are coming to us and asking how they can protect what they have left. A common securities regulator is the right thing to do. Most provinces are on board. The others have the option to come on board.

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I noticed that the member has difficulty speaking in the House to any issue without engaging in gratuitous insults and slurs. I would like to remind him that invective is the lowest form of argument.

He raises the question of facts in his speech. I will talk about some facts. The fact is that in November his government claimed that Canada was not in a recession and that we would be running budgetary surpluses this year and next year.

Another fact is that the government, which is led by someone who claims to be an economist, either did not see in November a recession coming, in which case I question his competence, or did see a recession coming, in which case I question his honesty with the House.

The member says that we did not send in any suggestions to the government. Our party sent in dozens and dozens of suggestions to the government. I personally sent in 15 suggestions about stimulus infrastructure spending from my own riding but the government persists in saying that the opposition has not been helpful in this regard, which is simply not true.

The Obama administration in the United States is putting every infrastructure project and federal dollar on the Internet so citizens of that country can see where their government is spending the money. I would ask the member if the government will do the same thing in Canada.

• (1655)

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear because once again I have been accused of lying in the House. I find that absolutely repugnant, besides the fact that I have slurred no one here, Mr. Speaker, and you very well know that.

I do not appreciate the hon. member saying that I lied when I said that his leadership did not provide suggestions. Good for him if he provided some suggestions to the leadership of the NDP but his leadership did not give one of them to us. That is the truth.

I sat with the Minister of Finance when the NDP critic berated the finance minister but refused to offer one suggestion. It was the same thing from the Liberal Party. At least the Bloc had the decency to put forward some written suggestions. The leadership of the NDP put forward absolutely nothing and then those members have the audacity to stall this process.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Macleod, Alberta, for his dedication and hard work in getting this budget through and the economic action plan and Bill C-10. I know he sacrificed time from his family through Christmas and New Year's. On behalf of my constituents and our country, I thank him.

We had consultations, as was mentioned, from coast to coast to coast. I had the opportunity to have consultations in my riding, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and attended by people of all ages. We had good input, including the EI waiting period, work sharing and the extension of the EI benefits. The British Columbia minister of finance, Colin Hansen, was in our riding and talked about the budget.

We heard this afternoon how the NDP has delayed the budget. Would the member comment on what the NDP has done in the past trying to form a coalition and talking about bringing forward finances for our communities and our country that are in a real economic deficit and the fact that its delay antics do not respond to its words?

Mr. Ted Menzies: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from the Okanagan, a beautiful part of this country. I envy where he lives. I thank him for his support.

In answer to the first question, when we talk about dollars going out, the important thing is that the five week extension to EI will be available to people the moment the budget passes this House.

[*Translation*]

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise for the last time on the subject of Bill C-10. As I have said a number of times, the Liberal party will vote in favour of this bill, despite its significant weaknesses, for the simple reason that the economy is in a full blown crisis. Despite its weaknesses in a number of areas, we have made it clear that the top priority for the Canadian economy and for Canadians is to support the economy during this crisis. This is why we decided to vote in favour, and we have not changed our mind. I think we have probably spent enough time on this bill, and it is not my intention to repeat all of its weaknesses, all the bad things it should not contain and all the good things it should contain.

I do not want to be repeating myself and, in this speech, I would like to address two issues. First, the fact that the government is on probation and, second, the issue of this blank cheque for \$3 billion the government wants us to support.

• (1700)

[*English*]

Both the fact that the government is on probation and is subject to a number of reports, and the matter of the \$3 billion fund go to the heart of the question of accountability, especially since the Prime Minister rode to office under a banner of accountability. The government ought to pay attention both to a serious approach to its quarterly reports and to resolving in a satisfactory way this matter of the \$3 billion so-called slush fund.

Government Orders

On the question of probation, the Liberal Party is voting for the budget, but the Liberal Party, as members know, has put forward a detailed amendment that requires the government to make regular reports. I would like to indicate in the next few minutes how we propose that the government do this in a way that is accountable and transparent.

There are four items in our amendment, which was accepted by the government.

First, the government is to provide ongoing economic and fiscal updates.

Since the time of the budget, with the terrible economic news that we have had, it should be abundantly clear to all in this chamber that we have a need for fiscal and economic updates. We have had a terrible drop in GDP of 3.4% in the last quarter of 2008, the worst since 1991. We have had big job losses. We have had record bankruptcies in the personal sector. We have had big drops in housing starts.

For all those reasons, the first point, which requires ongoing economic and fiscal updates, will clearly be necessary for the reports that the government has undertaken to provide to this House.

The second point is to detail the actual implementation of the budget. That is to say, is the money actually flowing the way that the government has said it will flow? Is it flowing fast enough? Are there delays?

I would emphasize the infrastructure funding, which has been talked about frequently, but also the funding from the Business Development Bank of Canada and EDC. The government has committed some \$8 billion in small business lending. We know that credit is at the core of our problems and we had a very unsatisfactory meeting in the finance committee this morning with the president of BDC, who was entirely unable or unwilling to give us any idea of the speed with which these billions of dollars in credit would get out the door.

Just as infrastructure funding is of no value if it sits under a mattress in Ottawa, neither is credit to small business of any value if it stays in the vault of a bank rather than getting out the door to the business customers who are desperately in need of credit.

Therefore, to detail the actual implementation of the budget is the second point. In this regard, the Parliamentary Budget Officer will be playing an important role. He has provided what I thought was a good report as to how he plans to proceed to help parliamentarians, to provide these economic and fiscal updates, and to detail the implementation of the budget.

The Liberal Party certainly expects the government to co-operate fully with the requests of the Parliamentary Budget Officer for information in order to permit him to do his job for Parliament, which is to provide these economic and fiscal updates, as well as to detail the implementation of the budget.

The third item is that we expect the government, and indeed the government has agreed, to itemize the actual effects of the budget with respect to the five criteria, which our leader has set out: to protect the vulnerable, to protect the jobs of today, to protect the jobs

of tomorrow, to ensure regional fairness, and to avoid permanent deficits.

In each of these categories, we expect the government, as it has committed to do, to set out the ways in which its actions and its future actions will impact Canadians in these five areas.

Finally, the fourth point is to provide details on any adjustments or new measures as may be required to benefit the Canadian economy.

As our party has said a number of times, as the finance minister has said, if the situation becomes distinctly worse, then it may be necessary for the government to take further action.

● (1705)

This would seem to be a matter of common sense in a crisis the likes of which none of us have seen in our lifetimes and nobody knows where the bottom is. It is impossible to say whether or not further government action will be needed. If we were to base our assessment on recent events, we certainly could not rule that out.

The only one who seems to be out of step on this is the Prime Minister himself, who has spoken ambiguously, on CNN yesterday and in previous times, where it becomes apparent that he does not really believe in fiscal stimulus in the first place, which was clearly reflected in his MA thesis.

I am not sure that he, unlike his finance minister, unlike the Liberal Party, subscribes to the notion that even if the Canadian economy gets substantially worse that he will or will not be willing to provide additional support. That is a question for the Prime Minister.

In the amendment to which the government agreed, the government agreed that it would provide details on new adjustments or new measures that may be required.

This is what we mean by the role of a government on probation. The government has agreed to it and we will hold it to account for co-operating fully and in a transparent manner on all of these four points of the amendment which was accepted by this Parliament.

I turn to my second and final subject, which is the matter of this \$3 billion so-called blank cheque, as we tend to call, or slush fund as others tend to call it. It is a \$3 billion fund which the Treasury Board seeks to appropriate and to spend in some fashion, as it sees fit.

If there is any doubt in the minds of anybody in this House as to the position of the Liberal Party, I will just read a headline from a *Canadian Press* story that came out about one hour ago. The headline is, “[Liberal leader] won't bend on \$3-billion 'slush fund' despite election threat”. That is a verbatim statement of the headline, except that it uses his name which I cannot say here rather than “Liberal leader”.

Government Orders

He has said, as the headline says, clearly that our party will not bend on this \$3 billion slush fund despite election threats. Let me just make it very clear, what is involved here. This has nothing to do with the vote on the budget. There has been some confusion on this issue. It is entirely a matter of the vote on the estimates. That vote will not take place for two to three weeks, which means that there is plenty of time to make some adjustments to what the government is proposing in order to restore at least a modicum of accountability to the government proposal which, so far, is entirely lacking in accountability.

It is possible to walk and chew gum at the same time. That is to say, we can get the money out the door with zero delay, with zero impact on the speed with which that money is out there to support the Canadian economy, and at the same time we can make some changes to what the government is proposing, so that it is not presented with a blank cheque that is absolutely and utterly blank.

The problem is that we have heard from Treasury Board officials that, contrary to statements by the Treasury Board President, this \$3 billion would be limited to expenditures on budget measures. The Treasury Board officials have told us in writing that in fact the \$3 billion could be spent on anything under the sun, including measures that the government has not even thought of yet.

Especially for a government and a Prime Minister that tells us, ad nauseam, about accountability and how much they subscribe to that, surely it is unacceptable to provide totally unrestricted rules for a government to spend taxpayers' hard-earned money with no accountability to Parliament, with no scrutiny, and with no barriers around the areas in which it is able to spend.

That is why, for the Liberal Party, it is a non-negotiable issue to come to some agreement on this which will maybe not establish maximum accountability but at least a modicum of accountability, whereas as matters stand today, none exists.

• (1710)

We have come almost to the end of our debate on this bill. All of us must be seized with the gravity of the situation facing our economy. All of us must be seized with the importance of providing support to the economy and that is why we in the Liberal Party, notwithstanding all the errors of omission and commission contained in this budget, will nevertheless support it at third reading.

However, we are not giving a blank cheque to the government in two respects. First, we are not giving it a blank cheque because we have put it on probation. We are requiring reports and demanding that the government behave in a transparent and co-operative way in providing the required information on these reports. Second, we are demanding that it display at least a substantial element of accountability in terms of the management of this \$3 billion fund.

In conclusion, I move:

That this question be now put.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I listened to my Liberal colleague's speech about Bill C-10, the budget implementation bill, which is at the third reading stage. He spoke to us about two major elements, the second being the \$3 billion that the government wants to give itself. The

member said he was not ready to give the government a blank cheque. He also spoke about accountability and the fact that minimal accountability, not maximum accountability, may be required.

I would like my colleague to explain exactly how he intends to show the government that it must demonstrate minimal accountability and to explain what he considers to be minimal accountability.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I believe that I said we would require a significant and substantial amount, not a minimal amount, as if it were not important.

I believe the House leader is discussing the options with his counterpart. It is somewhat technical, but I believe that there are means to limit the government's flexibility in terms of what it wants to spend. We may have other means to come to a solution.

In my opinion, we have not yet come to a solution that both parties find acceptable, but I am relatively optimistic that we will be able to get there and reach an agreement. I hope that there will be an agreement. As I said, our leader is seeking a solution and we would prefer to have an agreement. Negotiations are ongoing and so I do not have an exact answer to the question.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Let me get this straight, Madam Speaker. After the Liberals bent over backward on pay equity and sold out the women of Canada on pay equity, after they sold out and bent over backward on employment insurance because they supposedly believe, as the NDP does, that half the workers not being able to access employment insurance is a fundamental crime, after they bent over backward on equalization in Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Quebec, and after they bent over backward on virtually everything, now we are being told that this time the line in the sand that they have drawn is a very real line.

I just do not buy it because what we saw today, for the 60th consecutive time over two Parliaments, was Liberals propping up the Harper agenda, propping up the Conservative government.

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would remind the hon. member that members of Parliament are not allowed to use the name of a sitting member.

Mr. Peter Julian: Madam Speaker, I am actually referring to an agenda, kind of like *Harper's Magazine* and Harper's index. It describes something that is a reality, not referencing anybody in particular in the House.

However, what we have is systematic bending over backwards on everything, by the Liberals, for the Conservative agenda. We even saw the principle of the slush fund in the former sponsorship scandal. It was Liberal ingenuity, also most criminal ingenuity, that brought the sponsorship scandal to bear. We also saw with the softwood sellout, which the Liberals supported through every single stage, that the Bush softwood slush fund was supported by the Liberals.

The simple question is this: How could we possibly believe the Liberals this time?

Government Orders

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, Liberals do not take any lessons from the NDP members either on economics or on morality. On economics, they do not understand it and they never will. On morality, they may accuse us of propping up the government, but everybody knows it is the NDP that created the government, because it is as a consequence of NDP action that the government came into being. Had it not been for those actions, Canadians would have child care, Kelowna, and pay equity. It is the NDP members and not the Liberals who are responsible for that.

Therefore, we take no lessons from the NDP either on the subjects that the hon. member raised or anything to do with economics.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Before allowing another member to rise on questions, I would like to remind the member for Burnaby—New Westminster that he is not allowed to say indirectly what he cannot say directly in the House.

I recognize the member for Mississauga South.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, during question period the finance critic for the official opposition posed a question to the finance minister, the gist of which was following the finance minister's statement admonishing the House that we have to pass the bill because until we pass it not one dollar can flow. The finance critic posed the question and reminded him that no money under the budget implementation legislation actually can flow until April 1. As a matter of fact, it is not legal.

Interestingly enough, I asked the same question of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance in commencing this debate. I asked the blunt and straightforward question, could he confirm to the House the date on which the first dollar of these monies under the budget implementation legislation can flow?

He did not answer the question, which says to me that the Conservatives will not answer straight questions because they know they have been implying and insinuating that everything is everybody else's fault, that it is a global financial crisis that has nothing to do with us, that it is synchronized somehow, that this is jingoism and it is not true.

I wonder if the member would care to comment on the accountability and the transparency that his party shows even in simple questions.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for his good question. I believe he knows in part the answer to his question, which is that the money from the budget can legally flow as of April 1 of this year. When it will actually flow is a totally different matter.

If we were to make that assessment based on the government's past record in flowing infrastructure funding, and based on what we heard in committee this morning about the BDC's lack of concrete plans, I think we will be left to wonder whether this money will ever flow or whether it will take many months before any significant quantity of money does flow.

I think in a sense the practical question is more important than the legal question, and the monitoring function will be central for us in determining what the answer to that question will be.

The member refers to accountability. To repeat my speech, I will refer to the double elements of accountability that will be important to us going forward: first, to have the government accountable as a government under probation according to the four sets of criteria set out in the motion; and second, that the government must also be accountable in accepting substantive and significant changes in the management of the \$3-billion fund.

• (1720)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Madam Speaker, New Democrats believe passionately in pay equity. This budget trashes pay equity. New Democrats believe in respecting our public civil servants and the sanctity of negotiated contracts. This budget rolls back negotiated collective agreements, including rolling back pay to RCMP officers.

New Democrats believe in child care spaces. This budget does not create one child care space. New Democrats believe in a national housing plan, something that the Liberal Party promised to restore in 1993 and failed to deliver, despite being the government for 13 straight years.

What does the hon. member say to the children, the women, the affordable housing advocates and the civil servants of this country in terms of his supporting the bill?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member for Markham—Unionville the opportunity to answer. He has 35 seconds.

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, the NDP can always be counted on to speak with sanctimony. The NDP never has to exercise responsibility, and that is the fundamental problem. I have said many times that this budget is far from perfect. It is reprehensible in many ways, but the NDP never considers the fundamental point that this is an economy in crisis. This is an economy where jobless rates are soaring. This is an economy where in my office I receive requests from—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying that it is very clear, as far as third reading of Bill C-10 is concerned, that the Bloc Québécois will be opposed, for a number of reasons. We have taken part in the debates at second reading, and proposed amendments, all of which were rejected. Both the Budget Implementation Act 2009 and the budget implementation plan create significant inequalities for Quebec. They have been strongly objected to in Quebec. In particular, the National Assembly passed an unanimous resolution in which all four parties in the Assembly took part.

These elements are of such importance to Quebec that they were the topic of a special session of the Quebec National Assembly. It came out unanimously against the government's intention to create, through this bill, a single securities commission, setting aside \$150 million for the purpose. Quebec has always objected to this, and continues to do so. The Bloc Québécois members here will therefore continue to doggedly defend that position.

Government Orders

It is very clear that this is an area under Quebec jurisdiction. The Conservative government has been saying since 2006 that it absolutely wants to create this institution. We are totally opposed to this measure on constitutional grounds. What is more, we doubt that it will work.

Moreover, this morning, in the Standing Committee on Finance—which the Liberal colleague just referred to—we heard from specialists from the finance department. They told us that even if there is in the United States a commission for the entire country with a somewhat difficult to define role, it had not been up to dealing with the devastating effects of risk mortgages. These experts admitted that this type of mortgages were the source of the economic crisis we are experiencing. Even a single body in the U.S. was not able to offset the effects of a crisis everyone could see coming.

What is the real intention of the Conservative government in creating this single commission if not to be at cross-purposes with an existing process that is working very well? There are thirteen commissions working within an area that falls under the jurisdiction of their province or territory. A passport system enables communication between them. The International Monetary Fund has deemed this to be highly satisfactory and worthwhile for Canada and Quebec.

How can a government be trusted that is determined to flout one of Quebec's clear desires and decisions? The *Autorité des marchés financiers* is the only remaining bulwark in Quebec protecting all securities, especially at the Montreal Exchange, which had to give up a number of functions when merged with the Toronto Stock Exchange. The government wants to deprive Quebec of a tool that is very important for its future development and concentrate it in Toronto, which paradoxically is located in the only province that refused to join the passport system because that province knew that its refusal would damage the system.

● (1725)

Ontario said to itself, therefore, that if a single securities commission were established, it would get it. We are totally opposed to this situation.

There is another major item that we tried to amend. That is the Conservative government's intention in the budget implementation bill to unilaterally change the equalization system. They want to eliminate the planned \$991 million increase in the 2009-10 financial year. This figure was confirmed by the Finance Minister's people. Quebec will therefore be deprived of nearly \$1 billion, which will prevent it from establishing programs and improving services in the areas of education, health and transportation. The people of Quebec will therefore once again experience this offloading of responsibilities that uses the economic crisis as an excuse, despite the fact that agreements had already been reached. Now the government says it is putting an end to all that and henceforth the provinces will have to pay, especially Quebec.

We totally disagree with this. I was talking a little while ago about the resolution unanimously adopted by the Quebec National Assembly in January 2009 that asked the Conservative government to review this issue, because it is totally unacceptable. In March 2007, our current Prime Minister wrote to the Premier of Quebec saying that transfer payments would henceforth be predictable and

Quebec would be able to plan better knowing in advance how much equalization it would receive. In November, the government put an end to this agreement, all of a sudden and without warning anyone, and cut Quebec's equalization by a billion dollars, not counting subsequent years.

Another major, totally incomprehensible item in the budget is the favourable treatment accorded Hydro One in Ontario in comparison with Hydro-Québec. Hydro One arranges and installs electric power lines and distributes power. Hydro-Québec does the same but also builds and operates electric power generating plants. Two-thirds of Hydro-Québec's revenues come from transmission and distribution. The government is refusing now to give equal treatment to this two-thirds of what Hydro-Québec does.

That too is completely unfair to Quebec and deprives it of about \$250 million that it would receive if the same formula were applied to it as to Ontario. Once again, this is totally unacceptable.

There is another major issue. Once again, pay equity amendments, among others, were not passed this afternoon. This budget implementation bill scoffs at the right to pay equity, women's right to receive the same pay as men for the same work. This bill makes pay equity a negotiable right. That is unacceptable. Conservative government representatives told us that they had modelled the amendment on Quebec legislation, but everyone knows that in Quebec, pay equity legislation is proactive because it researches and analyzes these problems in advance. However, the federal government is trying to make women in the public service take a significant step backward. They are being told that from now on, the matter will be negotiable and the government will have to see if it can be adapted.

● (1730)

The Conservative members' suggestion that their bill is similar to Quebec legislation is false, and we take exception to such statements.

The other issue is capping pay raises for federal employees. The government signed salary increase agreements with a number of groups, but the budget implementation bill is a big step backward for these people too. Their employer, the government, publicly gave them the shaft. These people work for all Canadians and Quebecers, but they have just been denied the right to the fair, equitable, proper negotiations that resulted in agreements, agreements that the government has torn up. That, too, is completely unacceptable.

Government Orders

Another major issue—and I should note that I am only talking about major issues, because we could go on forever if we were to discuss the details of every significant irritant in this bill—is this bill's amendment of the Navigable Waters Act. Bill C-10 gives extraordinary powers to one person, the minister, no consultations required. From now on, the minister will have the power to define navigable waterways and structures that may be exempt from environmental assessment.

This is giving far too much power to the minister, without reference to consultation or environmental studies, justified simply by the statement that we must act quickly to see that the money set aside for infrastructure is spent quickly.

Generations will follow us and rap our knuckles. They will rap the knuckles of the Conservative government and of the Liberals who support it at the moment. They will say it is crazy to have given a minister powers in this bill to circumvent the necessary environmental studies. It is highly likely that, in some respects—especially at the pace they want to proceed—the government will end up with projects that will damage the environment. No one wants this, but the way is clear for this to happen.

We mentioned as well in the budget debate that there is a major imbalance—I will point it out again—in connection with the forestry sector. The budget implementation bill has done nothing to correct the imbalance we identified in the budget. There are measures worth \$170 million for the forestry sector across Canada, when \$2.7 billion was paid or planned as loan guarantees for car manufacturing, which is concentrated in Ontario. That means crumbs for the forestry sector, which has been in crisis for five years, while the government taps are being opened to pour billions of dollars into the automotive industry.

It is if they were saying the forestry sector counts for nothing. That is nonsense. In Quebec, there are 140 municipalities whose livelihood depends only on the forestry sector. The Conservative government does not care about these communities. People are going to lose their jobs. Businesses will close. The economy will collapse. And yet, the government does nothing. No loan guarantees have been provided for the companies with a chance of surviving. The government is not there to help them.

Finally, I would like to speak about the entire employment insurance system. The government told us it had improved the employment insurance system by adding five weeks of benefits, going from 45 to 50 weeks. However, very few of the unemployed will benefit from this measure because the real need is felt when workers first lose their jobs. The two weeks of the waiting period are the most difficult. During the election campaign and the holidays, I met hundreds of citizens. Unfortunately, many companies are working on a temporary basis and this is even the case for some government services.

• (1735)

We have been told that workers are seriously affected by the two week waiting period. This occurs year after year and they are never able to recover these amounts.

The Conservative government has stated that money has to be injected quickly. Before its November economic statement, we suggested a very specific plan to foster economic recovery. The

unemployed would have had money in their pockets sooner. Now, however, they are impoverished constantly because they often have recurring periods of unemployment.

I reiterate that the Bloc Québécois will not support Bill C-10.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, we were very interested in the speech by the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, especially because he is opposed, like us, to the budget and Bill C-10.

The Liberal Party has actually spoken against the bill as well, while simultaneously saying it will vote in favour. This is the sixtieth straight time that the Liberals have supported the Conservative government in a vote of confidence in the House.

Can the hon. member tell me how he sees things? The Liberal Party says it opposes everything in the budget and Bill C-10 but ultimately will vote in favour of the bill.

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his question.

It is true that the Liberal Party has been contradicting itself over and over for the last year and a half. It effectively supports the Conservative government, often under false pretexts.

We have also heard the Liberals and been repeatedly dumb-founded by both their speeches and what they have asked in question period. They say something does not make sense and the Conservatives should have included something else in the budget, but then they go and vote in favour of it.

It is as if they were saying there are some very important things in this world but protecting women's right to pay equity is not as important as all that. It is not so important for the Liberals because they are ultimately going to allow things to pass that they oppose. It is not all that important, in their view, that Quebec has been unanimously demanding the withdrawal of the new equalization formula and the cancellation of a single securities commission. This is not very important for Quebec. That is clearly what the Liberals think because they will vote with the government to impose measures on Quebec that are unacceptable to it.

I can only say to my colleague that, unfortunately, we have heard and seen the same inconsistencies coming from the Liberal Party.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois speaking about all the problems he has determined with the economic action plan presented by our government.

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I find it really strange and hard to imagine, since the budget would provide many billions of dollars to his province in various aspects, both in economic structure development and also in equalization.

My question to that member is this: why would he keep blocking the passage of Bill C-10?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, we have often said that the measures the Conservatives included in this budget to boost the economy will miss the mark. We presented them with a very complete plan last November. They even admitted that the Bloc was the only opposition party to introduce a credible plan. The measures proposed in this plan would have given back to older people and the unemployed the money they had been promised. This plan would have ensured that the manufacturing and forestry industries were not completely abandoned, as this budget does by leaving them only \$170 million. Instead, all the assistance is focused on the automobile industry in Ontario.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, my colleague from Saint-Maurice—Champlain spoke earlier about part 7 of Bill C-10, which is a part that I personally find very important. Is he aware that, when this part of the bill was studied in committee, 28 witnesses were invited, none of whom were from Quebec? This is incredible given how many lakes we have in Quebec. And we have issues because the 1882 law, which became the 1886 law, was revised and became the 1985 law. But it does not reflect the reality of the majority of our lakes in Quebec.

I am very proud to hear that the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain will not support this bill, which, in my opinion, is completely inadequate for Quebec.

Is he aware that the bill does not even include secondary bodies of water even though the department's civil servants recommended them? It does not include secondary work either. I would like to hear his opinion on this.

• (1745)

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest: Madam Speaker, the hon. member is obviously referring to the part when I spoke about navigable waters. The most important point is that we are giving a minister, a single person, power that he would never have been given if the parts of this bill had been studied separately.

The Conservative government took advantage of the fact that it would have the Liberals' support and introduced a number of elements into its bill that are even against the Liberals' philosophy and views. But, knowing that they would support the budget, the government took advantage of that and included measures such as this one, which gives the minister, a single person, the authority to define waterway and decide which structures will not require an environmental study. The minister can decide which structures can be built where, without referring to environmental studies. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this important bill, which illustrates the profound differences between the parties in this House. This brings to light all the challenges we have with a third minority government in a row. This is the first time in Canadian political history that there have been three minority governments in a row: the Liberal minority

government of Paul Martin, followed by two Conservative minority governments led by the current Prime Minister.

I say this by way of introduction to explain that, clearly, the government has had to become accustomed to this situation and find various ways to deal with the presence of other political forces in this House. Let us look at the differences in approach.

When Paul Martin came to power with a minority government in the spring of 2005, he was faced with an opposition majority. There were enough Conservative, Bloc and NDP members to defeat the Liberal minority government, so it had to find an ally.

Mr. Martin's budget had provided that taxes on major corporations would be reduced by \$4.8 billion. This money was removed from Crown assets. The NDP supported the budget on the condition that the government make a drastic change, allocating the \$4.8 billion to social housing, public transit and post-secondary education. This shows that the parties can work together in a minority situation, provided that the government is willing to accept its minority status and work with the other parties in the House.

What changes have we seen with the Conservatives? During their first government, which lasted from January 2006 to October 2008—there was another election last October 14—the House of Commons was the scene of daily bickering, spite, invective and constant attacks from a minority government. The leader of the Liberal Party was weak and voted 43 times for the Conservatives. As a result, it was very difficult for the Liberals to face the voters and say how bad the Conservatives were, since they had given the government a vote of confidence 43 times.

The Prime Minister had the temerity to call an election. It should first be said that this election was called contrary to the provisions of legislation that had been introduced and voted on by the Conservatives as part of what they called their ethics package. That may seem somewhat pompous, but it was as hollow as it was pompous. They said with their hand on their heart that it was not right for the government itself to decide on the date of the elections and that they were going to set the date for the next election, which would be held on October 19, 2010. That was when the next election was to be called.

They did as all the other governments have done before them, but more hypocritically, since they had a vote on legislation here in the House of Commons saying it was not right to leave it to the government to choose the date of the election and that elections had to be called on a set date. That really betrays the Conservatives' modus operandi and shows how it is they cannot work with anyone. In the 2008 election campaign, they swore to the public that they had understood the importance of working with all forces in the House of Commons. They said that this time things would be different, even if they were in a minority position. It is true that things were different. They were worse.

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• (1750)

On November 27, right in the middle, not of what we feared might be, but what has already proven itself to be one of the worst economic crises since the 1920s, the Conservatives made a budget statement, one that required the confidence of the House. In the statement, they attacked three things. First, they attacked the right of women to equal pay for work of equal value. Second, they attacked union and social rights. Third, they attacked the very system of funding political parties. This system, it will be remembered, had been put in place in the wake of the worst political scandal in Canada's history. It was the sponsorship scandal, in which the Liberal Party of Canada stole millions of dollars from Canadian taxpayers for its own use. It has yet to pay it all back.

That is what the Conservatives decided to do, instead of proposing budgetary measures to increase economic activity, save jobs and create new ones. It was so serious that the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois and the Liberal Party of Canada announced their plans to defeat the government. That is when we saw a man who usually struts about like some tough guy run and hide behind the Governor General's skirts, asking that Parliament be prorogued, instead of facing the music on December 8. He went and saw the Governor General, imploring her to grant a prorogation unlike any other in the history of Canadian politics. That prorogation was granted only a few weeks after the federal election. He was about to be defeated. Showing a lack of respect for our institutions, he hid out at Rideau Hall and succeeded in getting his prorogation, and a reprieve. The House resumed exactly two months from November 27. On January 27, the government presented its budget.

What did the budget do? The budget attacked women's right to equal pay for work of equal value. The budget attacked union and social rights. But this time, as though there always have to be three things, instead of attacking political party financing, it attacked the environment, taking away the protection granted by legislation that even has that word in its title: the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

I will list all the things that were in the budget and ought not to have been, and the others that ought to have been in there and were not. The only thing that was taken out between November 27 and January 27, and which was of sufficient interest to the Liberals to get them to vote in favour of the budget this time, while they were prepared to vote against it in November, is abolition of the clean funding system for political parties. In so doing they managed to get their money back. We got it clearly: the only principle of interest to the Liberals is their own money. Let us keep in mind that the Liberal Party of Canada is the party that depends the most on public assets for its funding. It is, in fact, incapable of finding funding. We saw that with the sponsorship scandal: the only way it could get any money was to steal the public's money. So, there were a whole series of elements that should never have been in a budget bill.

We understand where they got the model from, however. In another Bill C-10 in another time, the Conservatives felt the desire to start imposing film censorship. This was a step back to the 1950s. The good Conservatives made the decision for the public on what films could or could not be made in Canada with funding from various tax credit programs. That had nothing to do with the budget except the fact that tax credits were mentioned, but it had everything to do with their right-wing ideology.

Then, in another bill they managed to include in a budget bill, we had an all out attack on our immigration system, a system that had been based on rights. A person was entitled to become a citizen if he or she met all the criteria. The Conservatives changed this to "may". A person may become a citizen if he or she meets all the criteria, but the one who makes the decision is a public servant. It thus becomes totally random and discretionary, and thus at cross-purposes with all our principles of law, but that did not bother them much. For the Conservatives, none of that is of any interest.

Those are the three things they have done.

• (1755)

These measures were included but should not have been there. I have to say that those items that should have been in the budget are nowhere to be found.

I will make a friendly suggestion to my good friend, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance: he should either clean his ears or take a memory test. I was at a meeting attended by my colleague for Winnipeg, the Minister of Finance, and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. They explained to him, chapter and verse, what should be in the budget—because our approach was to stimulate the economy with large public expenditures—and, knowing them very well, they did not want them to start down another path. It has been on the website for a long time. My leader met with the Prime Minister and had been discussing with him a number of measures for an hour and a half. Significantly, during the meeting, it was my colleague who, on behalf of the caucus members, pointed out, line by line, item by item, projects that were at the ready and had all been analysed in their respective parts of the country. Apparently, the Minister of Finance, who looked as though he was taking notes, was just pretending to take notes. His parliamentary secretary, who was obviously there in body but not in mind, rose in this House today to contradict one of my colleagues by stating that nothing at all had been submitted. That is false.

My colleague did indeed provide a list of things, but our approach is totally different. As our Bloc colleague has just put it so well, there is a fundamental difference between our two parties. This difference colours all of their thinking. We would have preferred from the outset that they not provide the same tax reductions across the board to all major corporations, because, by definition, a company that makes no profits has no tax to pay and cannot therefore enjoy a tax reduction. This is economics 101.

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They should have targeted the sectors of the economy that needed it most, such as the manufacturing and forestry sectors. Unfortunately, these two sectors are in Ontario and Quebec, primarily, where they have no political base. So that was of no interest to them. They gave tens of billions of dollars to the most profitable companies, including the oil and gas sectors in western Canada, their political base. So, companies not needing it were bailed out with public funds, and companies with the greatest need got nothing. The figures are there. Since they came to office—even before the current crisis—over 350,000 jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector and over 100,000 in the forestry sector in Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. That is the direct result of the poor budget choices of the Conservatives. But they were not about to change their tack. That was the meeting we had with the finance minister.

His parliamentary secretary said earlier that we were rude. We do not agree with them and do not support the decision taken knowingly by the Conservatives to demolish the manufacturing and forestry sectors. That is what they have done.

At the end of January, on January 27, they presented a budget. The crisis had been full blown since September and continued in October, November, December and January, but at the end of January they still had not done anything.

They have introduced a budget with supposedly 1.9% of the GDP for public spending. Let us look at the facts. The figure advocated by the G7 and the G20 is 2%. Let us look closely at the facts, however. The 1.9% includes \$8 billion that was to come from a reduction in public spending, but nothing was identified. One important point to remember is that the Conservatives have been in office for three years and, prior to the current budget, they had increased spending for government programs by nearly 25%, or \$40 billion a year, with no results.

● (1800)

They gave \$60 billion in tax cuts to the richest large corporations and increased spending by \$40 billion, but this has no impact on most people. Did they eliminate the two week waiting period for employment insurance? Not at all. Did they help certain sectors of industry? They do not believe in that; they will not do so.

What is more, the 1.9% of GDP is also entirely unrealistic. They claim they will spend the municipalities' money and the provinces' money. In their little columns of numbers, they are including money from the municipalities and the provinces, which have not said a word about whether that money is available. Yet, that money is part of the Conservatives' calculations. Talk about free-loading. While all other countries are pinching their pennies and doing everything they can to sustain themselves, the Conservatives are sneaking a little here and a little there from everyone else's plate. They are not really spending to stimulate the economy. This aspect, which should have been in the budget, is totally missing.

There is a third factor. We are talking about what was in the budget and should not have been there, like the attack against women's right to equal pay for work of equal value, and what should have been there, like real spending to stimulate the economy, particularly in the area of infrastructure and refurbishing old homes to make them more energy efficient. Are we going to pass such a huge debt down to future generations? Hopefully we can at least pass

down green infrastructures at the same time, along with clean, renewable energy and things they can benefit from. Instead, some would rather destroy the environment under the pretext that projects must be approved as soon as possible. Thus, they are using a real economic crisis as an opportunity to attack women's rights, the environment and social rights.

Last week, we got the icing on the cake, the cherry on top. On Thursday, we found out that by fiddling with the vote on the Treasury budgets, they were going to try to get approval for a \$3 billion slush fund to be spent however they wish with no strings attached and no defined programs. They tried to absolve themselves by saying that they have to do it because measures take too long. This is like some kind of 1-800-Chuck-Guité. They have to start understanding what they have done. They are asking high-level bureaucrats to do what the Liberals asked them to do during the sponsorship scandal.

We have a parliamentary system based on departmental accountability. Since the sponsorship scandal, the rules have been changed, and what used to be implicit—deputy minister accountability—is now explicit. They are thumbing their noses at all of that even though it was in a bill that they introduced on accountability and the obligation to report to the people's elected representatives. That is what is so dangerous.

The U.S. has a different system of government and a lot has to change to make it work, but the Americans and their new President Obama are setting up an on-line system that will allow citizens to track how every dollar is spent. I made the same suggestion last Thursday. The same parliamentary secretary, the one with the memory problems, was on CTV with Tom Clark, and he said that it was a very good idea. Just two days later, on CTV's *Question Period* with Craig Oliver, that interest evaporated.

The NDP reproves and condemns the government because it has introduced a budget that does nothing to stimulate the economy, that attacks basic rights, such as women's rights, and that brings in several billions of dollars worth of discretionary spending. The budget is shameful. Unlike the Liberals, who have no principles, the NDP will take a stand against this budget.

● (1805)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, much of the debate we have had through the various stages of the budget implementation bill has meandered around the question of whether this flawed budget should be passed. I think all hon. members understand how serious everyone is about the principles upon which the budget tramples.

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The budget came down on January 27. If we consider how long it will take to get through the balance of third reading and then through the Senate, it appears it will take until near the end of March before it will be in place and April 1 when the money starts to flow. That is two months. However, the process was also contracted by the budget consultations and even the debate. This means even if we were to defeat the budget, go to an election, see how it turns out, get the House back, start it all up, get another throne speech, get another budget in place and then add about two to three months on to that, it would appear we would be into October of 2009 before we would be back at the same point we are at right now, albeit with a different budget, I would hope.

I am pretty sure that the damage done to some of the principles trampled upon by the budget will be reparable by subsequent actions of Parliament. I think I am convinced that, if we do not get this stimulus out and help the people of Canada to either save their jobs or create new jobs, if the House is defeated and we go into an election, the damage done will never be reparable.

Would the member care to comment on that assessment?

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, it is always an interesting experience to listen to Liberals try to give themselves a clean conscience, as they vote against women's rights, the environment and social and union rights. They try to give themselves a clean conscience by convincing themselves that somehow this is a stimulus package that will help the economy, whereas their member from Markham—Unionville, who has always been with me in committee, has said the same thing; that a lot of this is a pure fiction.

Of the 1.9% of GDP that is supposed to be in this budget, those members presume that a lot of the money will come from municipalities and provinces that do not have the money. That is a fiction. A lot of it is supposed savings in government spending. The Conservatives are the worst public administrators in the history of Canada. Prior to this budget, which has a large deficit, they had already increased public spending by the order of 25%, almost \$40 billion a year, with nothing to show for it.

This so-called stimulus package has almost nothing left in it except for the \$3 billion slush fund that the Conservatives keep talking about now and that has to be put through with the same urgency. They are using a very real political and economic emergency at this time in the country to try to take away the normal rules of control of public spending.

This is exactly what the corrupt Liberals did with the sponsorship scandal. There was a very real national urgency with regard to national unity in the wake of the 1995 referendum. The Liberals said that we had this unity problem, so they would spend hundreds of millions of dollars of public money. They forgot to say that they would take away all the normal controls and fill their pockets with millions of those dollars. That is the sad legacy of the Liberal Party. That is why no one who actually knows the Liberals is surprised to see them talking about women's rights and the environment and then voting against them.

One of their members, I think Toronto Beaches is the name of her riding, spoke eloquently yesterday, and I congratulated her when I saw her alone. I asked her if she would do like the members from Newfoundland and Labrador and stand up and vote against the

budget. She walked away, having nothing to say. I saw her today, shamefully standing up and voting for the Conservative budget because, like all the other Liberals, she is devoid of principles. She talks a good game when it comes to women's rights, but will not back them up when it comes to a vote.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I found the comments by the member for Outremont very interesting and I would like to ask him about what I would call the government's deceit. He talks about the fact that the Liberals will probably vote for the budget implementation bill to keep the government in power and says that, at that point, it may even include other laws. That is fantastic because it will pass and there will be no need to revisit it.

There are many such laws. In addition to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and the Pay Equity Act, we find amendments to the Competition Act, the Investment Canada Act, the Canada Transportation Act, and the Air Canada Public Participation Act. And we could name others. Hence, I wonder if the member for Outremont believes that this shows contempt for Parliament.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I could not agree more with my colleague from Brome—Missisquoi that there is contempt for Parliament. I would add, though, that the Liberal members have contempt for the voters. They all keep on talking in this House during question period and outside when they are questioned during media scrums after question period. They talk about women's rights and say that it is terrible that the Conservatives are taking away those rights, yet they are voting for that. They say it is terrible to play with the Navigable Waters Protection Act, yet they are voting with the Conservatives to remove that protection.

Another issue we have not had enough time to talk about is creating a new regulatory system, which not many people in Canada want. We must not forget that we are talking about a group that has never been a fan of big government. Yet the Conservatives are creating a new securities regulator. That is really something. It does not address any known problem. We have a passport system that works very well and has been praised by the G7. Canada is a regulatory model.

I would like to ask a few riddles. How many court cases were undertaken by the federal government in the sponsorship scandal? I will give you a hint. The number starts with a zero. Yes, the only court cases were those undertaken by the Government of Quebec, and the people who went to jail went there thanks to the Government of Quebec.

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And how many days of proceedings have there been so far under the Criminal Code for Vincent Lacroix? Let us keep in mind that the Autorité des marchés financiers exists at the provincial level, and that it is the Criminal Code on the federal level. He is in prison for many years because of the proceedings initiated by Quebec. There are several hundred criminal charges against him, but how many days in court so far? Let me give you another clue. It starts with a zero. Yes, that is the real performance record of the federal government as far as crimes of this type go, what are sometimes called white collar crimes, that is fraud and the like. I myself have had the pleasure of seeing how the OSFI, the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions operates, when Ms. Dickson came and testified last year. We had an opportunity to question her about the famous commercial paper, and she was not able to tell us what she had to do with all that and yet this was one of the biggest frauds ever perpetrated in Canada.

So, for heaven's sake, before they start preaching to us about how well the federal government can do things, could somebody at least look at the facts?

• (1815)

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Madam Speaker, I heard the member for Outremont say that the Conservative government, unlike previous minority governments, has not learned to work with the other parties and has not considered its minority status. I think that is untrue since there is a party that has supported it 60 times. I do not understand his earlier statement. I would like him to explain it to me.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The member for Outremont has 45 second to respond.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair: Madam Speaker, I do not know if it is the lawyer in me speaking or the politician who hates to admit he is wrong, but my colleague is absolutely right. When the spineless Liberals, who have no backbone, consistently and constantly support the Conservative government, we are, for all intents and purposes, facing a new political party. We all remember the acronym that was invented when they formed the Conservative Reform Alliance Party. The acronym was unforgettable. Now we have the Conservative Liberal Alliance Party. I will let you figure out the acronym. It is very telling.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate at third reading on the budget implementation bill for the fiscal year that will commence on April 1.

We have been on a bit of a roller coaster ride. I would like to bring us to where we are and where some of the indicators may have been had someone's eyes been open, or at least had someone read the newspapers.

Back in the 39th Parliament, there were a number of things going on in the House. There was certainly some sabre rattling by some political parties that if the government did not get its act in gear, it may face an election. Some parties did not have much confidence in the government. They thought that the government could not be trusted, that its credibility was in question, that they could not believe what the government said. Conservative times were tough

times. All these things were going on, which is part of the political process that we experience in Parliament.

During the latter part of the 39th Parliament, there was an investigation going on in the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics on the in-and-out scandal. The Chief Electoral Officer had ruled that the Conservative Party had broken the elections law of Canada, had overspent its advertising budget and had laundered the money through candidates, et cetera. I do not have to go through all of that other than to say that there are ongoing legal proceedings as a consequence. We did have committee hearings and we were getting evidence and testimony from people who were corroborating what the Chief Electoral Officer had found, that the government was aware that what it was doing was improper under the Canada Elections Act. This is where the term "dysfunction" came out.

In fact, the standing committee, which I chair, held summer hearings on this issue. Things were getting pretty hot and interesting to the point where we had to subpoena members of the Conservative Party of Canada to appear. They refused to honour the subpoenas of the committee. That got a lot of attention. The committee decided it would deal with it when the House resumed because the assistance of the Speaker of the House would be needed to act on the subpoenas and to determine whether contempt of Parliament issues might have to be dealt with.

Before the summer was over and before the House was to return, the Prime Minister dissolved Parliament. He said that Parliament was dysfunctional. We had an election on October 14, 2008.

The first point is there was no defeat of the government on any confidence issue. Opposition members certainly had a lot of concerns about the integrity of the government, but there was no threat to any legislation. Everything the government had wanted to pass had passed.

In fact one of the things that had passed in that Parliament is a law regarding fixed election dates which had specified that the first election was to be October 19, 2009. The Prime Minister himself said that not ever again would a prime minister have the opportunity to call an election when it was politically advantageous. He said that everybody, every party, every member of Parliament, every member of the public would know exactly when the next election would be held.

What did he do? He dissolved Parliament and called an election one year earlier than the law stipulated. I can remember why. By that time, we were already seeing indications that an economic tsunami was forming. We saw indications that the highest record of employment in 30 years was starting to crack. All of a sudden economic indicators pointed to concerns within the financial institutions and some of the major industries. We started to see some indications in the auto sector. We started to see it in some of the other program areas. Little cracks were forming.

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•(1820)

We had that election. We came back. I remember I got a letter from my own broker with regard to my RRSPs. We had a long, good and healthy period under the Liberal government. There were balanced budgets for 10 years, tax reductions, highest employment rate, lowest inflation, lowest interest rates. Things were good, but what was going to happen, as we know now, was foreshadowed by a lot of the indicators that were out there.

In fact one of the key indicators happened to be the Parliamentary Budget Officer. That office was created under the Federal Accountability Act to make sure that the information the government had was reliable for parliamentarians and Canadians. That is a story in itself, the way the government has totally ignored the information and the advice of the Parliamentary Budget Officer.

The election was on October 14. On November 18 we were back here and there was an economic statement. That economic statement said, "Life is good. We carry on. Everything is going to be fine. We are looking forward to four years of healthy surplus yet again. Do not worry about it, but by the way, as long as we are at this, we are going to destroy pay equity. We are going to cut out the funding to political parties. We are going to deal with the public service and we are going to do a few other things".

These were all things that had nothing to do with budgetary or economic measures. The government was playing games. It was poking sticks in people's eyes, trying to make them upset. But all of a sudden, the November economic statement did not have the support or the concurrence of anybody anywhere on the planet.

It was ludicrous. It was so ridiculous. As was pretty clear under the Constitution, if the government was defeated either on its throne speech or on some measure out of that economic statement, we would be into another election. However, there was an opportunity under our Constitution that the Governor General, if there had been an election in the last few months, could have approached the official opposition to form a government if it could demonstrate it had the majority support of the House.

We know where we were. There were indicators. The government said that everything was good. The November economic statement said that everything was going to be great, but I am a little concerned that the government again was saying, "We are getting a little worried about the possibility of a coalition government and getting turfed out of office. We better save our backsides". What did it do? When it saw that there were problems coming down the pike, that the jobs of Canadians were going to be put at risk, it prorogued Parliament. It shut it down totally. No committees existed. No work was getting done. No attention was being given to the emerging issues of the day.

We came back and there was a throne speech on January 26, and the next day the budget was presented. The budget now shows four years of deficits, not four years of surplus. It shows four years of deficits, cumulatively, \$84 billion of deficits.

I do not know about other members, but when we go from four years of surpluses and everything being fine in an economic statement on November 8, then on January 26 the government puts out a document, which was already a month old because it had to go

through the approval process, which shows four years of deficits totalling \$84 billion, where is this coming from? How is it that the world could change so much?

The Prime Minister explained it quite simply that it has nothing to do with us, that our banks are healthy and we do not have to do anything, but what he did say also is that it is a global economic crisis. Consider what global means. Everybody who is in business, anybody who has any economic activity in the world is part and parcel of the same thing we are experiencing here.

•(1825)

On November 8, when the Conservatives put out an economic statement that they were having nice surpluses and everything was fine, they had no inkling whatsoever. Then all of a sudden there is this global economic crisis that in the next month they recognized and they changed their numbers and their forecasts and came out with the January budget showing four years of cumulative deficits. Can anyone imagine the ludicrousness to suggest that they did not know about a global economic crisis because it really did not happen until after the economic statement? It is nuts. It is absolutely unbelievable.

The Conservatives think that Canadians are stupid but they are not. They continue to persist that it is not their problem and they did not create that. It is pretty clear that the Conservatives inherited a \$14 billion annual surplus from the previous Liberal government that had 10 years of surpluses and handed over the reins of a healthy economy. The Conservatives squandered that by their tax cuts and the spending spree that they went on, the highest spending per capita in the history of our country. They squandered the \$14 billion annual surplus. They put us in a condition where we had absolutely no wiggle room. There was no cushion to help us get through difficult economic times.

That \$14 billion per year would have gone a long way to handling the so-called global economic crisis. It would not have been so painful.

Now we have this wonderful budget that has a stimulus package associated with it and 40% of that infrastructure. We know that infrastructure is an efficient way to save jobs at risk, to create new jobs, generally being supportive, and to provide support to the financial sector. Other countries are doing it and we are doing it as well.

The government continues to say, in its answers to questions, that the opposition needs to put the public interest ahead of partisan interest and pass this budget, but what does it do? It decides in this budget to address the serious needs of Canadians who are faced with job loss and all kinds of other consequential impacts of a major financial crisis by loading the budget up with a bunch of other things. What is it going to do? It will basically decimate pay equity for women, equal pay for work of equal value. That has nothing to do with a budget but if it is thrown in, the Liberals and the others will not be able to defeat the budget because if they do an election will be called.

Government Orders

That may be true but the Conservatives also put in things like the Competition Act, changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act and proposals for a national securities regulator that cannot possibly be resolved for years. It will take years to deal with that. They also had changes on equalization, a very sensitive area that affected Quebeckers and Maritimers.

The Conservatives made this an omnibus bill, which means they put in a bunch of things that are not necessarily connected. Why did they do that? Again, this is playing partisan politics, poking a stick and trying to get what they can get because they know that no responsible official opposition party would allow the budget to be defeated because it would probably take until next October before we could get back to the same spot that we are at today. By that time the jobs will be lost, the personal and business bankruptcies will have peaked, the consequences to Canadians will be enormous and the damage will be irreparable.

It would be totally irresponsible for Parliament not to pass the budget. The government knew that. It knew there was an economic crisis and it knew there would be this major downturn. It knew that it could get away with this and it continues to play partisan politics.

Every time the government talks about this, it says that the opposition needs to put the public interest ahead of political interest and yet it is the government's actions, not its words. We need to look at its actions and its actions have been totally contrary to the words that come out of the mouths of government members.

Today a question was asked of the finance minister. He said that the opposition needs to pass this budget quickly so the money can flow and that no money will flow until we pass this budget. That is true, except that this is the budget implementation for the fiscal year that will begin on April 1, 2009. Therefore, even if the bill were to pass at all stages, even in the other place, and receive royal assent, no dollars could legally flow until April 1. We still have a month for the balance of this process to take place.

● (1830)

It is the way the finance minister is trying to insinuate that everyone else is slowing the process down and blocking the money from flowing. What makes it even more ironic is that over the past two years \$2 billion of approved, funded and appropriated infrastructure funding was promised but was never sent out. As a matter of fact, we still have another month to go in the current fiscal period. If infrastructure is so important, jobs are so important and stimulating the economy is so important, why are the Conservatives not spending some of that money in this last month? Why are they not getting it out before the books are closed?

I know why. It is because the Conservatives promised they would have a balanced budget in the current fiscal year which ends on March 31, 2009. The current budget implementation bill shows that it will be a small deficit of \$1.1 billion. Members should mark my words that we will have a balanced budget reported for the current fiscal year and they will use that to say that they kept their promise. What they have done is taken away the opportunity for Canadians to save themselves, to save those jobs by having \$2 billion less for infrastructure funding.

This is not integrity of government. This is not transparency, openness and accountability. The measure of success of a country is not an economic measure. It is a measure of the health and well-being of the people. With the inactions of the government with regard to the infrastructure funding, it is very clear that it does not believe that stimulus funding will do any good. It just wants to paint a picture for partisan reasons that the current fiscal year will look pretty good with a balanced budget and if it delays enough a few other things and the \$3 billion slush fund it has set up in this with no accountability strings attached to it, it will be able to manoeuvre.

I wish I could pull out one of the speeches and read it into the record for members, but the Conservatives basically said that we were a trading country and that all of those countries with which we trade, the United States and others, have massive stimulus packages. Those countries have pumped a lot of money into the banks, the auto industry and into infrastructure, et cetera. They said that we would benefit because those countries will begin buying our stuff again and everything will be fine. They said that we really did not need a stimulus package. I honestly think they do not believe that the stimulus package does not get out on a timely basis and maybe never. It will be promised but never delivered and promised at another photo op and promised again and never delivered.

That is what the Conservatives have been doing since they were first elected in 2006. They have not been governing since 2006. They have been campaigning. It is only because of the official opposition saying that we cannot let this happen to the people of Canada, that someone must give hope to the people of Canada, not fear. It is the Conservatives who are delivering the fear to our country.

Today it is reported that the Prime Minister, in an interview with the CNN, said that what is happening right now is just a cyclical downturn but nothing that requires major government intervention. It speaks for itself. The Prime Minister is not on side. He does not believe it. He cannot be trusted. He is not credible in what he says. His caucus is right behind him in lack of credibility, accountability, transparency and openness.

The day will come when we will be able to fix all the damage the Conservatives will do with this budget, but in the meantime, the official opposition will support the budget because the people of Canada need us to be here working for them and ensuring the government is held accountable at a time of Canadians' needs.

● (1835)

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Madam Speaker, that was a very entertaining speech that we just heard from the member for Mississauga South.

Government Orders

We all know that the oracle of Omaha is Warren Buffett. He has been a very successful investor over the years. I heard the hon. member comment during his speech that during the election he anticipated a downturn in the Canadian economy. However, during the month of September we saw an additional 100,000 jobs added to the economy. In October, further during the election period, we saw 9,500 jobs added to the Canadian economy when the analysts, unlike the oracle here, had predicted the loss of 10,000 jobs. The Canadian economy produced 9,500 jobs.

The reason for that is that the Prime Minister took action well in advance. He anticipated the downturn long before, unlike our colleagues on the other side of the House. There was a tremendous stimulus in the form of tax cuts to keep this economy going, one of the last countries of the G8 to maintain a positive economy.

He talked about a vision for Canada. His former leader offered a vision of Canada in October called the carbon tax. One can just imagine if the carbon tax had been brought into this country. It would have been devastation.

If the hon. member was predicting the future like Kreskin, where are the comments that we would foresee this massive economic recession during the election? Would the hon. member comment on that?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, Statistics Canada just reported the results of the fourth quarter for 2008: an annualized rate of reduction in the GDP of 3.4%. That is the reality of what happened in the last quarter of 2008 under the Conservatives' watch.

I do not care how rosy the member wants to paint October, et cetera, the fact remains that we lost a record number of jobs in the fourth quarter, the economy has tanked and there is a global recession going on that is very deep and very dangerous. The Conservatives think that all they need to do is say that somebody else will take care of it.

The interesting thing is that the Conservatives feel so little responsibility to do anything about the economy, they have decided to turn their attention to perusing thousands of hours of tapes of the leader of the official opposition to see if they can come up with stuff they can use in attack ads in the next election. That is the priority of that government.

As I said earlier, since 2006, the Conservatives have not been governing. They have been campaigning and they continue to do it. [Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Madam Speaker, in his presentation, my colleague stated that, in practical terms, in order to avoid elections, the Liberals had no choice but to support the budget. That is not true because, first of all, there was the coalition agreement signed by the three parties, which would have made it possible to take down the government and bring about change without going to the polls. Thus, it is false to state that there was no other option.

I would say that, at the very least, the Liberals could have made significant gains for citizens. What did they get besides a new cloakroom in the lobby and an end to the lawsuit against them? Next to nothing. They made a pitiful amendment asking that the government report on its work. I believe that it is the responsibility

of all parliamentarians to monitor the government. Therefore, in general, the Liberal amendment asks the government to do the opposition's work.

Could the Liberals not have seized the opportunity to make substantial rather than trivial changes to the budget?

• (1840)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, the member has a point but sometimes we need to say that this is not a matter of a lust for power, that it is a matter of what is in the best interests of the country and nothing more.

Constitutionally, the coalition was a possibility and still is a possibility. However, the member will also know that the opposition was able to secure a substantial amendment and that amendment called for ongoing economic and fiscal updates, details of the actual implementation of the budget itemized to the actual effects of the budget in respect to protection of the most vulnerable, minimizing existing job losses, creation of employment opportunities for tomorrow, provision for economic stimulus, et cetera.

This was the compromise that was made by the official opposition. The official opposition has a greater responsibility than the other two opposition parties that will never, ever form a government. It is our responsibility to work in the best interests of Canadians. We have taken a decision and Canadians will judge ultimately.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Madam Speaker, let us get this straight.

The Liberals sell out employment insurance, given that 50% of Canadians who lose their jobs cannot access it, and that is okay. They sell out on pay equity, rise in this House and try to defend it, and that is okay. They sell out the Kelowna accord. They did that in the last election campaign, when their election promises repudiated Kelowna, and 14 years in power did not deliver child care.

Basically what we are hearing is that every single time, Liberals sell out Canadians. Every single time, without exception, they sell out Canadians, and they are doing it again. They simply do not have any credibility whatsoever. The Liberals cannot have credibility when time after time they break their promises and sell out Canadians.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, let me remind the hon. member from the NDP that with its vote bringing down the Paul Martin government, the early learning and child care program never happened, the Kelowna accord to help aboriginal Canadians never occurred, and the pay equity changes that we were bringing in never occurred, because that party—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member for Mississauga South has the floor.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, it was because NDP members decided that they were more interested in going into an election than they were in serving the people of Canada.

In this budget there is \$2 billion of infrastructure stimulus, a \$495 million base funding program, \$250 million for communities, \$200 million for green infrastructure, \$51 million for Atlantic Canada, \$106 million for economic development in Quebec, \$175 million in Ontario, \$17 billion in the north, \$154 million for the west, \$1 billion in repairs for post-secondary institutions, \$75 million for first nations housing, \$125 million for CMHC, support for on reserve housing, social housing, low-income seniors, disabled persons and in northern housing, and there is more—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The length of the answer has to correspond to the length of the question.

I would like to recognize the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for a very short question and a very short answer without lists, please.

• (1845)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, there was so much in that speech. I listened to every word the member gave, and as usual it was right on the mark.

I would ask him a simple question. I know he is very interested in innovation and research. The government says it has put money into innovation and research. The facts are a little bit different. We even have the case of the university teachers, CAUT, going in to see the minister and being told to shut up, that they had burned their bridges and all that stuff.

Could my colleague tell me if that is a good idea? Is that the way to treat people?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Madam Speaker, the member is quite right. Unfortunately, when a minister of state for the Crown starts raising his voice and pointing fingers and telling a group representing 121 Canadian universities and colleges across the country that they do not understand the budget and that everybody loves the budget, it means one thing to me. It sounds to me like yet another example showing that the government really does not care to listen to anyone who does not agree with it. If they do not agree, the government is going to be a bully.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber has a few minutes to begin his speech, but I will have to interrupt him shortly.

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Madam Speaker, I will do what I can in the time that I have.

Naturally, the Bloc Québécois will not support this budget because the government has broken its promises. Once again, it is encroaching on areas under provincial jurisdiction that fall within the exclusive purview of the Government of Quebec. Take the securities commission, for example. The government's plan to impose a Canada-wide securities commission and centralize the work and the regulation in Ottawa is blatant interference. Quebec does not want this commission, and neither do many other provinces.

One reason the federal government's interference in areas under Quebec and provincial jurisdiction is so surprising is that it cannot even take care of business in areas that are under its own jurisdiction. As I have always said, should the day ever come when the federal government can manage its own affairs capably, it would have

Private Members' Business

nothing more to do. Perhaps it would be tempted to get involved elsewhere. But that is not the case. Take immigration, for example.

Currently, all classes of immigrants are subject to long wait times. For example, immigrant investors are prepared to put up \$400,000 to come to this country and invest in our economy. Those who go through Quebec's system get their Quebec selection certificate within a year, but they have to wait many more years for the federal government to do a basic criminal records check through Interpol before they even go to a designated doctor for a physical exam. That takes years.

I would suggest that if the government suddenly stopped interfering in areas that belong to Quebec and the provinces, and started taking care of its own responsibilities and putting a little money into speeding up case processing for immigrant investors selected by Quebec who are still waiting for confirmation from the federal government, thousands of people on these lists would come here in the middle of the economic crisis and contribute to and stimulate our economy.

That is not what the government plans to do. Instead it is getting in the way of members from Quebec and the provinces. Like the Liberals in their day, the Conservatives say they are listening to Quebec. But they are not. One hundred and twenty-five members out of 125—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I regret to interrupt the hon. member.

It being 6:49 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1850)

[*English*]

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY OF MINING, OIL AND GAS CORPORATIONS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ACT

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.) moved that Bill C-300, An Act respecting Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas in Developing Countries, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

He said: Madam Speaker, it is a matter of quite considerable pride for me to introduce this bill into the House and to hopefully precipitate a full debate and ultimately move it on to the committee.

Private Members' Business

We are all proud Canadians. Everyone in the chamber is a proud Canadian. The people in the gallery are proud Canadians. The people watching on television are proud Canadians. We are proud of our hockey team. When the men and women won gold in Salt Lake City, it was an enormous matter of pride for our nation. Students travelling in Europe are so proud of their country that they sew a flag on their backpacks. They do this for a couple of reasons: one, to say they are proud Canadians, and two, to say they are not Americans.

We are so proud at times that we are at pains to tell others that we are not like those Americans, and sometimes we are right. Certainly we have superior banking and health care systems. We do not have a subprime crisis. However, there are times when we are morally arrogant to the point of being insufferable. At times our superiority is unbecoming to a nation of dignity.

Last week I was visited by some folks from Ecuador. They talked about a Canadian mining company that was behaving in a way that was distinctly un-Canadian, and certainly at variance with our sense of self, of our nation and of how we operate in this world. The video they presented showed the ugly Canadian. It was the ugly Canadian corporation trying to gain a commercial advantage over indigenous people. It showed a company willing to engage in violence, use its superior financial resources, abuse the environment and abuse human rights in order to get its own way.

To be fair, the video did not show the company's side of the story. Basic rules of procedure and fairness require that we at least listen to the other side. Nevertheless, this was a pretty damning indictment of a Canadian company using its financial clout to develop a copper mine.

I wish I could say this was merely an isolated example. Unfortunately, I cannot. There are documented abuses by Canadian companies operating in Guyana, the Philippines and possibly in as many as 30 other countries, Canadian companies that are acting in manners that are unbecoming of our sense of self as a nation, our sense of how we operate in this world and our sense of how Canadian corporations should operate in the world.

The Toronto Stock Exchange is the most active mining exchange in the world. More money for mining and exploration is raised there than anywhere else in the world. Sixty percent of the world's mining and exploration companies are listed in Canada.

It is not my intention to overstate the case by painting all Canadian extractive companies with the same brush. Many companies are quite responsible and actively pursue their responsibilities in terms of both the environment and human rights. They are seriously engaged in environmental compliance and respect for human rights.

However, all our reputations are at risk through the behaviour of certain companies. Not only is there a behavioural risk to an individual company, but there is also a risk to our national reputation.

● (1855)

When a Canadian company behaves badly, our national reputation suffers. All of the hard work done by many Canadians, through NGOs and indeed through the government, gets swept aside when our own companies and our own people abuse human rights standards and environmental standards. Our reputation for respon-

sible environmental stewardship gets swept aside when we degrade and we debase the environments of other countries.

So, what to do? Ideally, the government should be presenting this bill or, if not this bill, certainly a beefed up version of this bill.

The national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries presented a report on March 29, 2007. Those round tables were actually sponsored by the government. Yet here we are, almost two years later, and we have yet to hear the government's response to their report.

In fact, the round tables re-deposited their report just in the hope, the faint hope possibly, of trying to solicit a response from the government. To date, there has been silence.

These round tables engaged everyone, from government stakeholders, to NGOs, to corporations. In fact, it kind of reads like a who's who of the mining industry. Mr. Tony Andrews from the Prospectors and Developers Association was part of the round table. Jim Cooney from international government affairs for Placer Dome was in on it. The VP for exploration, Dennis Jones, from IAMGOLD Corporation was there. Talisman was represented. Various other corporations were represented at this round table, in addition to various NGOs and in addition to, if I may say so, the usual suspects.

So, this was a series of round tables engaged in by all of the stakeholders. They presented a comprehensive report and yet, we have no response from the government.

As I say, ideally, this would be a government bill because the government could do so much more than can a private member. For instance, a private member cannot propose the spending of taxpayers' money. Only the government can propose, upon parliamentary approval, the spending of taxpayers' money.

The limitation of every private member's bill that is presented here is called a royal recommendation. We cannot, in a private member's bill, present a bill which would require the government to spend money.

The problem in this case is, ideally, the responsibilities for the implementation of this bill would be reposed in an ombudsman, or an ombudsperson. Unfortunately, however, if we do draft our bill so that the responsibilities are deposited with an ombudsman, we would trigger a royal recommendation and so, the bill would be ruled out of order. Unfortunately, we have had to draft around the issue of a royal recommendation. So, the responsibility in this bill is reposed in the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Trade.

In a lot of other respects the bill looks a lot like the recommendations as contained in the round tables recommendations. The basic purpose of the bill is:

—to ensure that corporations engaged in mining, oil or gas activities and receiving support from the Government of Canada act in a manner consistent with international environmental best practices and with Canada's commitments to international human rights standards.

Paragraph 5 provides that:

—the Ministers shall issue guidelines that articulate corporate accountability standards for mining, oil or gas activities.

And make reference to specific internationally recognized standards for the environment and human rights.

So, we set up the purpose, and then we set up the guidelines, and adopt these guidelines.

• (1900)

Once the guidelines are adopted, a scheme is set out whereby the minister or ministers, as the case may be, may receive complaints, conduct examinations and publish their results, presumably in the *Canada Gazette*. That is where the problem arises.

This does not have the force of law such as the Criminal Code. It is not regulatory. They are guidelines for which there is no explicit sanction such as a fine or imprisonment. The reason is that there are limits to the extraterritoriality of Canadian law. Just as other countries cannot and do not apply their law to our country, so too Canada cannot apply its laws and its regulations to other countries.

Where is the teeth in this bill? What would happen to a company that offends these guidelines?

The first sanction is reputational. I would expect that good companies will work at not finding themselves being gazetted. All of us here in this chamber indeed work at protecting our own reputation. What is true of individuals is also true of companies. Companies spend a lot of money preserving and enhancing their reputations. Being gazetted under this bill would not enhance a company's reputation.

Remember the Nike issue, where Nike was accused of engaging in dubious labour practices? Nike had to not only reverse its labour practices but it spent millions and millions of dollars trying to restore its reputation.

There are some companies that simply do not care. There is just way too much money to be made to worry a little bit about a reputational downside and if that reflects badly on Canada, so be it. There is a certain cynical truth that some companies will conclude that it is a lot cheaper to engage a bunch of lawyers and PR people than to comply with internationally recognized guidelines for corporate behaviour in third world countries.

If they are not overly worried about their reputation, and they are aware of the limitations of Canadian law as it applies to activities in other countries, what additional sanctions should we apply? The proposal in Bill C-300 is that we put a bit of financial bite into these guidelines.

If a finding has been made and gazetted, then the company in question will not be eligible for Export Development Bank of Canada's services, EDC. It may be that such a corporation really does not care and it does not need government help. As well, the corporation cannot expect anything from the Government of Canada other than basic consular services.

In the language of the bill, "no undertaking made through a program developed by the Minister in the exercise of his or her powers under this section shall promote or support mining, oil or gas activities". In other words, basic consular services and nothing else. If the corporation is gazetted, it will basically be on its own.

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Maybe the corporation does not care about EDC or does not care about promotion by the government. Maybe disallowing the Canada pension plan from investing in the corporation will get its attention.

With the passage of this bill, CPP would have to assure itself that it has no assets invested in the offending company, in other words, no CPP money, and because CPP is so heavily weighted in the market, other pension plans may well follow suit.

Money just got a whole lot more expensive for a corporation that ignores this bill. Corporations which have nothing to fear and much to gain, those are good corporations. Those corporations will be enhanced. Their reputations will be enhanced. They will be entitled to assistance from EDC. They can expect support from the government and their money gets cheaper. It does not get much better than that.

Let me conclude by urging all hon. members to support Bill C-300. Good ethics make for good business. Good business makes for good ethics. Everyone should win if these guidelines are adopted in this legislation. Canada should win. These corporations should win, and citizens from around the world should win.

Win-win seems like something to be supported and I would urge all members to support this bill.

• (1905)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would quickly like to congratulate the member for Scarborough—Guildwood on this initiative. We have been waiting for almost two years for the government to respond, and I quite liked the explanation he gave about the bill in terms of royal recommendation.

There were many recommendations in the report from the national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries. I understand that the member may not be able to remember all of the recommendations that pertain to royal recommendation.

Is he open to improving the bill when it is studied in committee, especially in terms of a mechanism that would allow the appointment of an independent ombudsman who could pursue complaints?

In his bill, it is provided that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Trade would receive complaints. But that could create a conflict of interest for them.

Would he be open to this possibility if it did not create an issue with royal recommendation?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the Bloc member for supporting this bill. If the hon. member can show us how we can avoid a royal recommendation by the appointment of an ombudsman, I would be on it in a heartbeat. That would be the critical question.

Private Members' Business

He is absolutely right that there is a bit of a conflict of interest or possibly not as much enthusiasm on the part of a minister to pursue complaints as there might be on the part of an ombudsman. I would prefer an independent officer of Parliament to be the person that has the responsibility for the prosecution of this bill.

I agree with the member totally. If we could it, I would do it. If he could propose an amendment which would meet the guidelines of the Speaker, then I would be happy to consider that.

Mr. Glen Pearson (London North Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, a decade ago in Africa there were difficulties with certain Canadian companies that were operating under dubious means. What ended up happening was that a split developed between our foreign diplomacy efforts from Foreign Affairs as opposed to something like CIDA, which was a development effort. It was trying to do work in the region and the work was being undermined by some of these companies.

My question to the member would be this. How do you see that squaring up under this? I am interested in how those controls would work, so groups like CIDA, that invest in the areas where companies are having a detrimental effect, would be protected and their investments would be protected.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the kind of question we should be asking in the chamber and I thank the hon. member for a very fine question.

If we wind the lens back, Canada has a confused moral stance. We do not know whether we are doing development one day and defence the next. We want people to vote for us at the UN and we want to have our sphere of economic interests protected as well. For certain companies operating in Africa, our economic interests clash with our moral responsibilities. CIDA was discharging its sense of a moral responsibility. Yet, it was a corporation that was chartered in Canada, sold on the Canadian stock exchange, and was operating in a fashion which, frankly, lacked certain levels of morality.

By publishing these guidelines, everybody would be bound by them. CIDA would be bound by them, international trade would be bound by them, and Foreign Affairs would be bound by them. It would be the law of Canada. I think in some respects it would resolve certain elements of moral ambiguity.

• (1910)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I know the commitment that the member for Scarborough—Guildwood has to international affairs. I also know he is familiar with the NGOs and faith-based organizations that are involved. I wonder if he could run through some of the organizations like CCIC and others that would be supportive of this bill.

Hon. John McKay: Just before the debate, Madam Speaker, I received an email from a Catholic-based organization for development and peace. It had delivered to one of the NDP member's 1,800 names on a petition to support this kind of initiative. CCIC, MiningWatch, even the World Bank and OECD have their own guidelines. I am expecting that there will be an enormous amount of support for this bill from a wide variety of sources.

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the issue of corporate accountability as it relates to the activities of

Canadian mining and oil and gas companies operating in developing countries.

I would like to thank my hon. colleague, the member of Parliament for Scarborough—Guildwood, for introducing Bill C-300 today, and with regard to the opposition party, for their continued interest in this very important issue.

The Conservative government attaches a great deal of importance to the question of corporate social responsibility, often referred to as CSR. We encourage and expect Canadian mining and oil and gas companies working around the world to respect all applicable laws and international standards, to operate transparently and in consultation with the host government and local governments, and to conduct their activities in a socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Canada is, after all, a major player in the international extractive sector, a sector that has significant investments and operations in developing countries. Canada is a world leader in mining.

Between 1998 and 2008, the share of worldwide mining exploration attributed to Canadian companies increased from 30% to 43%. Canadian mining companies invested over \$60 billion in developing countries abroad, including \$41 billion in Latin America and Mexico and almost \$15 billion in Africa. Total foreign direct investment in all developing countries is \$80 billion.

The economic downturn that started in 2008 will likely decrease or delay further Canadian mining investments. However, the projected figures remain very impressive. For 2009-10, Natural Resources Canada estimates additional Canadian investments in Africa to be between \$10 billion and \$12 billion.

These investments play a very important role in Canada's economic development. Our companies not only drive prosperity here at home, they also provide jobs, opportunities, and other benefits in what are often small rural, indigenous, and isolated communities abroad. In many cases they bring vital infrastructure to communities that are without roads, hospitals, or even clean water.

As a member of the international trade committee I have had the honour of travelling to some of these communities, whether in Yemen, or last May, in Colombia, seeing the shanty towns and the displaced individuals, working with them, and seeing the Canadian companies and how they are bringing the corporate social responsibility method to the communities' tables, to bring the philosophy that a rising tide lifts all boats and all ships, and every individual has an opportunity to be a better individual with a more prosperous future.

Through global investment, this sector is making its presence and Canada's felt throughout the world in helping other countries to develop their own mining industries.

As Canadians, we recognize that with this presence overseas comes numerous social responsibilities for our corporations towards local communities and stakeholders. That is why our government actively supports CSR best practices for corporations based on internationally recognized CSR standards and principles such as the International Finance Corporation, otherwise known as IFC, and performance guidelines and the voluntary principles mentioned in the bill.

However, our Conservative government goes beyond that. We also look to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, otherwise known as OECD, the United Nations, the International Labour Organization and other leading standards around the world for inspiration. Indeed, Canadians want our companies to be a positive force in the communities in which they operate.

In fact, adopting CSR practices can be an important benefit to Canadian companies. It can improve their situation and facilitate the business climates in which our companies operate. It can promote trust and goodwill in communities and with host governments. It can also send a powerful signal to the world that Canadian businesses are upholding CSR principles and should be partners of choice around the globe.

Many Canadian companies from every sector already recognize these benefits. They have put in place voluntary CSR practices to help them manage the social, economic and environmental issues they encounter in their daily operations. They recognize that a commitment to CSR is a commitment to their own success. It makes them more competitive by giving them an enhanced social licence to operate in communities. It enhances the brand and reputation they have and helps them manage risks and therefore improve their access to capital and other financing and insurance opportunities.

• (1915)

Unlike these voluntary practices, Bill C-300 mandates ministers to issue guidelines that articulate corporate accountability standards but leaves the legal effect of these guidelines unclear. Therefore, our government does not believe this bill is the right approach to take. As mentioned, we support the voluntary nature of the internationally recognized CSR standards and principles.

Several Canadian industry associations and companies have been globally recognized for their leadership in CSR.

Our Canadian companies are doing their part, and the Conservative government is there to help them. Our trade commissioner service provides counselling and advice on local market conditions including local laws, risk assessments and advocacy through more than 150 offices across Canada and around the world.

The Canadian International Development Agency does tremendous work building the capacity of host governments to support economic and social investments aimed at promoting the sustainable development of rural populations within the areas of influence of the extractive sector operations.

Our partners at Export Development Canada, otherwise known as EDC, and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board also believe that working with Canadian business to foster CSR best practice is more effective than creating a rigid and punitive legislative regime.

Private Members' Business

The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board already has a policy on responsible investing by which it engages the companies in which it invests. In defining this policy the CPP investment board has taken a broad view of the impact of environmental, social and governance factors on long-term investment performance.

Let me also say that while our companies clearly recognize that CSR is an inherent part of doing business, they have indicated that there is a limit to what they are capable of providing in the area of support for the social, health and educational concerns of the communities within which they operate abroad.

Responsible business conduct cannot substitute for host government responsibility for, and therefore governance of, social and economic policy.

It can already be quite challenging for our companies to do business overseas. Unpredictable business environments, limited services and protection for investors, ill-defined or unevenly applied regulations, legislation and property rights, and weak host government institutional capacity to manage extractive sector development and associated social and environmental considerations are only some of the challenges they face, particularly in developing countries.

In that sense, while environmental stewardship and successful community involvement is a shared responsibility, and Canada can certainly offer a range of assistance to help developing countries build their own capacity to manage CSR issues, host governments ultimately remain responsible for the transparent development of legislation that meets the needs of their citizens.

Following a 2005 report on mining and CSR by the parliamentary Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Government of Canada organized the 2006 national round tables on CSR and the Canadian extractive sector in developing countries. The national round tables provided a unique opportunity to encourage a practical and solutions-oriented dialogue on ways to expand the knowledge and capacity of Canadian companies to conduct their operations in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

The government shares the view that more can be done to enhance the ability of the Canadian extractive sector to manage the social and environmental risks of its operations abroad and at the same time enhance the benefits arising from their investments for the local communities and the countries in which they operate.

Private Members' Business

While I know that some hon. members would prefer to address this issue by creating a punitive legislative regime and broadening the scope of our sanctions legislation, we believe it is far more effective to work with our companies and host governments to achieve these goals. Where efforts to work with host governments fail, we do have tools at our disposal. Canada has the ability to impose sanctions against foreign states in response to a call of an international body or when a grave breach of international peace and security has occurred.

In closing, I ask for the support of all hon. members, from both sides of the floor, as we continue to take steps to ensure that Canadian companies can make the most out of global opportunities while setting a high standard for CSR excellence in the communities in which they operate.

Since our government will soon be introducing and announcing a more comprehensive CSR approach for the Canadian international extractive sector, I trust that this bill is redundant.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address the House on this important issue, and I look forward to discussing it further with my colleagues.

● (1920)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would again like to congratulate the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood for taking the initiative in presenting this bill. I had the opportunity to work with him on the Standing Committee on Finance and, although I do not wish to cast any aspersions, I would not put him in the left wing of the Liberal Party. This gives the bill even greater merit, because he considered the fact that it would be advantageous to the entire industry, as well as all operations in such countries, to move forward with Bill C-300, An Act respecting Corporate Accountability for the Activities of Mining, Oil or Gas in Developing Countries.

I am rather surprised by the government's position, considering that March 27 is fast approaching, the second anniversary of the report on the national round tables on corporate social responsibility and the Canadian extractive industry in developing countries. The government member says the bill is redundant, but I do not think it is.

The members of this House want the government to take action on this. We are currently examining this bill, a motion will be debated next Monday and another bill is the subject of a notice on the same issue. It is therefore in our best interest to examine this bill, and the Bloc Québécois will support it, because we think it is a step in the right direction.

Here are a few facts: 60% of mining companies are registered in Canada; these companies contribute over 40% of global budgets spent on mining exploration; and it is estimated that approximately US \$2.2 billion is invested every year by these corporations in exploration activities abroad. Thus, we see that this is a major economic force and that a great deal of investments are made abroad.

It is important to look at the social and environmental responsibility of Canadian firms abroad, especially Canadian mining

companies. The Bloc has been concerned about this issue for a very long time, in fact, since 2001. At the time, we put forward motions to require companies to comply with certain criteria.

I do not believe it is possible to simply rely on companies' good faith. Most companies, like most people, are honest and do their work properly. Unfortunately, some demonstrated in the past that they had unacceptable behaviour, and it is our responsibility to discipline Canadian companies working abroad and give them the chance to behave in a way that is respectful of the entire industry.

Canada is a world leader in the mining industry. It has a huge presence in Africa in particular, where most companies are Canadian and American and are incorporated or listed on Canadian stock exchanges. Canada therefore has a vested interest in making sure that these companies behave acceptably, as its international image is at stake.

For a number of years, several companies have been directly or indirectly associated with forced population displacements, significant environmental damage, support for repressive regimes, serious human rights violations and sometimes even assassinations. We must put an end to this savage behaviour and have much more definite enforcement. That is why the Bloc Québécois has always defended the need to impose standards of social responsibility on companies that work abroad.

But the federal government has always defended the principle of laissez-faire, preferring a voluntary approach, which unfortunately is what the government representatives are still calling for today in this debate. We also defended the recommendations in the report entitled National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries. It is important to note that these recommendations were unanimously supported by civil society and the extractive industry.

I gained an awareness of this issue through Development and Peace, a NGO that is mobilizing citizens on the importance of ensuring highly ethical behaviour internationally. They conducted a post card campaign. Thousands responded to the appeal by Development and Peace. We must thank them for this initiative. Many thousands sent post cards asking their MPs and the government to promote this issue. The bill before us reflects this concern.

● (1925)

This bill does not contain all measures found in the roundtables report but it does seek to ensure that extractive corporations will act responsibly and respect international standards for human rights and environmental law.

The bill assigns responsibility for preparing guidelines to the Department of Foreign Affairs. Practices reflecting these standards are based on recognized documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each MP is to receive an annual report on the application of this law. In this regard, the bill is headed in the right direction. It is important to support it and to ensure that it will be studied in committee. At that point, we can take a closer look and determine whether the roundtable recommendations should be added to the report.

The report examined the social and environmental responsibility of Canadian corporations working abroad and issued 10 recommendations urging the Government of Canada to adopt a number of very specific measures to:

—ensure that Canadian companies have the necessary knowledge, support and incentives to conduct their activities in a socially and environmentally responsible manner and in conformity with international human rights standards.

Three specific committee recommendations proposed some concrete objectives relating to the Canadian government's assuming responsibility for follow up and more effective monitoring of Canadian mining operations.

The committee's recommendations were described by several Canadian NGOs as real breakthroughs. There was much hope of their prompt implementation. However, it was pointed out that problems such as those raised by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development would increase in number and severity in the years to come. So the present inaction of the government, its lack of response to the report thus far, is one way of contributing to the disorganization and this is unacceptable behaviour. It is therefore important, this finding and the government's insistence on voluntary measures with other countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and the other OECD member countries notwithstanding, that there be a more specific legal framework for Canada and for Canadian companies.

We do not share the Conservatives' belief that the responsibility needs to be laid at the feet of the host countries or the industry. The issue for these countries and for the extractive industry is to ensure that natural resources contribute to reducing poverty and promoting economic and social development, and the mining industry does fulfill that function. The problem does not arise from economic development in the developing countries, but it comes from the way certain businesses behave, businesses that should be subject to more supervision and possibly more discipline.

I have referred to our desire to integrate a number of improvements into the bill. Among them, I mentioned the creation of an ombudsman position. We will need to look very seriously at the possibility of integrating all of the recommendations into this bill, even though it might need a royal recommendation in the end. I understand that the hon. member wants to see his bill passed. That is completely normal. But why not put some effort into giving it more teeth and making it more effective? The bill needs to contain as many possibilities and as much efficiency as possible. That aspect of the bill can be improved, and I am convinced that the hon. member will concur and we will be able to move forward with it.

In conclusion, despite these shortcomings, Bill C-300 is a step in the right direction. It fails to act on most of the round table

recommendations, but a step in the right direction is still progress. That is why we support this bill in principle. We believe that the situation is so critical that we must act now to ensure that Canadian resource extraction companies comply with international human rights and sustainable development standards so that Canadian companies can contribute to economic development, social development and the redistribution of wealth worldwide, not just to exploiting natural resources with no concern for how they do it.

We can ask the Chinese and Indian governments to introduce environmental protection or worker's rights regulations, but the Government of Canada has to abide by the same standards.

● (1930)

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for introducing this legislation and for his general concern for the citizens in developing countries.

I thank the member while I note, and I am sure with his agreement, that corporate accountability for Canadian resource extraction companies operating abroad is long overdue. We know extractive industries are often able to take advantage of political cultures in developing countries that do not accept or respect our domestic principles of democratic accountability and transparency. Centralized decision-making at the executive level that can offer extraction rights in exchange for capital in many developing countries can greatly infringe upon human rights and environmental sustainability of localized populations.

Canadian companies, like those from other modern industrialized states, have at times taken advantage of political circumstances in their quest for new sources of revenue to the gross detriment of workers and local communities, which have and will suffer the devastating environmental consequences for generations.

I was sad to see that just this week a lawsuit was filed against a company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange for its alleged involvement in human rights abuses at a mining concession site in Ecuador.

I am sure all members, current and past, from the House will agree that legislation that enforces international rights standards and environmental best practices upon Canadian companies operating abroad is long overdue.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood will know that New Democrats have long stood in the House in support of corporate accountability as a principle of international trade and economic activity among and between nations. He will also know that it was the former hon. member for Ottawa Centre who first sought to enforce this principle with Bill C-369 in the 38th Parliament.

Private Members' Business

Support from the New Democrat caucus on legislation that enforces ethical behaviour upon Canadian companies, including those operating abroad, has never been difficult to attain. As such and given that this bill merely seeks to encourage such behaviour rather than enforce it, I can only offer my qualified support for it at this stage.

The bill is imperfect legislation. It is too narrow in its scope and application and too weak in its enforcement. If the member is truly interested in ensuring that companies apply environmental best practices and the protection of international human rights standards abroad, he will promote or surely encourage three very important amendments to the bill.

First, the member should encourage an amendment to the bill that would see it apply to all corporations in Canada with operations abroad, and not just those receiving government assistance and that are operating in extractive industries, like mining and oil and gas. It is true that the very nature of extractive industries makes violations of these principles all too profitable and tempting for many, but violations are also likely to occur and be reported in manufacturing, agriculture and other labour-intensive and environmentally taxing industries. This would be a very important amendment.

Second, the member should encourage an amendment to the bill that would ensure the principles contained in it related to environmental best practices and international human rights standards would be enforced rather than simply encouraged. This could be achieved by adding a provision that amends the Criminal Code to punish the same undesirable behaviour abroad as it does at home. Such a provision was contained in Bill C-369 from the 38th Parliament, if members wish to explore this possibility.

Finally, the member should encourage an amendment to the bill that would create an ombudsman's office to help ensure the principles of it would be respected and to investigate any claims that may be brought against companies with respect to the provisions of the bill. An independent ombudsman would help ensure that our domestic and international politics would not interfere in the promotion and protection of environmental best practices and international human rights by Canadian companies operating abroad. It would also assist the minister, as well intentioned as Conservatives may be, so he or she would not be exclusively burdened with monitoring and enforcement of these measures.

• (1935)

It is important to note that this last amendment was called for in the Advisory Group Report in 2007, entitled "National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries". I would like to thank all members of the advisory group and all participants of the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility for their hard work. I encourage each and every member of the House to read the report and strongly consider its recommendations when deliberating on this legislation.

I also encourage the member for Scarborough—Guildwood to take a bold step by pushing for these three amendments, including the creation of an independent ombudsman, to be attached to this bill at the committee stage.

Parliament represents a rare chance for real change on a number of fronts, if only members could muster the political will and courage to stand in support of the principles they claim to respect and wish to uphold. The bill, for all its imperfections, is progress on the issue of corporate responsibility for Canadian companies operating abroad.

Given that the bill can be amended in committee, I offer my support to it at this stage and thank the member for tabling it.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am proud to second this important bill, particularly in light of the fact that the member for Scarborough—Guildwood who proposed it has a record of success in private members' business. We recall the way that he worked with Bill C-293, the overseas development act, to make sure that poverty was the focus of overseas development assistance.

I cannot help but react a little to my colleague from the NDP. I understand his concern, but we are trying to do something here. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood has been able to move legislation through the system. It does not happen all that often, as members would know, but he has done it twice now and he is going to work on doing it a third time.

We have to keep in mind that we have to present a bill that can actually pass the House. We want to make a difference; we do not just want to make a point. We cannot let perfect be the enemy of better. This bill will make things better.

Why is the bill important? I think we know why it is important. In Canada we have a unique position. Sixty per cent of the world's mining and exploration companies are listed. There are Canadian companies that have been implicated in practices which none of us would be proud of, both in terms of how they treat the environment and how they treat human rights.

Complaints regarding the impact of the overseas operations of Canadian extractive companies have been lodged with a number of international organizations, so there are problems and Canadians cannot just turn a blind eye to them. We have a responsibility to the people around the world. Canadian companies especially have a responsibility to give something back to the places where they take profit.

In 2007 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended that Canada take appropriate legislative or administrative measures to prevent acts of transnational corporations from Canada which negatively impact upon the enjoyment of rights of indigenous people outside Canada. We have a responsibility and I think we would all want to see something that would make it better.

As my colleague mentioned, in 2006 the Canadian government was involved in round tables to address corporate misconduct in the extractive industries. There is a whole list of recommendations that were agreed to. I will not bore everybody with the details, but a number of recommendations were agreed to by a wide range of stakeholders: industry, labour, academia and civil society. They agreed on these recommendations and they put them forward, but nothing has happened.

Private Members' Business

We recognize that there is an issue. We recognize that there are solutions, but we also recognize that the government has done nothing about this issue.

My colleague from the Conservative Party suggested that the Conservatives are going to come up with something that would make this bill redundant. I would suggest that we pass this bill and make whatever they are going to do redundant, if in fact anything is going to come down the pike when it comes to this.

I have had the chance to travel with my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood and see his commitment to people from other countries, particularly countries that have not been as fortunate as Canada has been. I had the chance to travel to Kenya with him, the former member for Halifax, and our colleague from Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley. He is aware of organizations from Canada that are making a difference, and there are many.

There are many organizations from Canada that are making a huge difference in the third world. There are NGOs that are making a big difference. CIDA can make a difference. Right now my sister is working for WUSC, World University Service of Canada, in Sri Lanka. She is making a difference. We met Canadians on our trip who were with the Red Cross and they were making a difference.

Canada does a lot of very positive things in the world, but we also contribute to the problems that we then have to alleviate. Canadians expect us to do better. There has been some mining of public opinion which indicates that 90% of citizens believe that corporate social responsibility should be a top corporate priority. Sixty-five per cent of surveyed Canadians want companies to go beyond simply obeying laws and become fully accountable for any conduct that might undermine social and environmental health.

Canadians want us to do it. They see there is a problem. I suspect the average Canadian may not know what this means internationally to any great extent, but they have an expectation of Canada to do better. At one point in time Canada had a great reputation, and we still have a good reputation, but I would say it has been undermined to some extent.

• (1940)

I noticed that Canada ranked 10th in the 2007 Responsible Competitiveness Index 2007. A lot of countries ranked below us, but as usual our Nordic friends and many countries in Europe, as well as Australia and New Zealand, are ahead of us in corporate responsibility.

It is possible to do better. My colleague mentioned that there are companies that do a good job for us. I know of one that is based in Nova Scotia, a company called Etruscan Resources. They had a gold mine, one that was not desperately profitable at the time, in Niger, which is very near the bottom of the human development index of the United Nations. At the time, I think it was 173rd out of 174.

There was a potential for mining, but they decided that before they took any profits out, they would make sure there was some social infrastructure there. They came to my father, who had just resigned as the premier of Nova Scotia, and asked for his help. He was delighted to help and very proud of the work he was able to do. They built a health clinic that exists to this day. They brought in the Rotary Club from Dartmouth. They have had some international assistance,

and the Canadian government has helped a little bit. They have left a lasting legacy of Canadian goodwill and investment in that community. I believe they are now doing some business in Burkina Faso.

There are companies that take this responsibility very seriously, and I applaud companies like Etruscan Resources. I applaud people like Gerry McConnell, the president of that company, who has taken a responsible view. I say with some measure of pride that the health complex is named after my late parents, John and Margaret Savage. It is a source of great pride to our family. The people in that community have a very high opinion of Canada, and I think Etruscan Resources and other companies like it deserve an awful lot of credit.

That is how Canadians would expect a Canadian company to do business. If we are going to go overseas, make money and mine the land, we should do it responsibly. We should respect the environment. We have all heard stories of companies that have not been so respectful. More than anything else, we need to treat the people with the respect that we ourselves would want to receive. As an international player, I am afraid we are not the gold standard anymore, but we can do better. We should do better. We should live up to the expectations that the people in this country have for us, and we should go beyond them.

We should recognize the work that international aid organizations do in pulling all this stuff together and in keeping us responsible. I hope and expect that support for this bill will equal the support for my colleague's last bill. Organizations like the CCIC, which does so much good work in Canada, Make Poverty History, Development and Peace, the Micah Challenge, and the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund all believe that we can make the world better. Let us get behind this bill and encourage government members to support it. We can get it to the committee stage. We can work on it and do all the things our colleagues want us to do. However, let us remember that we are here to make the world a better place. We are here to make a difference, not just to make a point.

I applaud my colleague for bringing this bill forward. I am very proud to second it and I hope that all members in the House will support it.

• (1945)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for London West has about four minutes to begin his speech. He will be able to continue when this debate resumes in the second hour. I recognize the hon. member for London West.

Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC): Madam Speaker, being newer to the House, I must tell you that four minutes seems like an eternity at one level.

It is my privilege to rise in the House today to speak to Canada's role in promoting effective corporate social responsibility and socially responsible investing. Also, as a new member of the House and a rookie in the international trade committee, I take seriously the role that corporations must accept in their capacity as positive contributing members.

Adjournment Proceedings

Let me thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood for introducing Bill C-300 on February 9 and all the opposition parties for their continued dialogue on this important issue, because their contributions make this House better.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the many constituents of London West who have taken the time to send me their opinions on the subject. I have received many postcards and emails from constituents, many of whom I do not know, who have expressed a desire to see Canadian companies demonstrate more corporate responsibility.

We all know that London is a growing hub for international business and that corporate success comes from serious responsibilities. I know Londoners care and business cares. That is why they are concerned about issues like this.

I consider my role as past president of the London Chamber of Commerce, which provides a thoughtful perspective on corporate social responsibility with companies in my city which are world class, a very personal insight.

The Conservative Government of Canada already encourages and expects Canadian companies working internationally to respect all applicable laws and international standards to operate transparently and in consultation with host governments and local communities and to develop and implement corporate social responsibility practices.

My concern is that Bill C-300 would impose a rigid legal framework of corporate social responsibility standards that has not undergone the necessary degree of consultation and analysis. The framework would abandon the use of multilateral standards and instruments that create a unilateral corporate social responsibility regime against which the Government of Canada would assess the activities of Canadian companies operating abroad, raising concerns of both privacy and extraterritorial jurisdiction.

Moreover, this legislative framework would affect the ability of the government departments, agencies and crown corporations to fulfill their mandates, and its compulsory nature would entail a rigidity that would not be beneficial in today's economic climate.

Londoners believe we can, and should always, encourage greater efforts toward corporate social responsibility, but unfortunately, I believe this proposal falls somewhat short.

Bill C-300 specifically addresses how two crown corporations and one government department encourage Canadian companies to act in a socially responsible and sustainable manner. The bill proposes substantive changes to the legislation that establishes Export Development Canada, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade without due consideration for the consequences, nature or enforceability of those changes. Those departments and agencies have already incorporated corporate social responsibility initiatives into their operations.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade actively promotes corporate social responsibility best practices to the companies it serves. As part of this commitment, trade commissioners in Canada and around the world work with

companies to help improve their corporate social responsibility records.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade chairs Canada's national contact point for the OECD guidelines, an interdepartmental committee with representatives from a number of federal government departments whose role is to promote awareness of the guidelines and ensure their effective implementation.

At Export Development Canada, Canada's export credit agency, corporate social responsibility has become an integral part of the operations and risk management practices. It provides expertise to Canadian exporters and investors and its worldwide partners.

Export Development Canada recognizes that in the extractive industries, transparency and environmental responsibility are paramount to a project's sustainability.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but the time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

• (1950)

[English]

EQUALIZATION

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

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Ind.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to follow up today on my question about a \$75 million equalization payment that was committed to Nova Scotia. I asked the minister, at the time the payment was promised, if he could table the details of the \$75 million agreement. It seemed to be a verbal arrangement but I think that anything worth \$75 million should be committed to paper when it is between two levels of government. I thought that was a reasonable question.

I also asked if the transition payment would only happen one year, this year, or whether it would happen for the subsequent years for the term of the agreement. The minister replied that they had made the arrangement and that Nova Scotia was happy. However, this is not Nova Scotia. This is the House of Commons and it is our job as opposition members to find out the details of these arrangements and these deals and hold the government accountable.

I am again asking the very distinguished parliamentary secretary, who is here to answer the question today, whether the \$75 million arrangement is only verbal or has it been committed to paper and whether it extend for more than one year. All we have seen in the media is that it is just for one year. Had the changes not been made, we would have had that equivalent amount for five years at least and maybe even till 2020, which is the extent of the term of the Atlantic accord.

Adjournment Proceedings

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us whether the arrangement has been committed to paper, what the details are of the deal and whether it will continue on to subsequent years or is it just a one shot deal?

Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague from the other side for his continued questions and his passion for ensuring that his province is treated the same as every other province.

I just want to mention that today is a sad day for Nova Scotia. On this day, we mark with sadness the passing of a great Nova Scotian. I would like to convey my respect and condolences to the family and friends on the passing of the Hon. Michael Baker, Minister of Finance for Nova Scotia, after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Our thoughts are with his wife, Cindy, and his sons, Matthew and Daniel, at this time.

On behalf of the Minister of Finance, I wish to read his statement on Minister Baker's passing:

I had the good fortune to work with Michael, both in cooperation with Canada's other finance ministers to address the collective challenges facing our nation, as well as directly in our efforts to secure a resolution to the long-standing Crown Share payment issue for the people of Nova Scotia.

In all cases, Michael advanced the interests of Nova Scotia and Canada with the utmost respect for his constituents and colleagues, a profound appreciation for our parliamentary traditions and a great sense of personal responsibility for securing his home province's prosperity. His passing marks a tremendous loss for his family, his friends, his province and our country.

I will now address today's question. I want to assure the member that Nova Scotia's cumulative best-of guarantee is untouched by budget 2009 equalization changes. This means that Nova Scotia will receive at least as much equalization and offset payments on a cumulative basis as it would have under the system that was in place when the 2005 accord was signed.

On top of that, it will receive \$1.5 billion of equalization and offset payments combined for 2009-10, along with a \$74 million transitional adjustment payment, ensuring payments to the province are the same as 2008-09, despite the fact that Nova Scotia's fiscal capacity has grown significantly. This payment is legislated through Bill C-10, the budget 2009 implementation act. It is referenced on page 335 of that document.

In subsequent years, total equalization payments under the new O'Brien based system will grow in line with GDP on a three year moving average. The amount each province gets will depend on its fiscal capacity.

For example, a province growing faster than the national average might see a decrease, while a province growing less than the national

average could see an increase. However, Nova Scotia was provided with what has become known as the cumulative best-of guarantee. This guarantee ensures that Nova Scotia will do at least as well under the new O'Brien based system, which Nova Scotia has opted into on a cumulative basis, as it would have if it had remained under the old system that was in place when the 2005 accord was signed.

The cumulative best-of guarantee and the 2005 equalization and accord system are not touched by the equalization changes in budget 2009.

• (1955)

Mr. Bill Casey: Madam Speaker, I still did not get the answer to my question about the ongoing transitional payment but I think it is just for one year, if I am not mistaken.

However, I want to slide into another issue that we talked about before. The October 10, 2007 deal had a 3.5% escalator clause for Nova Scotia when the fixed base formula based on the 2005 agreement was used. Each year, Nova Scotia was supposed to get a 3.5% cumulative escalator increase in its equalization payments.

In the budget it says that increases to equalization will be capped at the overall growth of the economy. In fact, I think the parliamentary secretary just said that again a moment ago. I wonder if he could confirm for sure that the 3.5% escalator for Nova Scotia will remain in place until 2020 as originally agreed to in the October 10, 2007 agreement.

Mr. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, that is what I said.

However, I want to refer back once again to the expression of regret of the House. Two S. O. 31s today were read out in the House recognizing the passing of Minister Baker. As Nova Scotia's finance minister, he served in the most demanding portfolio in all of government, amazingly while courageously battling cancer. He realized Canada was facing one of the most challenging global economic periods that we have seen in recent history. Indeed, he attended the meeting of the Canadian federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers in Saskatoon this past December where he provided valuable insight and ideas that helped craft our federal budget. We thank him for that service and we thank him for his wisdom and his courage.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:58 p.m.)

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