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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, November 16, 2009**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 16, 2009

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from October 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-395, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (labour dispute), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

• (1100)  
[*English*]

#### SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The Chair is now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader on October 7, 2009 concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for Bill C-395, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (labour dispute) standing in the name of the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for having raised this important matter, as well as the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé for his remarks concerning the bill.

[*English*]

In presenting his concerns with respect to Bill C-395, the parliamentary secretary stated that in his view the bill infringes upon the financial initiative of the crown. Specifically, he pointed out that the bill seeks to change the purposes of the Employment Insurance Act by adding a new provision that would extend the qualifying period for an undefined period in case of a work stoppage caused by a labour dispute. He also argued that by altering the calculation of the qualifying period, the bill would result in increased government spending on employment insurance.

In support of his contention that the bill requires a royal recommendation, the parliamentary secretary made reference to a Speaker's ruling on Bill C-265, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (qualification for and entitlement to benefits) on

March 23, 2007 and a ruling by the Speaker of the Senate in Bill S-207, an Act to Amend the Employment Insurance Act (foreign postings) on January 29, 2009.

Both bills were similar to the present bill in that they sought to modify the employment insurance qualifying period, and both were found to require royal recommendation.

[*Translation*]

In his intervention, the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé argued that a royal recommendation is not required since the funds in the employment insurance account are paid by workers and employers and do not constitute government funds.

The Chair has examined the bill carefully and, it is clear beyond all doubt that Bill C-395 alters the terms and conditions of the existing program under the Employment Insurance Act. The argument put forth by the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé regarding whether or not funds contributed to the employment insurance fund constitute public revenue is a recurring argument. It has been brought forward during similar discussions on Bill C-308, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system) as well as Bill C-269, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (improvement of the employment insurance system) from the previous Parliament. In essence, all monies received by the government, regardless of source, are deposited in the consolidated revenue fund and become public funds, that is, funds of the Crown. The Constitution Act of 1867 and Standing Order 79 apply to these funds. Thus, a bill proposing a new or increased expenditure of public funds, that is, an appropriation, requires a royal recommendation.

The employment insurance program operates under this framework. The funds in question are public funds and their management is subject to the financial initiative of the Crown.

• (1105)  
[*English*]

By extending the qualifying period for employment insurance benefits by the amount of time a person was unemployed due to a work stoppage resulting from a labour dispute, Bill C-395 is increasing the expenditures under the act. These expenditures would be paid out of the consolidated revenue fund. As the House is aware, such provisions can only be put to the House for a final decision if they are accompanied by a royal recommendation as set out in Standing Order 79(1). Consequently, the Chair will decline to put the question on third reading of the bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

*Private Members' Business*

Today's debate, however, is on the motion for second reading, and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the current debate.

## SECOND READING

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to debate the merits or demerits of Bill C-395 today.

Let me begin by acknowledging that labour disputes do affect Canadians, and sometimes Canadians do find themselves unemployed at the end of such disputes. My colleague from the Bloc obviously cares about these workers, as do all members of the House. I am sure of this, but we must go beyond good intentions. As the old saying goes, good intentions can lead us down a path on which we would be better not to go.

We must probe the potential policy and legal impacts of these proposed amendments on the Employment Insurance Act. We must ensure that any changes to the employment insurance system are based on hard evidence, and we must look at the practical facts on the ground. When we conduct this investigation, the implications of Bill C-395 become troubling on several levels. Let me discuss some of my concerns.

First, let us deal with the practical facts on the ground. In the history of law and legislation, we have seen that another old saying is also true, that often extreme cases make bad law. I recognize that this bill is intended to protect employees who are caught in a lengthy labour dispute that ends in a firm's closure. This result of course is regrettable and often difficult on the workers affected.

We should view this in context, however. Most labour disputes are relatively short and they rarely end in the closure of a firm. Between 2003 and 2009, for example, a little more than one per cent, only one per cent, of the total number of strikes ended in a firm's closure. Moreover, the average length of a strike that ended in a firm's closure was 110 days. For lockouts, the figure was 116 days. As the parliamentary secretary noted, these figures average out to 16 weeks. That leaves plenty of time for employees to qualify for benefits under the current 52-week requirement.

By these comments, I do not want to suggest that I am or our government is unsympathetic to the plight of the unemployed, far from it. Simply, we need to take account of the facts to inform our decision-making. Here are some of the facts.

The Employment Insurance Act does not preclude workers from accepting other employment during a labour dispute. The act allows employees to accumulate the work hours required to establish a claim for benefits. Specifically, through the variable entrance requirement, employees need between 420 and 700 insurable hours to qualify for regular benefits, depending upon the unemployment rate in the applicant's region.

In other words, using existing provisions of the act, employees in a labour dispute could qualify for benefits by building up their hours through work elsewhere. For this reason alone, the provisions in Bill C-395 are inadvisable.

Let us also recall that the employment insurance system is an insurance-based program. It is designed to provide benefits to workers if they are unable to work, whether because they are

unemployed, sick, pregnant, caring for a newborn or adopted child, or caring for a gravely ill family member. This regime is supported by the premiums paid by both workers and employers.

When a worker meets the qualifying requirement, benefits kick in. It is that simple. The proposal before the House goes against the guiding principle that the EI program should remain neutral during a labour dispute.

My colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain pointed out correctly that allowing the provision of benefits to workers, paid for in part by employers, during a labour dispute would disrupt the system's balanced treatment, tilting the system in favour of workers in a situation where they are negotiating with management. This bill would make changes such that the negotiating position of unions and workers would be unfairly improved at the cost of employers, who pay 58% of employment insurance premiums. I simply do not think this change is something we should undertake.

There are other related aspects of this bill which I do not think are wise. Specifically, the bill proposes to change how the EI program calculates a qualifying period in the event of a labour dispute that leads to work stoppage. As members know, the qualifying period is the time in which a claimant must accumulate enough hours of insurable employment to establish a claim for benefits.

● (1110)

Currently it is generally the 52 weeks preceding the beginning of a claim. In some cases the period can be shorter when there was a prior claim. The bill would extend the qualifying period to be the same as the period of the labour dispute. This would allow employees to be eligible for employment insurance benefits if they are laid off after a lengthy labour dispute is resolved.

Existing provisions allow for the extension of a qualifying period to up to 104 weeks in certain situations. These exceptions include situations in which individuals are physically unable to work, such as quarantine and sickness. Labour disputes are not considered an exception, because individuals are not physically prevented from working. They could work somewhere else. The proposals in Bill C-395 would therefore deviate from the EI program's basic insurance principle, that there must be a reasonable proximity of timing and correlation of value between premiums paid and benefits disbursed.

These are the reasons I think this bill is not wise. I welcome the chance to speak a little bit about some actions that I do think are wise. Those are the actions of this Conservative government both recently and as part of Canada's economic action plan. Since coming to office and particularly since the beginning of the economic downturn, our government has acted decisively to support unemployed Canadians and help them get back to work, but we have done so based on sound evidence that the changes are in the best interests of all Canadians.

*Private Members' Business*

Through Canada's economic action plan, our government has introduced measures that support all unemployed Canadians. Specifically, we have temporarily extended the duration of EI benefits by five weeks. We have made it easier to take part in work-sharing agreements, which are helping to protect the jobs of almost 167,000 Canadians. We are also helping young people get certified in skilled trades, and helping long-tenured workers make the transition into new careers.

We have frozen the employment insurance premium rates for 2010 so they will be at the same rate as this year, which is the lowest level in a quarter of a century, and we are providing an additional \$1.5 billion to the provinces and territories to help support skills training. Our government has also recently passed measures in Bill C-50 that will help long-tenured workers who lost their jobs because of the global recession. These measures will now start to help ensure that approximately 190,000 long-tenured workers who have paid into the EI system for years are provided between five and 20 extra weeks of EI while they search for new employment. Surely we can identify with likely one or two businesses in every riding throughout this House. This much-needed support is in addition to the five weeks of EI included in the economic action plan. This is an important step for Canadian workers who have worked hard, have paid taxes their whole lives and who find themselves in economic hardship.

Our government recognizes that the self-employed are an integral part of our economy. We believe that self-employed Canadians should not have to choose between their family and business responsibilities. That is why in 2008 our government committed to extending maternity and paternity benefits to the self-employed. On November 3, 2009 we introduced Bill C-56, the Fairness for the Self-Employed Act, which provides all EI special benefits, including maternity, parental, sickness and compassionate care benefits to self-employed Canadians on a voluntary basis.

We have not just met our commitment to these 2.6 million Canadians, we have exceeded it. Bill C-56 has received a very positive response from a variety of stakeholders: the Grain Growers of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Independent Contractors and Businesses Association, the Canadian Real Estate Association. I could go on and on.

The government has acted responsibly to enhance the employment insurance program, particularly since the global economic slowdown. For all these reasons, I cannot support the proposed amendments, and I urge all members of the House to join me in my opposition to the bill.

• (1115)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-395, the proposed changes to the Employment Insurance Act with respect to labour disputes.

This legislation addresses what I think is a bit of a gap in the EI system right now and in the Employment Insurance Act. The question is: what should be done if the qualifying period for somebody who has lost his or her job includes work lost because of a labour disruption? This bill is a reasonable attempt to address the gap. At the very least, it is worthy of further study at committee, so we can identify whether or not there is more that needs to be done.

Also, to some extent, we could perhaps address the issue of what the cost might be. I see that the Speaker has ruled that a royal recommendation will be required.

Let me speak to the issue this bill addresses and how it proposes to solve it. Right now, somebody's qualification for employment insurance is determined by the qualifying period that precedes the loss of employment, and that is 52 weeks. There are allowances for certain instances such as sickness, but not for work time lost due to a labour disruption.

During a labour dispute, employees cannot draw EI. They can, in some cases, receive strike pay. Or they could, conceivably, go out and get another job, although it is a very difficult circumstance in which to look for a job when one is hoping to go back to a job that one currently holds. If one gets strike pay, of course, it is different from having insurable earnings for EI.

It is always difficult to determine costs when we are looking at employment insurance. It involves very complex calculations. This year, we had the issue of what it actually costs in another area of qualification, the 360-hour national qualifying standard. Just over a year ago, last spring, because of a request from the committee looking at a private member's bill, the HRSDC department had estimated that cost at somewhere around \$600 million or \$700 million. The exact figure does not come to me, but it was in that range.

Other people have estimated it will cost \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion a year. That would make sense, because there are more people unemployed now than there were last spring, and there has been a slight escalation in cost. As a result of a request from the employment insurance working group established by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, we had the outrageous guesstimate, we might call it, of over \$4 billion. They came back and said this would cost over \$4 billion.

That did not make any sense. Everybody knew that was nuts. In fact, the government itself came back a little bit later and said the cost was actually about \$2.5 billion. We asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer and he came in with a cost of about \$1.1 billion, which notionally makes sense and obviously was statistically backed up. But that is why we have issues with costs when we start looking at employment insurance.

*Private Members' Business*

We have the same thing when we look at two-week waiting periods. What is the cost of a two-week waiting period? It is not really a waiting period; it is an out-of-luck period for a person who loses his or her job. What is the cost of that? The estimates have varied a bit on that, as is the case with this bill.

This bill does indicate that if a job is lost following a labour disruption, allowances can be made. It is very difficult for people and families who are already suffering from being unemployed because of a labour disruption when, all of a sudden, they come back and within a short period of time they are laid off completely and find out that their qualification for EI has been affected.

In essence, this bill will simply extend the qualifying period by the length of time of the labour dispute. As I have indicated before, qualifying is a huge problem in this country. It has been identified as the number one problem with the EI system. Many solutions have been proposed over the last number of years, and specifically in the last year.

We have had private member's Bill C-269 and private member's Bill C-265 from the member for Acadie—Bathurst and the member for Chambly—Borduas. In this session, we have looked at Bill C-241, Bill C-280 and Bill C-304. These are serious attempts to have a look at what the gaps are in the EI system, particularly at a time of economic difficulty.

We are still in this; we are still seeing job losses. We saw the numbers that came out the other day. There are still people in Canada who are losing their jobs. The economy needs a little bit of help. Everybody talks about stimulus. From any reports I have seen, the best stimulus is to invest in people who have lost their jobs or are in economic difficulty, because they will in fact put the money back into the economy, which is what stimulus is supposed to be all about.

We have heard from many people, including all the premiers from Ontario to the west, who normally have not spoken out much on employment insurance. All of the premiers of varying political stripes have said that we need to look at the issue of accessibility. We need to have a look at these variable entrance requirements, particularly at a time of economic difficulty, to see if they still make sense, because they are hurting the provinces. We heard that from the Minister of Finance's wife, when she was running for the leadership of her party in Ontario. We heard it from Premier Stelmach and Premier Campbell, and every premier, including Premier Brad Wall in Saskatchewan.

• (1120)

We have heard it from social policy groups. We have heard it from economists. We have even heard it from organizations that one might not normally think would call for such a thing. TD Economics has called for it. The Chamber of Commerce urged that we have a look at a couple of things in its prebudget submission this year, including entrance rates, but also at the two-week waiting period. These are all things that can be done to improve the system right away.

We have to have a look at what has the government done for employment insurance, recognizing finally that we are in a period of economic distress. As the House will recall, last November when the United States was already looking at proposals to assist people who were unemployed, we had an economic update that offered nothing.

In January, when we came back after Parliament was prorogued, EI was addressed in a specific way by adding five weeks of eligibility, which was a step forward in my view. If we look at the private members' bills that we have seen in the House over the past few years, the extra five weeks was always a small piece of it.

Of course, there was nothing on the two-week waiting period, nothing on accessibility, and nothing on increasing the rate of payment from 55% to 60%, which is called for a lot. But the five weeks were helpful and they were particularly helpful because they affected all Canadian workers; they did not pick winners and losers.

That is why the five weeks was a good piece of public policy at the time, but they are nowhere near to being enough and did not address the issue of accessibility that the 360-hour national standard would address. But the five weeks were something for all workers in Canada.

This fall we had a couple of pieces of legislation, one of them being Bill C-50, which would extend benefits from 5 to 20 weeks, but only for a select few, the fortunate few, in this country.

In the spring the government was saying that it was going to offer extra benefits to everyone, and then in the fall it said it was going to go back to a small percentage of the unemployed. One may qualify for between 5 and 20 weeks, but if one has drawn on EI before, too bad. If one happened to be a seasonal worker in northern New Brunswick, or in the fishing industry or the tourism industry, or others like that, one did not qualify for the extra 5 weeks.

That kind of discriminatory approach flies in the face of what the government was proposing to do at the beginning of the year, which was to provide equality in the employment insurance system, at least on the extension of benefits, if not in actually going to the number one source of irritation for Canadians, for workers, public sector unions, social policy groups, economists, think tanks, premiers and the wife of the finance minister. They were all saying that the system is not fair and that we have to fix it.

The reason it is not fair is that accessibility requirements range too much. At a time of economic difficulty, we need to do something to assist all Canadians and we need to make sure that people who lose their jobs do not feel like the government has forgotten them.

I would remind members that earlier this year the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development was quoted as saying she did not want to make EI too lucrative. I remind the House and the millions who are watching at home that average employment insurance benefits are somewhere in the range of \$330 a week. There are not that many people in the House who would want to work for \$330 a week, or would feel very excited about losing their job so they could get \$330 a week. I think the maximum is \$440 a week.

*Private Members' Business*

EI is far from being a lucrative proposal for anyone. We have to keep in mind as well that people cannot draw EI in Canada if they voluntarily quit their jobs. If they quit their jobs, they do not get EI. They are told that they do not qualify. They can appeal it and they might be able to make their case, but they cannot quit their jobs and get EI.

Therefore, for an individual to suggest that EI is lucrative and that anyone would deliberately try to qualify for it, the individual would have to suggest that the person find a way to lose his or her job without quitting it. That person would have to get the employer to let him or her go so he or she could make 55% of his or her previous earnings.

Bill C-395 is worthy of consideration. I congratulate my colleague who brought it forward. We think it addresses a gap in the system. We think that at a time of economic difficulty, this is when we need to invest in employment insurance, because employment insurance assists Canadians when they need it the most, through no fault of their own from a work stoppage. It should not be made harder because of a labour disruption in the previous qualifying period.

• (1125)

**Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak today in support of the bill introduced by the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, which would amend the qualifying period for individuals during a labour dispute. As it stands now, workers who are involved in a strike or lockout that lasts 52 weeks will not receive EI premiums during this time and will not therefore qualify for extended EI benefits.

The whole point of workers contributing to the EI program is so that when a person loses his or her job, he or she can access these funds. However, as the system currently stands, far too many people cannot receive EI even though they have paid into the fund.

According to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada figures, more than half of unemployed workers do not have access to employment insurance because they do not qualify under the current rules. The NDP has put forward a number of bills to amend the current EI system to ensure that it offers proper support to everyone who has paid into the system.

For example, Bill C-242, introduced by the member for Acadie—Bathurst, would increase the percentage of income claimed through employment insurance to 60%. Bill C-244, introduced by the member for Nickel Belt, would remove the waiting period for EI benefits. Bill C-280, introduced by the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung, would, among other things, lower the threshold for becoming a major attachment claimant to 360 hours.

However, I welcome the bill introduced by the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, which addresses another major flaw of the employment insurance system. The NDP is committed to working with other political parties to support legislation that strengthens social security policies in Canada, and I would like to congratulate the member for this bill. Why should workers who are involved in a strike or lockout not be covered by employed insurance?

The right to strike is an important one and, as it stands, people are penalized for exercising this right. Employers have the right to lock out workers and are not penalized by the government for doing so.

Yet if a union votes to go on strike, it is penalized by the government through the flaws in the current EI system. In fact, as it stands, the government penalizes workers if they are locked out by their employer and it penalizes them if they go on strike. The government seems to support a lose-lose situation for workers.

In Sudbury, over 3,000 steelworkers at Vale Inco have been on strike since July 13. Today is the 126th day of that strike. Every day I speak to people affected by the strike: workers, their families and friends, small and local businesses in Sudbury. All these people want is a fair deal from Vale Inco.

Think of the consequences for Sudbury if this strike went on for a year and then these people were laid off. There would be over 3,000 people who would not only lose their jobs but also the employment insurance they paid into throughout their careers. There would be 3,000 families who would struggle to pay their bills and put food on the table. Think of the effect this would have on Sudbury's economy.

It is not just my riding of Sudbury that would be affected. Communities all across Canada are suffering. In Ontario alone, there are five more labour disputes currently taking place. At CEP Local 2003 in Toronto, 61 members were locked out in June by their employer, Cadillac Fairview, and then terminated one month later. At CEP Local 37 in Timmins, 95 members have been locked out by their employer, Grant Forest Products, since September 2006 and have walked the picket line for 39 months. At USW Local 271G in Erin and Cambridge, 44 members have continued to strike against Guardian Fibreglass Inc. since June 2007 for 29 months on the picket line. At USW Local 1-500 in Brantford, there have been 75 members on strike against ECP since August 2008, or 15 months on the picket line. At USW Local 9511, there have been 590 members on strike against DriveTest since August 2009, or four months on the picket line.

• (1130)

What is worse, as if the economic crisis had not brought enough hardship to these communities, is that many companies are using the situation for their own gain as to cause them to renege on agreements they made in the past. It is downright shameful. So many are using this economic crisis as a justification to roll back and renege on collective agreements. Workers should not be punished twice for standing up for the rights and benefits their brothers and sisters worked hard to obtain. This bill would fix that.

This bill would allow the extension of the EI qualifying period beyond the stated limit of 104 weeks for workers affected by a labour dispute, so that the extension of a qualifying period could equal the duration of the period of unemployment caused by the strike or the lockout.

This bill, if passed, would also be deemed to have come into force on January 1, 2008. This would mean that labour disputes which are affected by the current economic climate or brought on by companies exploiting the economic crisis for their own gain would be retroactively covered by this bill. It would also mean that members of the United Steelworkers Local 6500 in Sudbury would also be covered by this legislation.

*Private Members' Business*

This bill is not just about fairness for the workers on strike, it is about fairness for the communities they come from. One thing is certain, strikes do not just affect workers, they affect entire communities.

If 3,000 workers lose their salary and their EI benefits, it is not just 3,000 families that will suffer, it is the entire community; small businesses that rely on these workers and these families to spend their money; restaurants; and local charities. I will use the United Way in Sudbury as an example. It relies on the United Steelworkers in Sudbury for a significant portion of what it raises.

Entire cities will be affected. With a decreasing tax base, it means less revenue for cities, which is less funding for city infrastructure, services and so on. Families will break apart and parents will move to new areas to find work with no support networks.

As the representative of these workers and the citizens of Sudbury, a city that has been hurt deeply as a result of this strike, I am very proud and glad to voice my support, and will be voting in favour of this bill.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today.

The excellent bill introduced by my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé is designed to fill a major gap in the legislation that hurts workers. The bill seeks to benefit people who have worked for 15 or 20 years in a business where a labour dispute occurs. It may be that the employer has locked out the employees or that the union has decided to go on strike. It is impossible to know how long a dispute might last, but one thing is certain: conflicts at the federal level last the longest. Why? Because there is still no anti-scab legislation. The Bloc Québécois has tried for years to have such legislation passed so that no one can replace workers who go on strike. It is always easier for the employer to find managers to replace workers during a labour dispute, and that is why disputes are becoming longer and longer.

My colleague opposite said that this was not important because less than 1% of the population was affected. I would like him to go into the ridings and tell those people that this is not important, that there are not enough of them and that they will not get anything, even if they have paid employment insurance premiums for 20 years. This is the big problem this bill seeks to address. If someone has worked for 52 weeks before a dispute, he or she would, in theory, be entitled to another 52 weeks of employment insurance benefits.

It is impossible to know how long a dispute will last. If it goes on for 52 weeks and the employer decides the following week to close the business because of a lockout or for some other reason, someone who has worked for 20 years will not receive any employment insurance benefits. Have the members opposite thought about that? Someone who has worked for 20 years will not be entitled to EI because he or she has been on strike or locked out. That makes no sense.

The champions of repression on the other side of the House are doing everything they can to send people to prison for any reason they see fit. Inmates are luckier than honest workers. An inmate is entitled to a qualifying period of 104 weeks, twice as much time as an honest worker. I cannot understand how the Conservatives can

change their tune when it comes to workers. Why does the government not give workers the same 104-week qualifying period as inmates? It makes no sense.

I hope that anyone listening to us this morning will be able to see that this makes no sense. The Conservatives keep introducing bills to impose two-year prison sentences for people who steal a car or what have you. But when it comes to workers, the government says they are not important, and that they represent less than 1% of the population. The Conservatives need to stop making publicity out of the big cheques they sign. With that money alone, they could pay workers after the 53rd week.

They should start thinking about why their spending with taxpayers' and workers' money is systematically out of control, and why they promote themselves on the backs of these people. A worker covered by a collective agreement has one opportunity to stand up for himself.

● (1135)

He cannot do this while the collective agreement is in effect; only when the agreement has expired. The only point at which a worker can tell his employer that he will go without a raise, will go without pay, is during the collective bargaining process. That is the only time he can stand up for himself. He has the right to tell his boss that he would rather go without pay, because he does not agree with the new collective agreement; he can walk out and assert his rights. This individual is using the right to strike given him by the province. He is using that right. But if the strike lasts more than 52 weeks, he will not be entitled to anything, as I have already mentioned. That makes no sense.

When it comes to employment insurance, there are a lot of things the Conservatives do that do not make sense. Last week, we spoke about Bill C-50, which provides an additional 5 to 20 weeks for workers who have worked seven of the last ten years. This bill should not even have been introduced here. The government could have simply created a pilot project. There was no need for all the readings, the speeches and the committee stage. A pilot project would have served the purpose.

I suppose that, with this bill, the Conservatives wanted to restrict the rights of workers and bring them to their knees again. That is all they want to do. They do not want to help workers who pay taxes, thereby ensuring that the government has operating funds. When it comes to giving something to these people who are more often than not referred to as the middle class, there is never anything for them.

Had the Conservatives really wanted to do something for these workers, they would not have given them 5 to 20 additional weeks of benefits. They would have restored the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, or POWA. It would have been fair for a 55-year-old worker who lost his job because of a plant closure to have access to such a program.



That being said, I fail to understand, once again, why the Conservatives do not help these workers. When businesses are in trouble, the government is first in line to give them the money everybody wants in order to save them. We saw that with the auto industry in Ontario. Billions of dollars started pouring into this industry. The government had no problem giving money to those companies.

Tomorrow, we will be debating the Canada-Colombia free trade bill. What does this government want to do? It wants to help mining companies take control of Colombia and ensure that workers over there have no rights. Not only is the government stripping away the rights of workers here, but it wants to do the same in another country. It does not want Colombian workers to have any rights. I find it despicable that the government would give more rights to prisoners than to workers.

I hope the Conservatives will change their minds and vote in favour of this bill which, I can assure members, is an excellent piece of legislation.

• (1140)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to thank the hon. member for Shefford for his excellent speech on Bill C-395. In his many years at the FTQ, the member was an advocate for workers facing health and safety issues. It is clear that he is very concerned by what people affected by problems in the workplace, work accidents or a layoff are experiencing.

Of course, we are at the end of the study of the bill at second reading. The bill's objective is to improve the situation of workers affected by a labour dispute or a lockout. However, as my colleague so eloquently explained, if the qualifying period exceeds 52 weeks, people lose their entitlement to EI even though they worked for 20 or 30 years. That is shameful.

I have been here since 2004 and during that time, we have had many debates on EI. Many bills whose objective was to improve the EI system have been introduced in the House.

It is important to remember that workers and employers are the ones who contribute to the employment insurance fund. Over the past 15 or 20 years, the fund accumulated a surplus in excess of \$57 billion. The government got that money from workers and employers. The government does not contribute to the employment insurance fund.

Here in the House, the government has restricted access to the employment insurance program. It started with Paul Martin's Liberal government and continued with the Conservatives. Despite the economic crisis, nothing is being done for workers. The government is investing huge sums of money in the military and is spending billions to support Alberta's oil industry, which is polluting our whole planet.

The Conservative government really does not care about workers, nor does it support them. During election campaigns, the Conservatives try to manipulate public opinion by saying that they want to help workers and people struggling with various issues. But here in the House, I have no doubt that the Conservatives will vote against this bill even though I hope they will not. From what the

### *Private Members' Business*

Conservative member said, I gather that they will be voting against this bill. That is shameful and senseless.

This is a simple bill. It states that people who have worked the required number of hours during a 52-week qualifying period and who have been involved in a lockout are entitled to employment insurance even after 52 weeks or following a prolonged strike.

In closing, I urge all members of the House to really give this some thought and vote with their heart and their conscience when the time comes to vote on Bill C-395 at second reading. When voting, we should keep in mind workers who have taken a stand to protect their rights and who, because they do not have access to employment insurance, cannot support their families when their employers lock them out following a prolonged dispute.

I also urge all members of the House to think about all of the bills introduced by the Bloc Québécois, such as eliminating the waiting period and improving the employment insurance system. They should think about voters who have so often been denied access to benefits when they lose their jobs or are involved in a prolonged labour dispute.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 18, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*English*]

### SUSPENSION OF SITTING

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Given that we have no further business before the House, we will suspend until 12 o'clock when we will continue with government orders.

*Government Orders*

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:50 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1200)

[*English*]

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (STIMULUS)

The House resumed from November 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures, be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member for Mississauga South has seven minutes remaining in his speech.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-51 is an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

As members will know, from the debate that has gone so far, this bill touches on a broad range of subject matters, some of which I have mentioned in my previous remarks.

Before I move on to my final remarks, I would like to note that on page 6745 of the November 6 *Hansard*, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance raised a question about whether or not I had even read Bill C-51.

In my defence, I would remind the member that he chaired a briefing session for members of Parliament the day before it was tabled in this place and, as he will recall, I was sitting in the front row throughout the meeting and was one of the members asking most of the questions. He may want to withdraw the remark about my presence at the meeting or about reading the bill.

In reviewing some of the other matters that the members have talked about in debate and why it is relevant, because members have obviously raised it, was certainly to go back and remind Canadians about the November economic statement a year ago, which is where we need to understand where we came from and why we are here today.

The economic statement contained projections of surpluses and it included cuts to government spending at a most inappropriate time. It is really amazing what happened. The members will know the litany of changes we have undergone. A budget was brought in that ultimately included a fiscal stimulus through infrastructure and other members and the Liberal Party supported them. However, what did not happen was the execution of the matters in that budget. I remember raising in the House that, even with regard to the last fiscal year, some \$3 billion of infrastructure funding did not get out the door. It was approved project by project, ready to go. We talked often about having shovel ready projects so that the money could get out quickly so we could save current jobs. That was one of the key elements of the infrastructure program.

We did not get the money out. We let the money lapse, which is a shame because it just goes back into the treasury, even though it was already announced, promised, funded and ready to go. Talk about shovel ready, that was it and they let it go.

We also know it is the same situation with regard to the current program of infrastructure spending. Only 10% of the projects that were submitted for funding are underway and have shovels in the ground. It is the government's term "shovel ready".

In my own city of Mississauga, I just looked at the listing from the manager of the City of Mississauga who keeps the members of Parliament informed. There are a large number of projects in the sixth largest city in the country, Mississauga. However, in my own riding there are none that have any shovels in the ground yet, but they do have signs everywhere announcing them. It is really a shame because, as we have seen with the unemployment situation, we have gone from having the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years to now having the highest in our history. We are approaching 9% and expectations are that it could hit 10%. It means that we are still losing jobs when the stimulus program should have been saving those jobs, should have been creating those jobs through the infrastructure programs and through other initiatives. It has not. It has been a terrible execution.

It just strikes me that the Prime Minister once mused that Canada did not need to get on side in terms of stimulus, in terms of this overall so-called global financial crisis, because we are a trading nation, which means that other countries that are doing all the stimulus spending are creating an economic activity and they will trade with us and we will benefit from their economic spending.

However, we also need to do our share but now, instead of having a surplus in the current fiscal year, we are now up to a projected deficit of some \$60 billion for Canada. It is outrageous that the current government has allowed this to happen.

• (1205)

The Prime Minister says that his government will not raise taxes and it will not cut government spending, particularly in transfers to the provinces for health care and other things. The Parliamentary Budget Officer says that we are in a technical recession. This means that we cannot grow out of it.

Projections show that even five years hence Canada will still be running a \$19 billion to \$20 billion deficit. This should be of concern to Canadians. This shows the government is incapable of managing the financial matters of the country. The government's responsibility is to be fiscally responsible. The Conservatives have spent all their time advertising things that have not happened.

I have some grave concerns about the government's ability to do the job. I have concerns about the EI commission, which the government wants to start up in 2010, with \$2 billion in seed money. After that, all the premiums would go into the commission and all the expenses would come out of it.

With an unemployment rate that high, it is very clear to me, and I am sure to all Canadians, that the commission will operate at a deficit itself, and I hope members will ask about this. It will not have the resources to pay the employment insurance benefits to which Canadians are entitled. The government will have to make further transfers into the commission. It shows how incompetent the Conservatives really are.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I found my colleague's comments in regard to these important issues interesting.

Would he elaborate a bit more on the issue of the commission and its workings? We do not know a whole lot about it. What would happen when it started to run into a deficit position? Who would be responsible? Obviously, it would be taxpayers.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** The member is quite right, Mr. Speaker. Although the government has said that it will not raise taxes, it has announced that it will raise the premiums on EI to generate an additional \$13 billion a year. This is a contradiction of its promise that it would not raise taxes.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, in answer to a question in the House regarding whether an increase in payroll taxes, basically EI premiums, would be a tax, he said that it was not a tax. If that is not a tax, then I do not know what is.

We are probably going to have a \$60 billion or \$70 billion deficit. The \$2 billion to be transferred into the commission would also be charged to the consolidated revenue fund, which means it would further erode the fiscal position of Canada. However, \$2 billion is not going to be enough. The premiums are going to go into the new commission and the payments are going to come out.

When we are running an 8% to 9% rate of unemployment and when we are looking at increasing benefits for long-tenured workers, it is clear it is going to operate at a deficit and the money is going to have to come from the pockets of Canadians.

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. I heard the first part of it the other day. He barely touched on Bill C-51. He does not seem to really want to deal with it at all, and I think there are a number of reasons why. Even today he has talked about a whole lot of other things other than the bill.

One of the main reasons he does not want to talk about it is that it contains the home renovation tax credit. This is probably one of the most popular tax reduction measures that has been brought in for years. People across Canada have taken advantage of it, but the Liberals have opposed it and voted against it.

Many people across the country are using the home renovation tax credit to renovate their homes and it is creating jobs. Given that it is as popular as it is, could he explain to Canadians, since millions of them are watching, why the Liberals are opposed to the home renovation tax credit?

• (1210)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are opposing an incompetent government for its fiscal mismanagement. That is the issue.

### *Government Orders*

When the government runs a deficit the way it is, I do not know how it will operate the home renovation tax credit once people start to file. I do know there are already some problems in it. We have raised some of the issues. We are very concerned about people getting scammed by disreputable businesses that have gone into it because there is such a high demand.

The renovation program is about two sentences in the entire bill, which is quite a substantive bill. Other issues are extremely important. The CBC will have its borrowing authority increased to \$220 million. Some people might say that it sounds pretty good, but the only reason it is being done is to allow the CBC to sell its rental revenues over the next few years on properties that it owns but does not use. It is mortgaging the future.

As I said the last time when I spoke on this, I believe that when we mortgage the future of the CBC, it is the very first step to privatizing the CBC at fire sale prices.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the member say earlier that when the Liberals were in power, they were expecting that the system the government had put in place to provide some kind of EI fund or an alternative management system for that fund would soon run out of money because there were a great many unemployed people.

I have a question for the member. When the Liberals were in power, they did not accept repeated requests made by unemployed groups for the creation of an independent EI fund. The Liberals collected billions of dollars in EI contributions and put the money into the general revenue fund to lower government deficits. That was a major misappropriation of EI money.

How can he say what he said, considering the fact that the Liberals could have acted a long time ago?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, the collapsing of a stand-alone bank account for the EI fund was mandated by the auditor general during the tenure of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. It was operating at a deficit at the time.

Who would have known we would have, under the Liberal government, not only balanced budgets by 1997 but 10 years of surplus and paying down debt. However, all that money is still being kept track of and it is the Conservatives now who are taking that money and locking it into the consolidated revenue fund. They will now set up a commission to operate on a stand-alone basis, just like it was when the auditor general closed it down. That is the problem. The Conservatives are taking the money from employers and employees because they do not have a way of paying back the \$50 billion that is still outstanding. The money is still there and it is being used to pay down debt, reducing interest expenses and trying to manage the finances of the nation. However, it is still owed, and the member knows that.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I always listen with great interest to my hon. colleague, but I think we need to back up a little to see where the Liberal Party has been. When it came to siding with the Conservatives on stripping pay equity for women, the Liberal Party stood and supported that. When it came to stripping basic environmental protection on Canada's river ways, the Liberal Party stood with the Conservative Party and supported that. When it came to stripping the fundamental obligations on Kyoto, the Liberal party went along with that.

The Liberal Party always looks through the prism, not of a national vision but of how to get back to power. Now we have a situation where the Liberal leader, perhaps he was seeking employment benefits himself, suddenly announced that the Liberals would oppose everything from here on in.

The Liberals are opposing changes to EI, which would help unemployed workers. Many in my riding have asked me about supporting it, but the Liberal Party does not support that. The bigger issue is getting the visitor from Harvard elected. Now the Liberals are refusing to support the home renovation tax credit, even though it is out there, because the visitor from Harvard sees this as a path to getting to power.

The Liberals have supported the government on everything that is wrong. When it finally has done one or two things right, the Liberals oppose it. I cannot understand their hypocrisy on this.

• (1215)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has a greater role to play than the other opposition parties because it has two responsibilities. First, it is to hold the government accountable. Second, it is to show Canadians that it is a government in waiting.

The accountability aspect is where the government has failed miserably. For example, what did the Prime Minister say about Kyoto? He said that it was a socialist plot trying to suck money out of rich countries and companies.

There is no commitment of the government in terms of addressing climate change, which is so important. Canadians want us to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Even the environment minister, when he talks to the oil sands people, says that the government wants to do its share on climate change but it wants to do it in a way that does not impact their businesses. The dirtiest, most polluting business in Canada is the oil sands.

I do not need to take any lessons from the member. Responsible opposition is to hold the government accountable and to point out where it has failed Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures.

Bill C-51 was introduced by the Minister of Finance on September 30 and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance on October 7. The members of the Standing Committee on Finance have already begun to study it.

The purpose of Part I of this bill is to amend various aspects of the Income Tax Act and the Income Tax Regulations, namely with respect to taxes for certain livestock producers, the home renovation tax credit, the first-time home buyers' tax credit and the working income tax benefit.

Part II of this bill includes provisions to amend the Bretton Woods and Related Agreements Act, the Broadcasting Act, the Budget Implementation Act, 2009, the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board Act, the Customs Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Public Service Superannuation Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. It is clear that this bill amends a number of existing acts.

I would like to speak more specifically to the home renovation tax credit. That aspect of Bill C-51 is rather important to the Bloc Québécois. It is because of that measure in particular that the Bloc Québécois will support this bill. What is more, this concept was part of a recovery plan submitted by the Bloc Québécois in 2008. A second component of this recovery plan was also submitted to the Conservative government in April 2009.

The part concerning the creation of a home renovation tax credit was included in the recovery plan and it is extremely important. At first, the Bloc wanted to encourage people to convert their oil furnaces to more energy efficient models. When we presented that measure, the Bloc members emphasized that this would help reduce our dependence on oil, which is extremely important. We have often said that Quebec would do well to reduce its dependence on oil. Even though the home renovation tax credit does not exactly achieve that goal, it does allow certain adjustments to be made. This measure does not strictly target energy efficient retrofits, but in this economic crisis it is an effective way to stimulate the economy rather quickly.

As we have already indicated, this budget was unacceptable to Quebec. The Conservative government has clearly favoured the automotive industry concentrated mainly in Ontario, to the detriment of Quebec's forestry industry. Compared to the \$10 billion given to the auto industry, only about \$70 million was given to the forestry industry, which is going through a major crisis.

Yesterday I met with some private woodlot owners who earn a living by making good use of their land. These people told me over and over that they have received almost no support from the Conservative government. To pass along what they told me, they are extremely disappointed.

• (1220)

They really expected to see a fairer distribution of the money they send to the federal government. I am convinced that the federal government is making these people poorer, since it is doing nothing to help them. It has also left them completely disillusioned, because of the unequal measures offered to certain groups in the country, particularly in Ontario and Quebec.

*Government Orders*

Coming back to the home renovation tax credit, we definitely support that measure. As I was saying earlier, it is a way to stimulate the economy to some degree. Even though this is not only about energy efficient retrofits, many people will benefit from this tax credit, for window products in particular.

So, part of this measure will improve energy efficiency. Indeed, people will be able to use this tax credit to improve the energy efficiency of their homes by putting in new window products, that is, windows, doors and skylights. Of course this can also help people significantly improve the comfort of their homes. When properly applied, this measure can considerably decrease both household energy consumption and the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change, a major problem for all of us.

Purchasing higher quality windows, doors and skylights will ensure the right balance between cost, ease of use and maintenance. Owners of homes that are 15 or 20 years old and even older are already experiencing maintenance problems. This tax credit will allow these people to make their homes more energy efficient and easier to maintain. People often choose maintenance-free doors and windows, which improves durability, aesthetics and energy efficiency.

I insist on that because this measure has been very popular, particularly in Quebec. In my riding, many people told me that they thought it was an interesting measure and that they used it to varying degrees. It is not a cure-all for our economic woes, but it is a good support measure.

These changes will reduce energy costs. It is estimated that, for the residential sector, energy bills will be reduced by 7% to 12%. This will obviously have an interesting impact in terms of reducing greenhouse gases.

We talked earlier about the comfort of our homes. We all live in a rather difficult climate. This measure will help eliminate cold drafts in our homes, which is very beneficial. In terms of prevention, efficiency and maintenance, it will help reduce condensation. When new windows are put in, the air exchange is better, which means less condensation in the homes and less deterioration of materials. It also reduces external noises.

However, the home renovation tax credit still raises some questions.

● (1225)

This tax credit is supposedly effective but it does have limits. Eligible expenses are those covered by contracts completed after January 27, 2009, when the budget was tabled, and before February 1, 2010, and must be directly related to eligible renovations to an eligible dwelling or property. An eligible dwelling generally consists of the taxpayer's principal residence or that of one or more family members.

The maximum tax credit is \$1,350 for one year only. Certain questions come to mind—questions that have not yet been answered—and it would be appropriate for the government to address them because they are important to citizens. Given that this tax credit was designed to temporarily encourage renovation projects or to accelerate projects already planned, should the credit not be available for more than just the one year? Should it not be extended for

another year? It is an economic stimulus measure and the economy is still in trouble. According to the statistics, a great number of people are still unemployed. However, statistics do not tell the whole story. They indicate that the level of unemployment has stabilized but what goes unsaid is that many people are not eligible for unemployment benefits and are not even included in the statistics.

The government's proposed changes to employment insurance have not made it possible for many people to have access to the program. Even now barely 50% of those who pay into the employment insurance program qualify for benefits when they lose their jobs temporarily or permanently. Thus, the government's changes to employment insurance have not improved accessibility at all. Too many people are still denied benefits and government support after having contributed for many years. For all sorts of reasons, they are not eligible for employment insurance benefits.

There is also the issue of the two week waiting period. Once again, the government is refusing to make changes even though we know very well that this measure would truly support and stimulate the economy. Rather than waiting two weeks, recipients would receive benefits much more quickly and would not have to strain their resources to cover this period.

As we know, in some communities, in many places, the two breadwinners of some families, namely the father and the mother, both find themselves out of work and must wait the two week period. These people often go back to work later on during the year and then, five or six months later, they are once again laid off. This means that, two or even three times a year, these families do not have any income for a period of two weeks each time.

That is totally unacceptable and that is why the Bloc Québécois has proposed changes and keeps asking for an in-depth reform of the employment insurance system that must include the abolition of the waiting period. We must also allow these people to receive EI benefits based on their good faith, and we must stop thinking that EI claimants are crooks trying to defraud the system. Let us stop trying to find all sorts of ways to delay the payment of benefits as long as possible, because some people must wait several weeks before getting that first cheque, even though they are entitled to it.

If I am now talking about the EI system it is because of our suggestion to the government to consider extending this tax credit.

● (1230)

It would be important to look at the actual impact of this tax credit over a longer period of time.

There are other questions that remain unanswered, but that should still be answered. Currently, how many Canadians qualify for the proposed credit? Are estimates available?

*Government Orders*

As we know, this tax credit is non-refundable. If, strictly for home renovation, Bill C-51 proposed instead a refundable tax credit, what would be the impact on the government's total tax expenditures? What would be the pros and the cons of a refundable home renovation tax credit? Surely there must be government studies that could help get a clear understanding of the impact of such a tax credit. However, as always with this government, we are getting as little information as possible. In fact, we do not have any information. We can always try getting more information indirectly, because with this government we never get answers to our questions.

I said earlier that the Bloc Québécois submitted a proposal, in a recovery plan, for home renovation incentives to improve energy efficiency and real estate value. Are there elements in such a program which should lead us to believe that there will be a real decrease in total greenhouse gas emissions?

The government of Quebec also introduced a home renovation tax credit, but it is very different and it applies differently. The fact that the federal government did not adjust its tax credit to the tax credit already introduced by the Government of Quebec has caused some confusion among Quebecers. Why was the credit capped at \$1,350? Was this amount determined to be the optimal one to allow for the best possible economic recovery?

To what extent will this tax credit help the economy to recover in Quebec and in Canada? These are other questions for which we have not been able to get answers from the government.

Part 1 of Bill C-51 also deals with the first-time home buyers' tax credit. The same questions must be asked. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a refundable tax credit for first-time home buyers? It would be interesting to have this information. Why has the proposed maximum been set at \$750? This is a very small amount for the purchase of a first home. It would need to be much higher for housing construction to really have a stimulus effect on the economy. These are important questions to which no answer has been provided.

The Bloc Québécois supports Bill C-51 strictly because of the home renovation tax credit, which is the most important part of it.

•(1235)

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to congratulate the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain for his excellent speech.

During the past few years, we have proposed several measures to improve the employment insurance plan. The member said that the government has invested very little money to support workers affected by job losses mostly in the forestry industry. The member and I intervened on several occasions because many forestry workers in the Mauricie region have been hit very hard.

I would like to hear what the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain has to say on that topic.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

Earlier, when talking about the EI system, I said that the measures introduced by the government to stimulate the economy, such as the home renovation tax credit, will not be enough to completely restore

the economy, particularly in Quebec where there is a serious crisis in the forestry sector. This is a major crisis and people are complaining because the Quebec forestry sector received only \$70 million compared to the \$10 billion Ontario's auto sector received.

We see that many unemployed workers in Quebec must get through the crisis without the help of the government, even though they contributed for many years to the EI system. They are ineligible for the benefits that would help them to better weather the crisis. We know that the successive Liberal and Conservative governments diverted \$57 billion from the EI system and put it in the consolidated revenue fund to reduce the debt. The unemployed and employers have been taken hostage. They are the ones who contributed to the system. Their money was used to reduce the debt and, on top of that, transfers to the provinces were cut. That is totally unacceptable.

•(1240)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech with great interest. I know he is very supportive of the home renovation tax credit. It is certainly not a new idea; it has been tried by many governments in tough times and even in good times in the past. The member is on to something in that the government recognizes that this is a very popular program. In fact, the government is going to announce an extension of the program. I think the Conservatives are planning to play politics with this. I think they are planning to hold off on the announcement until budget time next spring or whenever they feel an election is imminent. I believe the decision has already been made to extend the program. The Conservatives are just looking for a good time to announce the extension.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague said he believes the government would be willing to extend the program. I talked about the fact that such a home renovation program helps stimulate the economy to a certain extent. The question is whether or not it should be extended. Such a measure should be combined with a measure proposed by the Bloc Québécois. It must not be restricted to home renovation. We proposed that the federal government use wood in the construction and renovation of federal buildings. I think that it would really help stimulate a struggling economy in Quebec, an economy linked to numerous communities and towns that rely solely on the forestry industry. Such a measure would be extremely beneficial not only in allowing people to receive the EI benefits that are obviously difficult for them to obtain, but also in allowing them to get their livelihood from forestry products, as they did for many years.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today's debate on Bill C-51 gives us the opportunity to look at what happened during the last session regarding the government's budget measures and to understand why, this time, the New Democratic Party can support a motion that relates to the previous budget. As everyone knows, our party voted against that budget.

Let me remind the House that almost exactly one year ago, on November 26, 2008, the Minister of Finance announced that the government would enjoy a budget surplus. That was rather surprising, because the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, had said that it was absurd to anticipate a surplus. Rather, we were headed for a major deficit.

We learned—once again—that when the time comes to look at the government's books, it is better to rely on Kevin Page, our Parliamentary Budget Officer, than on the Minister of Finance, who suffers from the Pinocchio syndrome when he has to face these realities.

So, the minister was off by a mere \$60 billion. But since the Conservatives had just been re-elected—and even though they were a minority government—they included in that budget exercise a number of things which they knew would upset the opposition. Of course, what followed is now part of the Canadian parliamentary history.

I should mention, for the purpose of today's review, and because this relates directly to Bill C-51—which is why we can support it—that the Conservatives had proposed a series of measures. Among other things, they had decided to scuttle the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the Liberals supported them. They also decided to scuttle the right of women to equal pay for equal work, and the Liberals supported them again.

When budget time came, they insisted and persisted again. A series of measures were approved, including some that are on the table today. The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities went so far as to say that the Navigable Waters Protection Act was killing jobs. He was absurdly pitting the environment against the economy, as if we could not promote economic development without adversely affecting the environment, as the Conservatives were proposing to do.

We preferred to vote against a budget that was depriving women of their right to equal pay for equal work. We decided to vote against a budget that was going to scuttle the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

What we have before us today reflects the sort of work we proposed to do at the end of August. When the Liberals withdrew from the proposed coalition that would have enabled us to give a voice to the 70% of Canadians who had voted for something other than a right-wing government, we knew what we were doing, but the Liberals decided to pull out.

Hon. members will recall that at the end of August, in a now-famous address in Sudbury, Ontario, the leader of the Liberal Party said that the Prime Minister's time was up. He was prepared to trigger an election. But he had forgotten one thing, and that was that the Liberals held only 25% of the seats in this House, which meant that they could not trigger anything but laughter.

We in the NDP decided to sit down with the Prime Minister. Our leader met with the Prime Minister and told him that if, with a minority government, he was prepared to make the House of Commons work in the interests of Canadians, we would do our part. If they did their part, we would do ours. We indicated some areas of concern, particularly regarding finance, where we thought we could work together.

First and foremost was employment insurance. With the current crisis, many people's benefits were coming to an end, and these people needed more help. We also wanted better protection for pensions.

There have been many cases where employee pensions have not been protected, the classic one being Nortel, where many people retired and thought they were guaranteed a certain amount, but learned that they would not be receiving that amount because of the crisis. Better pension protection for the future was one of our priorities, as was the issue of credit cards.

Since the NDP extended a hand on these issues, we have seen movement on employment insurance, with the announcement of \$1 billion to help 190,000 families. I say "families", because the person who receives EI benefits will of course be able to help the other members of the household.

●(1245)

Is that enough? The answer is no. However, it does help all regions of Canada, including Quebec, where tens of thousands of families will benefit from this significant change.

With respect to credit cards, something is just starting to happen, but because this is a federal government responsibility, the usurious rates imposed by credit card issuers will have to undergo thorough review. These rates are highway robbery and completely unacceptable.

As to retirement pensions, some good work is under way. An important report is going to be delivered in Whitehorse next month during the federal-provincial conference of finance ministers. The Standing Committee on Finance has already decided to build much stronger alliances with respect to this issue once the report is released. I think that this is a great example of an issue that both sides of the House can work on.

We have before us today a new budget measure that the New Democratic Party will vote for. But what is this measure about? What is the difference between this bill and the budget we voted against in the spring? This bill only covers measures that will actually help people. We have no problem with that. For example, the home renovation tax credit is part of Bill C-51. Amendments are being presented to improve retirement pensions.

*Government Orders*

Let us not forget that the home renovation tax credit for Quebec residents is in addition to a similar program implemented by the province. This credit is having a major impact in the sense that the black market, which tended to keep significant amounts of money out of the legal economy, is being suppressed simply because people cannot claim a tax credit without a receipt and due payment. People who are having home renovations done are insisting on hiring above-board workers. For example, in Quebec, people only want to do business with workers who have paid their dues and comply with the Régie du bâtiment du Québec's codes. All of the rules that are in place to protect the public, to protect consumers, must be followed. This protects people in two ways: it ensures higher standards of work and, fiscally speaking, protects the public. In the past, billions of dollars have flowed outside of the normal channels meant to collect funds to be spent in the public interest. That is becoming less common, which is good news.

There are some provisions that have convinced us to vote in favour of this bill, and there are more to come. As the Conservatives introduce these so-called ways and means resolutions to implement parts of the budget, we will see whether they have listened to the message delivered by the NDP leader in August. We are prepared to make this House work in the best interests of the public, and in doing so, we are preventing a fourth general election in five years. The other side seems to be positively receiving our message. The main thing we are looking at today with Bill C-51 is the implementation of the budget.

Aside from the consideration of this bill, if we look at everything that influences our economic choices, there is a profound difference between the Conservative government and the NDP: we believe that the government has been going in the wrong direction for the past nearly four years. Members will recall that before this crisis hit, before the fall of 2008, the areas of Canada with the largest concentration of companies in the manufacturing sector, Quebec and Ontario in particular, had already lost several hundreds of thousands of well-paying jobs.

Furthermore, sustainable development is not just about the environment. Our generation has an obligation to ensure that future generations do not face a disproportionate burden. We are killing not only well-paying jobs, but also jobs that carry pensions. We are replacing well-paying jobs with pensions at General Motors along Highway 15 in Blainville with sales jobs, for example, in the shopping centre that replaced the General Motors. It does not take a genius to know that the people who are now earning \$12 an hour selling clothing are having a harder time supporting their families. Plus, these jobs do not have pensions.

• (1250)

Another debt is being passed on to future generations, in addition to the fiscal debt. On top of that, the primary growth strategy proposed by the Conservatives—I say “proposed” because it has never worked—was to introduce massive corporate tax cuts. Doing a critical analysis of this decision does not take long. I would remind the House that when the Minister of Finance announced the largest corporate tax cuts in Canadian history, he was encouraged and applauded by the Liberal Party of Canada. The Minister of Finance came back to the House and said that he never would have thought he would be able to reduce corporate taxes so quickly, but thanks to

the fact that the Liberals were asking him to go even further, he proceeded faster than expected.

Canadians will remember this decision and they will tell us what they thought of it in the next election. The basic error was giving \$60 billion in tax cuts to the most profitable corporations. Why did I say “the most profitable corporations” and not “all corporations”, as the government prefers to suggest? The reason is very simple. By definition, if a company does not make a profit, it cannot benefit from tax breaks because it does not pay taxes.

How did the Conservatives manage to create tax room to give tax breaks worth \$60 billion? It is not complicated. They raided the employment insurance fund. I would remind the House that, once again with the culpable complicity of the Liberals, they took \$57 billion from the EI fund and put the money into the government's general revenue fund. Some may argue that this does not change anything, because it was public money and it remained public money. We must be careful. Money from the EI fund was paid by every employer, every corporation and every employee. A business that was losing money or breaking even did not pay taxes and could therefore not benefit from any tax breaks, but it did in fact pay for every employee.

Even if a company is losing money, it is required to contribute to the employment insurance fund for every employee.

The Conservatives have raided the employment insurance fund to the tune of \$57 billion. They transferred that money to the government's general revenue fund, which gave them the tax room they needed to provide major corporations with a \$60 billion tax cut. Then, all of a sudden, we were in a global crisis. It is no coincidence that we are heading toward a \$60 billion deficit this year. This same government has also come to realize that the employment insurance fund will be short \$19 billion. Who will pay for this shortfall in the EI fund? It will be all the companies, all the employers and all the employees. A new tax will be imposed on all the companies, even brand new ones and those that are losing money. They will be on the hook again for this new \$19 billion tax. The major corporations that benefited from the \$60 billion will also have to pay, but the others, who were already struggling, will not get a penny in tax cuts and will be on the hook again. They have to cover an additional \$19 billion for all Canadian companies.

That is the lunacy of the Conservatives' doctrine. When one is guided by right-wing ideology instead of facts, with no regard for the fate of the citizens and all human beings, that is when decisions like this are made. Companies like EnCana in Alberta got millions of dollars in windfalls thanks to the tax cuts. The same cannot be said for manufacturing and forestry companies in Quebec and Ontario. There have also been many job losses in the forestry sector in other provinces. Just look at New Brunswick, or British Columbia, which has suffered terribly and not received a single penny.



*Government Orders*

The Conservatives are ideologically opposed to any intervention by the state in the economy. That is what guides all of their choices.

• (1255)

Since World War II, we have always understood that, being the second largest country in the world, Canada needs a government that makes sure that the imbalances in the economy are corrected and that stability, which would otherwise not exist, is achieved.

Through their ideological choices, the Conservatives are destabilizing the balanced economy that has been built throughout Canada since World War II. They are giving their preference to the oil industry and to banks, to the distress of provinces where part of the economy is based on the manufacturing sector. Yes, the primary sector is important, and natural resources must be exploited, but it must be done in a responsible way.

I spoke earlier about sustainable development, which is the obligation for a government to review the social, economic and environmental impact of each decision. When people refuse to acknowledge the real environmental cost of greenhouse gas emissions caused by oil extraction in the tar sands, the profit in American dollars looks much bigger than it really is. The environmental cost should be paid for according to the principles of sustainable development, but it is not. Thus, the value of the Canadian dollar goes up, making it more difficult to export our manufactured products and aggravating the already serious difficulties in the manufacturing and forestry sectors. This is what happens when we do not have a comprehensive approach.

Between now and the next budget, we will have a chance to see the Liberal Party's true colours, given this Conservative approach. We will likely see that the Conservatives do not enjoy managing public affairs. For them, it is an anathema: they feel the government has no role to play regarding this issue. That is what allowed the Minister of Transport to say that the Navigable Waters Protection Act was killing jobs. The fact that it is utterly false does not change anything to the fact that he can actually make such a claim. That has not prevented the Conservatives, with the culpable complicity of the Liberals, to abolish the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

In the next budget, we should expect even worse, a Conservative chain saw massacre. They do not believe in targeted action by the state, and nor do they believe that the government can make choices to generate wealth. They have this doctrinaire vision to the effect that the free market can deal with all these issues. In the next budget, instead of a surgeon's knife, expect the Conservatives to use a chain saw.

The Liberals will have to face their own contradictions. Those who have the word "liberal" in their political party's name have, time after time, supported the Conservatives on despicable ideological measures such as depriving women of their right to equal pay for equal work, and abolishing an act that had been protecting Canada's navigable waters for a century.

Today, we see the result of the NDP's reaching out approach. There is nothing ideologically despicable in what is being proposed. These are measures that we can support openly and with our heads up high. The NDP has always been consistent. It is out of the question for our party to behave like the Liberals and vote to deprive

women of certain rights and to destroy the environment. If such measures were on the table, the Conservatives know what would happen. An election that no one wants would take place in the midst of an economic crisis and during a flu pandemic. The fact is we do not need that this fall.

The NDP will always remain true to itself, its principles and its commitments. We cannot wait to deal with the Conservatives when they deliver their next budget.

• (1300)

[*English*]

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in his speech the hon. member for Outremont touched on the whole issue of pensions. New Democrats have put forward a proposition for how to deal with pensions in this country. I wonder if the member could specifically address the fact that often there are employees, from coast to coast to coast, who for all of their working lives, 30 or 40 years, have worked for one company. Now the company is in trouble and is looking at filing for bankruptcy or protection.

There are pensioners who worked at a pulp and paper mill in my own riding and who are looking at the fact that their pensions may be substantially reduced. They may get only 40% or 50% of what they are currently getting. Often we are talking about workers in their seventies and eighties. These are not men and women who can go out and find another job. They have established a lifestyle based on what they could reasonably expect to get from their employer and their pension contributions.

I wonder if, notwithstanding the proposed changes, the member could comment on what he sees as being essential to protect men and women who have worked all their lives.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, that is an important question from my friend and colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan. It allows us to remind ourselves that in terms of public administration, one always has to look at cost versus benefit.

The most important thing we can do is take care of people for the long term. That is the number one thing that governments exist to do. It is not very difficult to imagine a structure of insurance, which is one of the propositions the NDP is putting forward, that would be similar to the deposit insurance that already exists. It is a light structure that is self-financing, and the burden is shared.

When people deposit their money in a chartered bank, they know it is guaranteed. There are certain sums and limits involved. Something similar could be designed.

What is also interesting about the deposit insurance structure in Canada is that it is the provinces that regulate credit unions. In Quebec, for example, the Desjardins Credit Union movement is the bank of 80% of Quebecers. The deposit insurance exists under the federal scheme because the two have been able to work together.

*Government Orders*

It would, therefore, be very easy to come up with a light structure to which the provinces could adhere, because a lot of the pensions that exist in Canada are indeed under provincial jurisdiction. A lot of people work under federal structures. There is a federal labour code and a provincial one, and the jurisdiction changes, but it would be quite easy to imagine a solution that would not cost too much, would be fairly light and would provide the needed protection. That is what governing should be all about.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of our colleague from the NDP.

As we know, Bill C-50 does not meet the needs of the forestry workers in Quebec. They have told us so. The bill was designed more for automobile workers in Ontario. We are not against that, but we wanted the government to support the forestry workers as well. Bill C-56 does not help self-employed workers in Quebec at all, since they already have access to a parental leave insurance plan.

My question is quite simple. Does the member not agree that the patchwork reform of the employment insurance plan, proposed by the Conservative Party in Bill C-50, is of no help to workers in Quebec?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question because it is an important one.

He is right when he says that a sector of the economy that has been affected by successive layoffs and where workers needed to draw EI benefits over the years does not necessarily benefit from the extension that has just been given. However, one cannot say that Quebec workers will not benefit as much as other Canadians from the improvements included in Bill C-50. Tens of thousands of Quebec families will benefit from the bill and that is the reason why I was so disappointed to see that the Bloc voted against the measure. I really do not understand why the Bloc did that. Earlier, I alluded to the ideological approach of the Conservatives. Sometimes, the Bloc also has an ideological approach to issues.

As for Bill C-56, it has already been shown that the contributions will vary from one jurisdiction to the other. Since Quebec already pays, the contributions asked from Quebec workers will be lower than in the other provinces. I can illustrate that with the example of daycare centres that have received subsidies from the federal government. Since Quebec already had its system in place, the money was simply transferred to the province. On that issue, we succeeded.

As for the member's last question, I will say that, yes, we must once again make major reforms in the EI system in the best interest of protecting the entire population.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my heart goes out to the Liberals, because I know it bothers them to be in a position of voting against Bill C-51 and particularly against the home renovation tax credit, knowing full well that the government will be out there with its ten percenters just flooding their ridings, especially the close ones, with information on something that is this popular.

Could the member make some observations as to how the Liberals got themselves into this mess in the first place?

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, talk about an open ended-question, trying to figure out exactly the parcours that the Liberals went through to get themselves into so much trouble.

I will say that when I was debating the budget earlier this year, I heard one of the Liberal members who had once been responsible for the Status of Women in Canada trying to ask us questions about our position on the budget when she and all of her colleagues were about to vote to remove from women in Canada the right to have equal pay for work of equal value. I learned everything I needed to know about the Liberal Party of Canada, so I thought.

Last week the same Liberals presented a private member's bill, which they know will have absolutely no chance of ever producing an effect, because we all know the calendar of private members' bills and that bill will never be adopted. They have tried to buy themselves a fig leaf to hide their shame for having voted with the Conservatives to remove from women in Canada the right to equal pay for work of equal value.

When I saw that the Liberal Party would prefer a sword strike into water as their solution to try to justify what they had done, which was shameful, then I really knew everything that I needed to know about the Liberal Party and its sense that everything is due to it, and that nobody will ever pay attention to what it does. I think on that the Liberals are right, but it will take the next election to finally get rid of them.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures. It is important for those listening and for you, Mr. Speaker, to fully understand the situation.

First of all, for political reasons, the government decided to take part of what it had already announced in the budget and to make it a bill. We are talking about Bill C-51, which includes certain budget measures already adopted with the support of the Liberals.

Some may ask why the government decided to take certain provisions and create another bill. Quite simply because the government believed that it was very likely that an election would be held. It wanted to show that certain budget provisions had the approval of Parliament. It is always rather troubling to see the way the Conservatives manipulate public opinion. They have followed in the footsteps of the U.S. Republicans and they are good at it.

This allows them to shift the focus of debate. From the media's point of view, the debate is shifted to a new subject. We know that the latest budget adopted by the Conservatives contained important measures for the automotive industry. However, they have abandoned the forestry and manufacturing industries. In Quebec, there are a few automotive parts companies remaining but the only automobile plant, the GM plant in Ste-Thérèse—Boisbriand, shut down many years ago. The automotive industry was not a major player compared to the forestry industry, which affects 26% of the Quebec economy.

*Government Orders*

The Conservatives, in light of the Liberals' election threat, decided to take the most popular budget measures and create a separate bill to show that they were doing a good job of governing or that they had some interesting ideas. We will be reviewing them since the Bloc Québécois will support Bill C-51. It is a good way for our audience to understand this better.

Yes, a political party may decide to vote against a budget, even though it contains some worthwhile measures. Why? Because you have to look at the big picture.

The Bloc Québécois is the only political party in this House that defends the interests and values of Quebecers, and we analyzed the latest budget brought down this past spring with that in mind. The government had ignored the forestry and manufacturing sectors and employment insurance in favour of the automotive industry. The latest budget did not contain any worthwhile employment insurance measures.

Why was this so important to Quebec? Because there had been many plant closures in the forestry and manufacturing sectors as a result of the recent crisis. In addition, the forestry sector had been hard hit for many years. Plants had been closing one after another in many parts of Quebec for the past three years. This crisis in the forestry sector has been going on for five years. Conservative members and ministers from Quebec said that the market was to blame for the forestry crisis in Quebec. The same was true of the auto sector. The North American automotive industry was ailing, primarily because it had not adjusted its products. Inevitably, the market for cars was affected as a result.

● (1310)

In a move calculated to win votes, the Conservative government decided to help the automotive sector and ignore the forestry sector. It is always disturbing to see Conservative members from Quebec make a show of saying that the forestry crisis will resolve itself and the market will recover. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party decided not to leave the market in the auto sector alone, but to help the industry. That is why the Bloc Québécois opposed the budget. All we wanted was for the government to invest as much money in the forestry sector as in the automotive sector—just over \$9 billion.

We saw the numbers in the government's famous recovery plan, the famous incentive measures the Conservatives brag about. While it invested more than \$9 billion in the automotive industry, money that was paid out in September, it earmarked only \$70 million for forestry, and only \$53 million of that money has been spent.

As members from Quebec, when we read these numbers, listened to the Conservatives' speeches and saw this inequity between the forestry and automotive sectors, we could not remain indifferent, especially since much of the forestry industry is in Quebec. The Liberals and the Conservatives could, but not the Bloc Québécois. We wanted to be comfortable when we met people on the streets of our cities, and we wanted to be able to tell them the truth to their faces. We have never been afraid to do so. That is why we stand up every day to defend their interests.

That said, because of the imbalance between the Conservative government's investments in the auto industry and the forestry industry, the Bloc Québécois was not in favour of the last budget.

But that does not mean that there were not some interesting measures in the last budget. As I was saying, one morning, the Liberal leader arose and decided, at the last caucus meeting of the summer, that he was strong enough to trigger a general election. When the Conservatives saw that there was a threat of an election, they decided to take some measures out of the budget, which they put into Bill C-51, the bill before us today.

I will speak about some of these measures. Bill C-51 implements the home renovation tax credit, a measure inspired by some of the proposals in the Bloc's two recovery plans. Once again, the opposition parties can call us any names they want, but they will never be able to accuse us of not doing our job. Our party was the only one to release a recovery plan before the last budget, even before the Conservatives released one. They had the brilliant idea of asking the parties to make suggestions. Since the Bloc Québécois is always the first party to proudly defend the interests of Quebec, we proposed measures for the recovery plan. One of them was the home renovation tax credit. It is not surprising that this measure is in Bill C-51 and that the Bloc Québécois is supporting it. Since we suggested it to the government and included it in both recovery plans submitted to the government, we are very interested in supporting this measure in Bill C-51.

Bill C-51 introduces a tax credit for the purchase of a first home, a measure that was part of our platform during the last election. I am not making that up; it is available on the Bloc Québécois' website. A similar measure was in place in Quebec for a time under the Parti Québécois. The government did not reinvent the wheel. It just borrowed a good initiative, followed a good example. Quebec has come up with a lot of good initiatives. It is always disappointing to see how often Parliament ignores good ideas that come from the Government of Quebec, from Quebecers, but we must not forget that there are six Canadian provinces and three territories. The territories are being given more and more powers even though they have fewer inhabitants than pre-amalgamation Montreal.

● (1315)

So there are six provinces and three territories with fewer than one million inhabitants. Our neighbours are nice people, and we like them a lot, but Quebec has made decisions based on its population and its economy to support, among other things, residential construction. Quebec society has the means to create programs to foster investment. At the time, the goal was to promote residential construction.

*Government Orders*

The Bloc included these measures in its platform, and now the Conservative Party is adopting them. I hope nobody forgets that the Bloc Québécois supports this measure. All too often, people come up with all kinds of excuses for ignoring Quebec. I want the members who make those excuses to listen up here. Conservative and Liberal members from Quebec all have excuses for ignoring Quebec's demands. Even so, Quebec has a very strong economy and has planned for the future with hydroelectricity and wind energy. Our society made this choice, and it will be a very profitable one if Canada decides to respect its international agreements.

If Canada had decided to comply with the Kyoto protocol, Quebec would already be collecting payments for its efforts. Many Quebec businesses have reduced their greenhouse gas emissions compared to what they were producing in 1992, in accordance with the Kyoto protocol.

Once again, Quebec has access to a little less than half of its resources. As we know, over 50% of the taxes paid by Quebecers goes to Ottawa, because the federal corporate income tax rate is higher than that of Quebec, among other reasons. If Quebec had full access to all the taxes it collects, imagine what an economic powerhouse it could become in the context of a new, global environmental industry.

We are in the new, global environmental economy and Canada will always be dead last. Canadians have decided to put all their eggs in one basket: logging. They will pay a high price for this decision in the years and decades to come. We will see this very soon in Copenhagen.

We must show some foresight. In the years to come, some countries will penalize factories or businesses that manufacture products from countries that do not comply with new international environmental agreements, as they should. The European countries have decided to pay the high cost of reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, which Canada has not done and the Conservative government is not about to do. This government is earning more and more "fossil of the day" awards and ranks dead last in environmental rankings.

That was the government's choice, but it is not Quebec's choice. Quebec recently reached out to New Brunswick for its hydroelectric development and is really turning to energy sources of the future, to the economy of the future. Those who chose to follow Quebec's lead will do well. The others will be kicking themselves one day and will lose a lot of money because they made poor choices regarding energy development.

We can try to hide from this and tell ourselves that it will not happen in our lifetime. That is what some of our Conservatives colleagues are saying. But things are moving fast.

That is not how I want this planet to be left to my children and my grandchildren. I became a grandfather a few weeks ago and I am going to work hard to leave my grandson a healthier planet than we have now, the one the Conservative government is currently polluting.

• (1320)

We have to take up this battle because Quebec is still in Canada. One day, when it can take flight and be its own country, Quebec will

be able to work with the new industries in Europe. It is up to Quebecers to decide, of course. A new opportunity will likely come up in the next few years.

This is all because Canada lacks vision and does not listen to Quebec enough. Again, this House would do well to listen more and more to the Bloc Québécois.

I was talking about Bill C-51, which uses the measure that was in our platform, namely a first-time homebuyer's tax credit. The bill also implements Canada's international commitments to the International Monetary Fund that were signed in 2008. Obviously, we agreed with Canada's commitment. The government knew we would be in favour of that measure in this bill.

This bill also amends the Canada pension plan, from which Quebec is excluded because it has its own pension plan. For those watching us, Quebec has its own pension plan, the Quebec pension plan or QPP, and it manages its own pension fund. The rest of Canada's provinces have their program. The provinces, in consultation with Canada, who are under this Canadian plan, which excludes Quebec, have adopted certain measures and the Conservative government wanted to include those in Bill C-51. We have a lot of respect for our neighbours. It was their choice and we will not vote against a measure that was chosen after consultation with the federal government. We are in favour of this measure.

The fifth and last measure implements the report of a panel of experts, which included representatives of Nova Scotia and the federal government, on the dispute between those two governments dating back to 1984. Naturally, we will support these measures. Nova Scotia and the federal government have decided, pursuant to long discussions held since 1984, to implement the report of a panel of experts. We will support this in the hope that when the day comes for Quebec to hold negotiations, the other parties in the House will do the same for Quebec. It is not difficult to understand. On the contrary, the Bloc Québécois position is easy to understand. When the Quebec National Assembly adopts a unanimous resolution or motion, we are proud to defend it in this House. What we always find surprising is to see members from Quebec rise and vote against measures proposed by the Quebec National Assembly.

*Government Orders*

I was the president of the Union des municipalités du Québec in the early 2000s before being elected to this House. Given that I have two minutes left, I can tell you a story. I had the opportunity to take a poll. The question was simple. I asked people which area of politics would they like to see their children enter: municipal, provincial or federal politics. Only 11% wanted their children to be federal members of parliament. That is the reality for Quebecers. The most important government for them is that of Quebec, followed by municipal government. The government of Canada is last. It is important for my colleagues to understand Quebec. The federal government, for Quebecers, is not the most important area. I can definitely understand, as I was saying at the beginning, that the six provinces and three territories with smaller populations than the former city of Montreal need the federal government. However, the people of Quebec do not. All they need is to keep more tax dollars than they send to Ottawa to create their own programs and their own plans and to make the society they desire the society of the future, focused on reducing greenhouse gases and protecting the environment and benefiting from all of Quebec's investments in hydroelectricity and wind energy.

• (1325)

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague. I do not have much to say in response, because I thought his speech was very well done and very sincere. The one question I do have for him concerns Quebec. Of course I would like my colleague to explain to the House the main differences in terms of the economic approach Quebec would take and could take if it were to have access to all the taxes paid by Quebecers.

• (1330)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I will give an example. This week, the Bloc Québécois leader and our environment critic held a press conference to say that our automobiles should go electric. This means that we would need to set up electric charging stations to plug cars in at service stations, in order to develop a vast network and a major industry focused on electric cars.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois called on the federal government to do its part for the simple reason that, for decades, it has been paying hundreds of millions of dollars to develop the oil and fossil fuel industry, among others. Quebec paid between 22% and 24% over the course of the development of Hibernia. Quebec paid its share to develop the oil sands through funds, tax credits and government assistance.

If Quebec had its own revenues and all of its own taxes, it could make investments and, for example, create a real network for the development of electric cars. If there is anywhere in the world that would be able to create a network of charging stations, it would certainly be Quebec, with its hydroelectric capacity. It could be a world leader in the development of electric cars.

This is a societal choice that needs to be made, a choice that is being discussed in Quebec, but not in the rest of Canada, where they are still working on developing fossil fuels. Investments are being made in automobiles with combustion engines, while Quebec would prefer investing in cars with electric motors.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend our colleague on his excellent speech.

On the front page of *Le Devoir* on Saturday there was an article about the Conservative Party's lack of respect for Parliament, here in the House of Commons. I would also like to remind hon. members that last week in this House, the majority of hon. members supported the Bloc Québécois bill to improve the employment insurance program.

In that context, should the House of Commons not grant royal recommendation to this bill and show that this House is functioning and respects certain democratic values and rules of ethic?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé for his question.

The newspaper articles are quite something. The Prime Minister is leaving. He probably will not be here today and for several days as he is leaving on a mission abroad. The media are reporting that he prefers to be outside rather than inside the House of Commons. That is obvious when he speaks in the House. Participating in the debates is not his cup of tea. That is a sign that governing with Parliament is not how the Conservatives want to do things. That is the political reality.

The weekend piece in *Le Devoir* was interesting. An increasing number of political columnists, those who follow politics, are beginning to notice that the Conservative Party will do anything to avoid any public debate. We had the saga of tough on crime bills that were presented outside the House. The Speaker even admonished them and told them to stop. The Conservatives are doing this more often and are copying the Republicans. They are trying to avoid any debate in the halls of democracy, and attempt to hold debates directly in the public arena because they can control the debate without being required to answer real questions.

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-51. The comments made by other members illustrate how out of touch and out of tune the government was with the new realities that it faced one year ago in October 2008.

As a matter of fact, up until that time I think the government felt that it was doing reasonably well because it was applying its right wing economic model to an economy that had been expanding for the better part of 10 years. As has been mentioned by Liberal speakers, the Conservatives were left a surplus by the previous Liberal government so they felt that by applying their Reaganomic principles to the economy it would increase the expansion of the economy. Therefore, they proceeded with tax cuts and all the typical measures that a right wing approach to government can take.

*Government Orders*

In fact, the Conservatives can point out statistically that the measures they have taken have actually helped the economy, and they gain adherence by that argument. However, the fact is that governments of all stripes, right wing, centrist and left wing governments, can do a very good job of governing when they have an expanding economy because, basically, it is dividing up a pie that is growing every year.

The problem comes when the good economy stops and we get into a recession. The government then needs to take measures at that point in time. I think it is the right wing type of government that is ill prepared for an economy when it starts turning bad. There were signs that the Prime Minister was completely out of touch with the realities of the economy. Other than that, he was simply trying to ignore what, in all likelihood, he knew was about to happen.

He went through the election. The election campaign showed him as a relaxed politician who wore sweaters. When he was asked in the middle of the campaign why the stock market was dropping, he said that it was a buying opportunity and that it was time for Canadians to get out there, buy stocks and buy Nortel when it was down to 25¢. That was his flippant response to the crisis that was surrounding him.

At about that time, we knew that economies, such as Iceland's economy, were on the verge of declaring bankruptcy but for some reason he managed to ignore the problem. The government then had to play catch-up to try to get back in the game.

I saw Preston Manning a few months ago and if he were still around I wonder what he would have to say about the current type of government. A strong right wing Conservative would be looking at a government that owns General Motors and is running a \$56 billion deficit. I am sure he would not approve.

If the government had achieved the majority that it was looking for, I think it would have tried to apply the right wing economic approach to the problem. Fortunately for the people of the country, that is not what happened. The Conservatives were short of their majority government and therefore had to come to terms with the reality that was in front of them, which was an economy that was faltering badly and their status as a minority government in the Parliament. The Conservatives proceeded to move as though they had a majority, acting very high and mighty I might add, to the point where they almost lost their government because of it.

● (1335)

What we have seen from the government since the beginning of the year has been a big improvement, a big improvement in its approach and in its attitude. It has a way to go yet but it is showing signs. As I have said before, if the government acts in the proper fashion to try to make a minority government work, it is conceivable that it could last the entire four years. I know that is highly unlikely but it could have a longer lifespan than it thinks.

The government is also aware that going into an election is a two-edged sword. However, we know it will try to prod the opposition into voting against it whenever it sees blips in the polls that show it could win the government.

The government recognizes that people do not want a \$300 million election expense. It is so lucky that it got out from under that problem the last time. We can all recall the great fanfare when it

brought in legislation that fixed the election date for October of this year. We were all waiting for this fixed election, planning our campaigns and nominations based on this date, and the government turned around and torpedoed its own legislation by calling an election that cost the taxpayers \$300 million. That is something the government must wear and will continue to wear. If the government does prod and poke at the opposition to force a premature election, I think it is aware that it works both ways here. The government may carry the can for calling or causing that election, causing a \$300 million expense that the public did not want or need, and it may lose some seats over that.

Regardless of how well the government thinks it is doing coming out of the Quebec byelections or other blips here and there, I really think a number of Conservatives over there are hunkering down for a longer period of time and are starting to develop a proper approach to making this Parliament work.

We have seen some signs here that the government has been moving in the right direction, which is why our party is supporting Bill C-51 and some of the measures in it. We have a spectacle here where we have the official opposition, the Liberal Party, being kind of caught. They must have slipped out of the barn door when it was open and then the door was shut and they could not get back in. Now they are trying to get back in here to be on the right side of voting on Bill C-51 to ensure the other parties are not sending out ten percenters and campaign brochures in the next months reminding people that it was the Liberal MPs who voted against a very popular home renovation tax credit plan.

I know there must be a lot of queasiness and uneasiness on the part of a number of Liberals over there because they know that, unlike some other political decisions and issues that we deal with in this country, the home renovation tax credit is very simple, and the Conservatives know this very well. This is not a complicated problem that the Liberals can say that they voted against it because there was something else in the bill that they did not like. There is room for interpretation and that is what they must deal with.

This is very black and white. Either the Liberals vote for this popular measure or they vote against it. I can see the Liberals being very unsure of themselves. A few days ago, one of the members of the Liberal Party was speaking to Bill C-51 and I do not remember if he even indicated which way he would vote on this particular bill. We will see when the time comes.

The bill does a number of things. One of the major things that it brings in is the home renovation tax credit. That particular program is certainly not a new program. It is a very cost effective program. Over the years we have seen governments of all stripes, provincially and, I believe, federally, bring in programs such as this.

*Government Orders*

● (1340)

Way back in the 1970s, the Manitoba government under the NDP had the critical home repair program. My minister was in charge of it and it was my job to ensure that people had applications. I remember having to fill out applications for people. I would get calls at the legislature from people who had been approved asking why the carpenters showed up late and things like that. That type of program was targeted toward keeping Manitoba's senior citizens in their houses a few years longer, keeping them from moving out of their houses and going into senior citizens buildings. It was very cost-effective and worked very well. The government approved the applications. The homeowners paid a portion. It was a cost-shared program.

That is just one example of a program that was very popular at the time. In fact, it helped in the re-election of the government in 1973. I am sure the Conservatives already know that, or if they do not, they are making notes of it. That home renovation program was extremely popular and extremely cost-effective and it did help us to win re-election.

This program is a bit different. I have heard different criticisms about the program, as far as there being a refundable tax credit option and the fact that it is not user friendly for people with lower incomes.

We know the government is going to re-announce this program. That is an obvious fact. It has been a popular program. We do not know how much it is going to cost the government in taxes at this point, because the government does not know how many people have actually used it and it will not know until people file their income taxes next year. That will be past the date of the budget of next year. Regardless of what it costs, it is going to be too enticing for the government not to announce an extension, especially when there may be an election shortly thereafter or certainly within the period of time that the extended home renovation tax credit program for next year would cover.

There is one interesting point which members should note. With the collusion of the federal Conservative government and the provincial Liberal governments in British Columbia and Ontario on the HST, what we are going to see in those provinces effective July 1, exactly when the government's extension of this home renovation tax credit program will be in full swing for next summer, is that the tax benefits homeowners would be getting will be taken away. Currently home renovations are not covered under the tax. When the taxes are combined, we are going to see a broadening of the tax base which is going to include dozens of new items. Some of the items which are going to be included are the very home renovation projects, such as painting, stucco and roofing. Currently they are subject to only one tax but next year they would be subject to the blended tax. What the government is giving people with one hand will be taken away with the other hand. Personally, I do not see that as being smart economics. It sure is not smart politics if an election is called around that time.

If the government is going to re-announce the program, I would suggest that it take the advice of one or two of our members that it retool the program so that people with low incomes can take advantage of the program. I would suggest that the government look

at extending it. By that time, the government may have some idea of what this will cost in terms of loss of tax revenue.

● (1345)

I would say this is not a real big loss in tax revenue. There are spinoff benefits. This is one program that will show enormous amounts of spinoff. That is what the government needs and wants in this program.

As a matter of fact, I notice that the Bloc members are on side with this program. They claim that they had it in their election platform last year. It is the Liberals who have found themselves on the outside looking in wondering how this all happened. The vote has not yet happened but we will see if they vote against the bill.

In the remaining time I want to deal with some of the other important issues that are dealt with in the bill.

The bill introduces the first time homebuyers tax credit. This is something the real estate associations have lobbied for and very strongly support across the country. We want to facilitate making it as easy as possible for first time homebuyers to buy that first home. Particularly at a time when the economy is in big difficulties, this is something that is very important.

In addition, there is tax relief through the working income tax benefit.

Part 1 extends the existing tax deferral available to farmers in prescribed drought regions to farmers who dispose of breeding livestock because of flood or excessive moisture. It sets out the regions prescribed either as eligible flood or drought regions in 2007 to 2009.

This is certainly one provision of the bill that has not received a lot of comment in speeches. Most members have focused on that important issue of the home renovation tax credit. They have not dealt to a great extent with some of the other provisions of the bill.

In addition, part 2 authorizes payments to be made to the consolidated revenue fund for multilateral debt relief in relation to offshore petroleum revenues. It allows for \$200 million per year to be paid to the multilateral debt relief fund for a total of up to \$2.5 billion from 2009 to 2054.

I am not going to be able to finish all of the points dealing with Bill C-51 but I want to make the point that \$174.5 million is being allocated to Nova Scotia as negotiated with the provincial government. This is a good idea and something that should be done.

Finally, there are also amendments to the Bretton Woods and related agreements. They are being amended to implement amendments proposed by the board of governors of the International Monetary Fund.

As well, the Broadcasting Act is being amended to increase the borrowing limit of the CBC. There was a rocky period of time at the CBC with budget cuts over the years and with threats of closure. The CBC is vital, not as vital perhaps in the urban areas, the big cities of Canada, but it is extremely vital in the rural areas of Canada and particularly in the far north where it might be the only station that some people can receive in some places.

*Statements by Members*

• (1350)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Bill C-51, which I will be supporting, has some very good things in it.

There is the home renovation tax credit, the first time homebuyers tax credit and the income deferral for drought conditions for farmers.

I was elected by the people of Nickel Belt to represent them in the House of Commons and to advance their causes. Perhaps the hon. member could explain to me why the Liberals are not supporting the bill. They were sent here for the same reason that I was, to represent their constituents and to make Parliament work. Why would the Liberals vote against this bill? It seems to be a good bill to me.

• (1355)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, that is a mystery to all of us in the House and it may be a mystery to some members of the Liberal Party.

As I indicated, I listened to my good friend from Mississauga South the other day when he spoke to this very bill. I do not recall him at any point indicating that he was going to be voting for the bill or against the bill. I expected there would be a nugget somewhere and that he would let us know, but he kept us in a state of mystery for his entire 20-minute speech and the 10 minutes of questions and comments. If somebody could get the answer for me, I would sure like to know what it is. Other Liberal members have indicated they will be voting against the bill. There is still a long time between now and the vote on the bill, so there is some potential for them to change their minds.

Just think of all those ten percenters. My riding has already started to sink under the weight of the ten percenters sent out on the gun registry alone. I supported the bill, but I was going to support it anyway. They did not have to send out any ten percenters. They did not have to advertise on radio stations. I am glad they did as it has made me very popular with the duck hunters in my area.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was particularly interested in my colleague's comments with regard to the CBC.

This evening people from ACTRA will be in Ottawa. A number of us will be meeting some very significant and talented people, many of whom have worked on CBC productions. The programs the CBC produces both on television and radio are our voice. The CBC is the voice of Canada. It tells our stories. The CBC is essential to our culture and to the continuance of that culture.

I would like my colleague to comment on the importance of the extension of the financing for CBC and how it will impact all of our communities.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. The member knows the hacking and slashing of the CBC did not start with the Conservatives. That was well under way a number of years before that under the Liberals.

There has been a battle within the country for a large number of years where the private sector feels it is coming of age and wants to be given all the cream and gravy associated with the advertising revenues available in this country. By the same token, it does not want to have to provide any service to areas where there is not a

large listening audience. It expects the taxpayers of the country, through the CBC, to provide programming to sparsely populated areas where there is really not a lot of advertising revenue. Yet it would like to have almost exclusive rights to the heavily populated markets that have huge amounts of advertising revenue. That is basically the way businesses operate. They want to take the cream but they do not want the responsibilities for the poorly serviced areas in the case of the television business.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Elmwood—Transcona talked at length about the home renovation tax credit.

In my own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan there are many challenges facing people who cannot afford to buy their own homes. Many often live in substandard rental accommodation. There is no way for those in rental accommodations to get the benefit of the home renovation tax credit that could make their accommodations more energy efficient. I wonder if the member could talk about that gap in this program.

• (1400)

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very important question. I indicated in my speech that while the home renovation tax credit is a very good program, it is a copy of other programs that have operated very successfully over the years under governments of different stripes.

When the government retools the program and re-announces it, it should be looking at the different aspects. The government should be asking the opposition for input to improve the program for next year to get even more bang for the buck.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### CANADIAN JUNIOR FOOTBALL LEAGUE

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, the Canadian Junior Football League championship game was hosted in Nanaimo by the Vancouver Island Raiders. The Raiders joined the CJFL just five years ago. They captured the championship in 2006 and 2008 and this year went to the championship game against the Edmonton Wildcats, undefeated.

After a season of 10 wins and no losses, the Raiders defeated the Okanagan Sun and the Surrey Rams to win the right to defend the championship game against the Edmonton Wildcats.

Sunday, before a sell-out crowd, the Raiders set new records, defeating Edmonton 51-14 to win their third national championship.

Nanaimo and Vancouver Islanders are so proud of our team. President Hadi Abassi is the man with a vision, the patron saint of the V.I. Raiders. Hadi, along with head coach Matt Blokker, have assembled a team that has proven to be second to none.

On behalf of all citizens of Nanaimo—Alberni, I salute President Abassi, coach “Snoop”, the young men who suit up as V.I. Raiders and all the support team.



I am sure all members would like to join me in saying to the three time Canadian champions, the Vancouver Island Raiders, congratulations and well done.

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### HEROISM

**Mrs. Michelle Simson (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise today to pay tribute to John Dietsch, an 84-year-old veteran who valiantly served our country during the second world war in the Royal Canadian Navy and who once again demonstrated his bravery.

On November 12, four men, including Mr. Dietsch, were at a Royal Canadian Legion in my riding of Scarborough Southwest counting Remembrance Day poppy sale receipts. They were interrupted by an armed gunman demanding the money, money destined for widows and community service projects.

Mr. Dietsch and his legion associates refused to hand over the money. Mr. Dietsch, without thought for his personal safety, lunged at and struggled with the gunman. His friend, Earl Gray, wrestled the robber to the ground, chasing him away empty-handed.

I am certain all members of the House join me in honouring John Dietsch and Earl Gray for their bravery and share my relief and gratitude that both men emerged safely from this incident.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, global warming is a global concern. It should therefore come as no surprise that many alternative energy research projects are under way in Quebec to find solutions that will help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

I would like to highlight the work of Karim Zaghib, a lead researcher at the Institut de recherche d'Hydro-Québec in Varennes, and his team, who have developed a prototype rapid-recharge battery. Preliminary results are promising: apparently their two kilowatt hour lithium-ion battery can be drained and recharged 20,000 times in six minutes. This technological breakthrough nurtures hope for performance gains in electric cars and brings these vehicles one step closer to commercial viability. We will all be able to shrink our ecological footprint sustainably and help slow climate change.

I congratulate, Mr. Zaghib. The Bloc Québécois is proud of Quebec's engineering prowess.

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### IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE ASSISTANCE

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for over 20 years, Sister Andrée Ménard has been directing PROMIS, an organization in Côte-des-Neiges that provides assistance to immigrants and refugees.

Helping newcomers integrate into the new society as harmoniously as possible is PROMIS's main objective. The entire team, the members of the board of directors, employees and volunteers give

### Statements by Members

their all in order to achieve this important mission. They work together every day to build a society in which everyone has a place and feels comfortable. This might seem utopian, but they really believe in and achieve this goal.

Front-line services, French classes, educational support, family support, employment services, regionalization, information sessions and cultural activities are some of the services received by 6,623 people last year.

It is imperative that the government programs that fund this direct assistance to the public be maintained. Bravo Sister Ménard and bravo to the entire team.

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● (1405)

[English]

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the proud member of Parliament for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, it was an honour to announce several stimulus projects across my riding this year. The projects included water and sewer, new roads, recreational facilities and new municipal buildings.

We all know these types of projects will accomplish many things in my riding. They have addressed six municipal council's priorities and increased the quality of life in all six communities. However, most important, these projects create jobs across the riding, which is a help to many people during this global economic recession.

For instance, I was visiting one of the projects just last week. This project has extended the work period for many workers and has fixed a road that has been a problem for many decades.

Canada's economic action plan is delivering results not only for my riding, but right across the country. I am proud to have supported this plan and to have delivered results for my community in these tough economic times.

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### FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am calling on the government to deal with the credit card crisis facing Canadians.

During the past year, Canada's financial institutions, together with Visa and MasterCard, have significantly raised the interchange fees charged to all Canadian businesses. These fees, which are now the second highest in the developed world, are passed on to Canadian consumers, leading to higher costs for everything.

The credit card industry has burdened all Canadians with high interest rates, hidden fees, charges and double charges, with no transparency as to how these fees and charges are imposed or calculated.

*Statements by Members*

To add to the misery that all Canadians are experiencing around this issue, Visa and MasterCard are now entering the Canadian debit card business. The charge per transaction is expected to increase five-fold and, again, this will be an additional burden on Canadian consumers.

What we have in the Canadian credit card industry right now is one big unregulated jungle, and the big losers are Canadians. The issue cries out for government oversight and I urge the minister to take action now.

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**FILLMORE-CREELMAN LEGION**

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the Fillmore-Creelman Legion that includes Osage, Tyvan and area.

I attended a memorial hall Remembrance Day service in the small town of Creelman, population about 100. When the war list was read, we heard enlisted in the first world war were 77, 23 dead. Enlisted in the second world war were 171, 17 dead.

These types of numbers were common to all communities in Souris—Moose Mountain. This had to affect everyone in the community, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, neighbours and friends. No one was left untouched.

The most touching part of the service came when everyone wearing a poppy walked to the front and planted their poppy in a step of personal remembrance, the veterans, dignitaries, the choir, the young, the old and the man on crutches. Everyone was personally counted in.

It is not those sitting in ivory towers that most preserve the way of life we hold dear today, but the soldiers who gave of themselves that we might live the life to which we are accustomed.

Congratulations to Creelman, Fillmore and area for a special service. Well done.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**LUNICK FARM IN SAINT-EUGÈNE-DE-GUIGUES**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the 2009 awards ceremony held by the Ordre national du mérite agricole du Québec, a farm in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Ferme Lunick in Saint-Eugène-de-Guigues, won the gold medal at the national level.

The Ordre national du mérite agricole recognizes the expertise and the work of agricultural professionals. Candidates for awards are evaluated on their agro-environmental management, production management and human resources and financial management, as well as on the enterprise's social influence.

Nicole Maheux and Jean-Luc Baril, who own and manage Ferme Lunick, specialize in producing potatoes and milk. The judges singled out their research and development activities for special mention.

My colleagues and I want to congratulate Ms. Maheux and Mr. Baril of Ferme Lunick on this well-deserved honour.

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[*English*]

**TRADE**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is a trading nation. Our prosperity depends on our ability to sell our goods to other countries. That is why our government is pursuing an aggressive agenda to expand trade, open doors for our exporters, encourage economic growth and create jobs for Canadians.

In four short years our Conservative government has signed new free trade agreements with Colombia, Peru, Jordan, Panama, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. We have also launched historic trade negotiations with two of the world's largest markets, the European Union and India. We are working on new deals with countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East.

Our record, compared with the Liberals, could not be clearer. In 13 years the Liberals signed only three free trade agreements and caused long-term damage to our relationship with India.

In these difficult economic times, Canadians can count on our government to oppose protectionism and defend free and open trade on the world stage.

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● (1410)

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for months the Conservatives have been waving oversized cheques at infrastructure announcements with their party's logo on them; apologies followed.

At these same announcements, some members even signed those oversized cheques, giving the impression that the cheque was a personal one from the member; apologies followed.

Recently, we have seen another outrageous example of Conservative partisanship. Students were offered water bottles from a parliamentary office. The problem was the water bottles had the Conservative Party logo on them and no apologies were offered.

Kudos to Manitoba's Louis Riel school division for refusing to accept these water bottles. It goes against its policy to accept politically partisan propaganda, and rightly so.

As parliamentarians, we all know that students of all ages should be commended for their achievements. An accomplishment on bilingualism is one to be proud of and congratulated, not used as a political opportunity.

These congratulations ring hollow in the face of a political statement from a member of the House when he said, "Canada is not a bilingual country. Bilingualism is the god that failed". Who said that? The Prime Minister.

[Translation]

**NEW MEMBER FOR MONTMAGNY—L'ISLET—  
KAMOURASKA—RIVIÈRE-DU-LOUP**

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after five municipal, provincial and federal elections in less than two years, and 16 long years of the Bloc regime, the people of Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup have done the right thing and elected a new Conservative MP from Quebec.

Mayor of La Pocatière, successful entrepreneur, promoter of the Centre Bombardier with an exceptional partnership that is the envy of Quebec, Bernard Généreux and his team can now put some in the goal for Quebec.

This election proves that the Bloc Québécois no longer has a monopoly on Quebec values and that Quebecers increasingly identify with the Conservative team in Quebec.

As Yvon Deschamps said, yes to a strong Quebec in a united Canada. Congratulations to Bernard Généreux and his team. Yes to the economic action plan. No to white collar criminals. Yes to sustainable development. Yes to action and no to an election.

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[English]

**LOUIS RIEL**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I call upon Parliament to set the history books straight and reverse the conviction of Louis Riel for high treason and instead recognize his role as the founder of the province of Manitoba, a Father of Confederation and the champion of the rights of the Métis people.

Louis Riel was elected president of the territory that he named Manitoba and negotiated its entry into Confederation as Canada's fifth province on July 15, 1870. He was elected to the House of Commons three times. He was wrongfully tried, convicted and executed for high treason on this day in 1885, a case of justice and mercy denied.

It is consistent with history, justice and respect for the rights of the Métis people that the conviction of Louis Riel be reversed and that his historic role in the building of Canada be formally recognized, commemorated and celebrated, I suggest, by the placement of a statue of Louis Riel on the grounds of Parliament Hill.

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**INDIA**

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, before the Liberal leader decided to return to Canada to be crowned, the Liberal government pursued an ideological policy of isolation toward India, slapping it with sanctions and marginalizing Canada's influence with India well into this decade.

Our government has been working to repair this long-term damage to our relationship. That is why the Prime Minister is in India this week, rebuilding relationships and deepening our economic ties with an emerging economic power.

*Statements by Members*

I am happy to point out that under our government, Canada-India relations are at an all-time high. Canada's exports to India have more than doubled since our government was elected, and exports are still on the rise. We recently expanded our trade network in India to eight offices, making it one of Canada's largest networks worldwide.

When it comes to free and open trade with important allies like India, it is this government that is getting the job done.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

[Translation]

**SOLDIERS FROM VALCARTIER**

**Mr. Pascal-Pierre Paillé (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, 115 soldiers from the Valcartier base returned home to their loved ones on Saturday evening from a mission to Afghanistan. These soldiers, assigned to the Aviation Battalion, were responsible for transporting soldiers close to combat locations. They participated in 33 missions and their expertise provided support for the work of all coalition soldiers present in Afghanistan.

The community of Valcartier was particularly hard hit this year with the loss of 13 soldiers in Afghanistan, bringing the total to 23.

These men and women will have to return to their regular lives after a long and trying mission. It is important that they are not left to their own devices and that they are given all the resources needed to resume a normal life, away from war zones.

The Bloc Québécois would like to salute the courage and commitment of these soldiers. We wish them all the best as they return to their families.

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**LOUIS RIEL**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 124 years ago today, Canada lost one of its most famous citizens. We lost a man who will forever be a symbol of the difficulties our country faced in its early days.

[English]

Whether remembered as a defender of the Métis people, the founder of Manitoba, or a Father of Confederation, the lore of Louis Riel is central to Canada's past.

Louis Riel's fight in the 1800s to protect Métis rights and culture made him a strong voice for the Métis people during a turbulent time in Canadian history. In fact, the strength of the Métis today can be traced back to Louis Riel's efforts, which made the Métis nation an ongoing, vibrant part of our national identity.

[Translation]

Louis Riel's struggle will forever be ingrained in our collective psyche. His memory is now part of our country's great history. Today, on the anniversary of his death, we celebrate the life of Louis Riel, as well as the culture, languages and heritage of the Canadian Métis people.

*Oral Questions**[English]***BYELECTIONS**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one week ago, four new members were elected to the House of Commons. The results were clear. Canadians believe that our government is on the right track and Canadians can count on our Conservative government to continue to work hard for their families and their communities.

Congratulations to Bernard Généreux, who won in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, and to Scott Armstrong in Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, who will be joining our Conservative government as we continue to implement Canada's economic action plan.

Our government is focused on the economic recovery. We have been working closely with the provinces and the territories to face the threat of H1N1 head-on. We are working hard to pass our tough on crime legislation. The results make clear that Canadians want a government that has their interests at heart and a government that understands the challenges that Canadians are facing.

Again, congratulations to Scott and Bernard. Their hard work has been recognized. Welcome to the House.

**ORAL QUESTIONS***[English]***HEALTH**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the last time the House sat, the Minister of Health claimed that every Canadian who wanted the H1N1 vaccine would receive it before Christmas. Now, she is saying that the rollout will take up to 12 more weeks and run well into next February.

Why did the minister mislead the House and why did she not tell Canadians the truth?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have said all along that we would try and complete the vaccination program by December. In fact, we were early in the rollout of our campaign across the country.

I want to acknowledge all the hard work of the people on the front line who are doing a fantastic job in getting the immunizations out to Canadians. By the end of this week, we will have over 10.4 million vaccines in the provinces and territories.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in order to stop the pandemic in its tracks, health experts tell us that 60% to 70% of Canadians need to be immunized. The sooner we reach this goal, the more unnecessary deaths and illnesses will be prevented.

Will the government abide by the will of Parliament and finally give the provinces, territories and local public health units the money and resources they need to quickly and effectively administer the vaccine?

•(1420)

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this year, in the 2009-10 budget, we transferred \$24 billion to the

provinces and territories under the Canada Health Act. That is the highest amount ever transferred to the provinces.

In addition to that, we invested \$1 billion to develop a pandemic plan. In addition to that, we also purchased 50.4 million vaccines for every single Canadian who wants it and needs it.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, public health units are being forced to spend their very scarce resources on translating and re-translating messages for ethnic communities without a penny of assistance from the federal government.

Will the government commit the money and resources for accurate translation to ensure that all Canadians are receiving accurate public health information on H1N1?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the health authorities in the provinces and territories who are doing a very good job in delivering the program. If the member were to do her research, she would see on the local websites that there are over 20 languages in Ontario alone.

In most jurisdictions, based on their populations, they have translated the materials to the populations they serve. In my territory, they are in Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut, English and French. In the Northwest Territories, they are in another language. In Ontario, there are about 19. If she did her research, she would see that the provinces and territories are doing a great job in getting the message out.

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is revising her vaccination schedule yet again. First, she said that Canadians would be vaccinated at the beginning of November, then in December, then by Christmas. Now she is saying that the vaccination will be delayed by three months, which takes us to mid-February 2010.

Can the minister explain to Canadians that this government's incompetence and mismanagement is causing these unacceptable delays?

*[English]*

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the provinces, territories and the federal government have been working together to plan the rollout. We were early with the rollout of the vaccine. We got the vaccines to the provinces by October 26 instead of the second week of November.

We will continue to rollout the vaccines. In fact, by the end of this week, some jurisdictions will have completed their vaccine rollout.

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, early rollout? It was seven weeks behind China. I do not think so.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

Canadians are getting increasingly worried that they will not be vaccinated before the H1N1 virus hits its peak. Mid-February 2010 is too late. At least 41 people died last week, which brings the total number of deaths in Canada to 190.

Can this government explain to Canadians why the vaccines will not be delivered before the virus hits its peak?

[English]

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, I will say this in the House, the medical experts stated that it was very important to complete the vaccination program of the regular flu vaccine. As soon as that was completed back in July, we started to produce the H1N1 vaccine and have rolled that out as well.

As the member should know, many Canadians die of the regular flu every year. Medical experts stated that it was very important to complete the regular flu vaccine program, so that Canadians have that vaccine available in addition to the H1N1 vaccination.

We are well ahead of schedule than other countries.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while countries like France and Brazil are working to reach a concrete agreement at the Copenhagen summit, Canada is taking a blatantly counterproductive attitude on the international stage. The Prime Minister even took advantage of his presence at the APEC summit to immediately rule out the possibility of an agreement on greenhouse gas emissions in Copenhagen.

Will the government admit that it is trying to destroy any chance of reaching an agreement in Copenhagen just to please its friends, the oil companies?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is not true.

One thing is certain: Canada wants to take part in the discussions at the international level. The Prime Minister was clear: building consensus requires that the major emitters be involved. Another thing is certain: the worst trap is to get tangled up in legal wrangling. That is what the Prime Minister said.

We are going to deliver the goods, but realistically and in balance with our priority, which is the economy.

• (1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has stated clearly that he is open to discussions about climate change, but that oil sands development must not suffer. Since the oil sands are largely responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, this amounts to saying that the minister could not care less about climate change.

Will this government admit that its priority is to sabotage the Copenhagen summit at all costs so that Canada can keep on polluting with impunity?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is possible to balance economic priorities with the environment, contrary to what we are hearing. I can say that Canada has adopted bold targets. We will pursue our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 2006 levels by 2020 and by 60% to 70% by 2050.

That is action, it is tangible and, most importantly, it is achievable. We will not do what the previous government did, which was to sign an agreement like the Kyoto protocol without being able to comply with it.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the environment, this government is making an increasing number of bad decisions, such as supporting oil sands development and subsidizing the traditional auto industry to the tune of billions of dollars. Yet, the economy of the future will not be based on oil, but on alternative energies and technologies such as the electric car, which is an option proposed by both the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois.

What is the government waiting to show some foresight and propose concrete measures such as support for research on rechargeable batteries and the deployment of charging stations?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to inform the House exactly what this government has been doing on those matters.

Not only have we put aside approximately \$10 billion in the past three years with respect to renewable forms of electricity and fuels but most recently, we conducted four national round tables just on those issues of what does the next generation look like.

We are talking to industry. We are talking to academia. We are hearing what they have to say. That is how we are moving forward.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is this government which ended subsidies to the eco-auto program. Instead of subsidizing oil companies, the government must provide incentives to convince consumers to buy rechargeable electric vehicles or plug-in hybrids.

Why does the government refuse to take such measures?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in fact, it is through the natural resources department that we have actually set out a road map on how to get to the electric car. There is a lot of research being done in the area. We have been supportive of it.

As I indicated, the province of Quebec has received an enormous amount of support on renewable energy and on research and development through SDTC, and through our other forums with respect to biofuels.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are doing a good hatchet job of undermining the Copenhagen conference on climate change, before it has even begun. Five months ago, the minister promised he would table his plan before the UN conference, but that was a lie. Instead, he set up a team of communications officers and spin doctors to deal with the fact that his government does not have a plan. Worse still, in today's newspapers, the minister is announcing, for all intents and purposes, the failure of the Copenhagen conference.

Is this the legacy that the government has decided to leave to future generations?

[English]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the minister has said repeatedly in this House that the Government of Canada supports an international binding treaty that will balance environmental protection with economic prosperity, that it will maintain a long-term focus, that it will focus on the development and deployment of clean technologies, and that it will engage all of the major emitters. Why would the NDP not support that?

[Translation]

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives provide answers that are not supported by facts.

They were just awarded a series of booby prizes at the international level for their mediocre performance regarding the environment. This is what happens when one chooses oil sands over sustainable development. The Conservatives made Canada the most obstructionist country at the preliminary talks in Barcelona, and now at APEC.

How could Canadians believe that things will be any different in Copenhagen?

• (1430)

[English]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, the fact is the government has made it very clear that Canada wants an international binding treaty that includes all the major emitters. One hundred and ninety-two countries are going to be at that table. This government will ensure that any treaty will include Canada's economic, geographic and industrial realities. We will not sign a deal that is bad for Canada.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are not doing their homework on the international scene, and they are not getting the job done here on the home front.

More than 90% of the infrastructure projects will go ahead without a federal assessment of their environmental impact. Speeding up the stimulus projects is one thing, but doing so by disregarding any environmental impact is completely irresponsible and illegal.

The exemptions for federal assessments were not approved by Parliament. They are being challenged in court, which could end up slowing each and every project further if due process is not followed.

Why do they not follow the law, respect future generations, and evaluate the environmental impact of all of these infrastructure projects?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** In fact, Mr. Speaker, together with our partners at all levels, our government is taking unprecedented action to eliminate duplication and streamline the environmental assessment process. As one former NDP premier said, "one project, one approval". We think that is sufficient and it works.

\* \* \*

**POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING**

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first the leader of the ADQ publicly and formally disassociated his party from the Conservatives and its chief fundraiser in Quebec, Senator Leo Housakos. At that time, Mr. Housakos' municipal fundraising practices and his friendships were being aired in public. Then the leader of the ADQ revealed he had discovered troubling information regarding fundraising practices at the ADQ.

Were any of these issues raised in the inquiry conducted before naming Mr. Housakos in the other place?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member has any specific allegations, he should make them to the authorities, or better yet, he should have the courage to say them outside of the House of Commons.

Senator Housakos has proactively asked the Senate ethics commissioner to examine this matter. But let me be clear, it was this government that acted to put an end to the influence of big money on political parties. We banned contributions from corporations and unions. We limited individual donations to \$1,000, and we banned private or secret gifts. That is real action for accountability.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are avoiding the question. Yet, it is a very simple question.

What was taken into consideration during the inquiry on Mr. Housakos' background, before his appointment to the other place? Was the expertise of the RCMP and of the Sûreté du Québec used during this inquiry on Mr. Housakos? If this inquiry did not reveal anything wrong, then the Conservatives will surely agree to table the report in this House.

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to make allegations, he should make them to the authorities, or repeat them outside the House. Senator Housakos wasted no time in seeking the opinion of the conflict of interest and ethics commissioner regarding this issue.

*Oral Questions*

Let me be clear: this government has acted to put an end to the influence of big money on federal political parties. We banned contributions from corporations, unions and organizations, and we limited individual donations to \$1,000.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TORONTO PORT AUTHORITY**

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today's media says the government is musing about tinkering with the rules for crown corporations and other agencies, but it refuses to investigate alleged wrongdoings.

The Toronto Port Authority is so out of control that even the board of directors is calling for the Auditor General to clean up the mess. However, the government says it is beyond her mandate.

Will the government get out of the way and authorize the Auditor General to do the job that the government refuses to do?

• (1435)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Toronto Port Authority is an arm's-length organization. The authority has said many times that all expense and hospitality policies were followed.

The board has since stated that the management and staff clearly followed all of these policies.

The chairman of the audit committee stated that there was nothing unusual about these expenses for an organization of this size.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the governance of the port authority has been called into question for many reasons: fiscal mismanagement on hospitality and other expenses, altering board minutes to cover up political interference and gross mismanagement, a feuding and dysfunctional board, unauthorized use of government offices for Conservative political fundraising, and violations of the Privacy Act.

The chairman of the board of directors is pleading for the Auditor General to be brought in to do the job.

When will this shameful cover-up stop?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Toronto Port Authority is an arm's-length organization. The authority has said many times that expense and hospitality policies were in fact followed.

The board has since stated that the management and the staff have clearly followed all of these policies.

The chairman of the audit committee stated that there was nothing unusual about these expenses for a business of this size.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last week, a solidarity march was held in response to the TCE-tainted-water

tragedy in Shannon. I also attended a memorial ceremony for the victims. The people of Shannon are angry with National Defence because it did not lift a finger to prevent them from drinking contaminated water even though it knew the risks.

When will the Minister of National Defence heed their distress call and acknowledge his responsibility for the contaminated soil instead of delaying their class action suit?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are concerned about this issue too. The Valcartier military base supplied drinking water to members of the Canadian Forces and their families as well as to the people of Shannon.

Over the past few years, we have invested over \$40 million in projects to improve and maintain the base's drinking water supply systems and to help the Municipality of Shannon improve its drinking water system.

In addition, the government has announced that it will invest \$30—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Québec.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Shannon are victims of negligence on the part of the federal government. Their cry for help is compelling. They want the federal government to acknowledge its responsibilities. They want the government to do everything in its power to disclose all relevant information about the extent of the contamination problem in Shannon.

Is the federal government ready to support my bill to identify, trace and inform all individuals who might have been contaminated, just as the United States did in connection with Camp Lejeune?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is working hard on this issue. The department is working with all stakeholders, including the Municipality of Shannon, the City of Quebec, the Province of Quebec, Health Canada, Environment Canada and the people of Shannon.

We are prepared to continue working with everyone to find an acceptable solution.

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**POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the troubling revelations about the funding of Vision Montréal, the Conservative Party distanced itself from Giulio Maturi, one of Senator Housakos' cronies. Another friend of Leo Housakos, Dimitri Soudas, was recently relieved of his responsibilities for Quebec.

By distancing himself from Maturi and asking Dimitri Soudas to stay away from issues involving Quebec, is the Prime Minister not acknowledging that some light needs to be shed on the schemes led by the Maturi-Soudas-Housakos trio?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and encourage him to submit any information or allegations to the appropriate authorities.

Senator Housakos immediately asked the Ethics Commissioner for advice on this matter. However, let me be clear. It was our government that took action to put an end to the influence of big spenders on federal political parties. We banned contributions from unions, corporations and organizations. Our government took action to ensure greater accountability.

• (1440)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary can pretend to be a puritan, but the noose is tightening around Senator Housakos. I would remind the House that in addition to being involved in awarding a major contract to the Bridge Corporation at a Conservative Party cocktail fundraiser, he is also involved in questionable financing in Rivière-des-Mille-Îles and of Vision Montréal, where he was recommended by none other than Tony Accurso.

Will the Prime Minister finally resolve to shed some light on the schemes of Senator and bagman Leo Housakos?

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has any allegations to make, he should submit them directly to the appropriate authorities or express them outside this House.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us review the Reform-Conservative record on climate change.

After four years and three ministers there is no plan, no analysis, no price on carbon, no cap and trade system, no regulations, support for renewable power that was first frozen and then abandoned, no absolute reduction targets, rising rates of emissions, and provinces and businesses being forced to go it alone.

While the rest of the world is retooling their economies to compete in the global clean energy race, why is Canada not even at the starting line?

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member well knows that the government's plan is clear. We now have in effect a North American target of 20% reduction by 2020. We are also making progress on tailpipe emissions standards, aviation standards, carbon capture and storage, and a North American integrated approach on cap and trade.

By contrast, members of the opposition would move us away from a North American strategy. They have a long 13-year record of not getting it done. That will not happen under this government.

[Translation]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, countries around the world are reorganizing their economies in order to be competitive in the global race to develop clean energy. In that regard, Germany has already created 250,000 jobs. The United States is investing six times more than Canada and China is investing \$250 billion in the development of advanced energy technologies. Even Alaska and Sarah Palin are beating us.

Why is this government jeopardizing our economy and our environment, and when will it finally wake up?

[English]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member and other opposition members would have us abandon the target of 20% reduction by 2020. They would have us terminate our agreements with the Obama administration.

The person who nailed the Liberal position on climate change was the leader of the Liberal Party who said "I think our party has got into a mess on the environment... We didn't get it done". He was absolutely right. That party did not get it done. We are getting it done.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, who refuses to recognize the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court over the issue of the repatriation of Omar Khadr.

Can he assure us that the government will abide by the decision of the Supreme Court?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite and members in the House have heard many times that the government's position is very clear. Mr. Omar Khadr faces very serious charges. These charges arise from activities in Afghanistan: allegations of murder, attempted murder, conspiracy, material support for terrorism, and spying.

With respect to the decision to ask for Mr. Khadr's return and the formal obligations of so doing, we have always maintained, and continue to maintain before the courts that this jurisdiction is found in the duly elected Government of Canada and not in the courts.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the same parliamentary secretary said that they would let military justice take its course in the United States.

In light of that comment, does the minister not realize that what that means is that Mr. Khadr's status as a child soldier has been repudiated by the military tribunal, as well as the standard of evidence required, and that the standard of fairness for the accused is much lower in a military tribunal than it would be in a regular court?

Why would the minister not accept Canadian justice instead of military justice in the United States?



*Oral Questions*

•(1445)

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has international experience and he would know that we would, of course, acknowledge President Obama's administration's decision to prosecute Omar Khadr through the U.S. military commission system.

Clearly, we do believe, in the U.S. legal process announced today, that it should run its course. Due process should take place. Our position remains, incidentally, unchanged from the positions of two previous Liberal prime ministers, I would add.

Having just returned from a theatre of operation, I can assure the hon. member that there is concern about an individual who was involved in making bombs and IEDs in Afghanistan where Canadians continue to serve marvellously today.

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**CROWN CORPORATIONS**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as Canada continues to cope with the effects of the global economic recession, it remains essential for the federal government and for federal agencies to spend tax dollars wisely.

Today, the President of the Treasury Board took further actions to protect taxpayer dollars that have been invested in crown corporations.

Would the President of the Treasury Board update the House on the new measures that have been taken to help ensure that federal agencies spend taxpayer dollars in a responsible fashion?

**Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I reminded crown corporations and other public organizations that they should not hire lobbyists to communicate with the government.

Agencies within the federal sector need to examine all their spending to ensure taxpayers receive value for their money. The use of consultant lobbyists for communicating and lobbying the federal government is an unnecessary use of public funds. These interactions should be conducted directly and without use of publicly funded lobbyists.

Our government promised to protect taxpayer dollars and clean up lobbying and we have kept those promises.

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**TAX HARMONIZATION**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today the Ontario Liberals, with billions in financial support from the Conservative government, are introducing legislation to implement an 8% tax hike.

Exempting coffee and doughnuts does not make it easier to swallow this bitter pill. So, on a day when Liberals join hands with the Conservative government to gouge Ontarians, let us not add insult to injury by continuing to lie to them.

Will the minister finally admit that he is bribing Ontarians with \$4.3 billion of their own tax dollars to implement the HST?

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is pretty harsh language and I will not repeat that kind of language because I know you do not accept that, but it is a little rich coming from the member and her party to pretend to be standing up to protect citizens against taxes when they have, in fact, voted against every tax cut that we have put forward in this House, including such an emotional issue as guide dogs for the blind. The NDP voted against that and many other tax cuts in this House.

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that answer is an insult to the intelligence of all Ontarians.

The HST will nail Ontario families, seniors and small businesses at a time when they are barely staying afloat. Instead of exempting essentials, such as electricity and gas, Ontario is exempting doughnuts. Give me a break. Businesses will still need to keep two sets of books, one for items that get the HST and one for those that do not.

Will the government not just admit that the HST has nothing to do with streamlining the books of businesses and is all about a government tax grab to make its own books look good?

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member should be directing her questions to Queen's Park or to the legislature in British Columbia, not here. That question has no place here. However, I will tell members what does have a place and that is helping Canadians through this difficult worldwide recession. We have done that, starting out by reducing their taxes so they have more money in their pockets. It has been no thanks to the NDP for helping us with that and yet the New Democrats stand up and continue to suggest that they represent their constituents.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism persists in alleging that he decided to impose a visa requirement on Mexican tourists at the request of the Government of Quebec. Quebec's minister of international relations stated in the National Assembly that the visa requirement was never the solution advocated by the Government of Quebec.

Will the minister admit that he deliberately misled this House to justify his indefensible decision?

•(1450)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not at all. I had discussions on this subject with my Quebec counterpart, Ms. James. I was very clear: the visa requirement is the only tool available to Canada to prevent a wave of false refugee claimants that has cost Quebec taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

### Oral Questions

The member must explain to his fellow Quebecers why he believes they should pay tens of millions of dollars for false refugee claimants in Canada.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in reality, the minister's decision is harmful to the Quebec tourism industry and to relations with Mexico. The minister's stubborn refusal to put in place a system for handling refugee claims that would produce predictable decisions is totally incomprehensible, because it is precisely that lack of uniformity in decisions that encourages illegitimate claimants to try their luck.

Instead of shifting the blame for his decision to the shoulders of the Government of Quebec, why does the minister not implement the appeal division that is already provided for in his legislation?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 90% of refugee claimants from Mexico have been rejected by the IRB. Now, with the visa system, 90% of visa holders are being approved by our visa officers.

We have saved Quebec taxpayers tens of millions of dollars and potentially hundreds of millions of dollars in costs associated with false refugee claims.

I think the voters of Rivière-du-Loup will agree with me on this.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada was recently ranked 28th out of 30 countries on cellphone costs.

Canadians need competition to ensure better services and lower monthly bills.

The government has horribly mismanaged the Globalive file. It took \$442 million from the company 15 months ago and encouraged it to invest in a new network. Last week the government told Globalive it was not eligible to operate in Canada under foreign ownership rules.

This is nothing short of total incompetence. What does the government intend to do about it?

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are well aware of the CRTC's decisions with respect to Globalive's bid to provide cellular coverage in Canada. We take this situation very seriously and action surrounding it.

We are currently studying the CRTC's decision in the best interest of this country and when our government is in a position to comment further we will certainly do so.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is certainly not the way to treat our businesses.

This government awarded Globalive Communications Inc. a portion of the spectrum reserved for cellular telephone communications.

The company paid \$442 million for that privilege 15 months ago.

Last week, the government informed the company that it was not eligible because of foreign ownership rules—15 months later!

How could this government have exhibited such enormous incompetence in handling this matter?

[English]

**Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the hon. member is referring to two different decisions by two different entities.

I reiterate the fact that we take this situation very seriously. We are currently studying the CRTC's decision and the government will be in a position to comment further shortly.

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### ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Canada's north know that the government's words on protecting Arctic sovereignty are hollow.

Photo ops and announcements with no follow through are not enough. No one is fooled by red herrings like the non-dispute of Hans Island or the theatrical protests over Russian bombers which never actually came close to us.

When will the government take real action to protect Canada's Arctic sovereignty?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have taken a series of actions, not only on the military side where we have already launched the start of the ice-hardened vessels that will patrol the coast, but also on the creation of CanNor, which is the new Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and also in investments in the Rangers and other programs in the north to enhance our sovereignty. It is interesting that the Yellowknife newspaper says that the member of Parliament from that region should get behind this party and this government because finally they are seeing action in the north.

● (1455)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as I expected, a number of hollow words. This summer the U.S. banned commercial fishing in the Beaufort Sea, including 21,000 square kilometres of Canadian waters. The government's response was to send a note.

Now the U.S. and Alaska are planning to drill for oil and gas in our waters.

Will the government finally stand up for Canadian Arctic sovereignty or, as it has with climate change policies, will it wait for the U.S. to make the decision for us?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an exciting time to be in the north, despite the hon. member's presence, and here is why.

Last year, companies that were drilling and exploring in the north gave a record amount of money to the Government of Canada for the privilege of just exploring in the Beaufort Sea.

We continue to work with the Inuvialuit, the Governments of NWT and Yukon, and with northerners to ensure we advance carefully considered drilling and exploring in the Beaufort area to ensure it is done properly and done for the benefit of all Canadians.

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**INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, history shows that when times get tough the worst thing countries can do is retreat into protectionism. That is why it is important, more than ever, to oppose protectionism and defend free and open trade on the world stage. For Canada, this means opening new doors for Canadian businesses.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade tell the House what the government is doing to create new business opportunities for Canadians?

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. Protectionism is absolutely the worst response in difficult economic times. I would like to thank the member for Essex for his tireless promotion of international trade.

We have been working hard to open new markets for Canadians and we have been having a lot of success. We have signed new trade agreements with eight countries and are in the process of negotiating agreements with over 50 countries around the world.

While some countries are choosing protectionism, Canada is open for business. That is what Canadians expect and that is the message the Prime Minister is taking to India this week.

\* \* \*

**MEDICAL ISOTOPES**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Americans are investing in the production of medical isotopes and the Dutch are investing in isotopes. Both are building up their economies and investing in this sector because the Prime Minister decided Canada will no longer be a world leader in the field. He threw it away.

How is it that the rest of the world sees the value in nuclear medicine but the Conservatives are blinded by their ideology?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with the U.S. secretary of energy about plans regarding medical isotopes. On Friday, I spoke to the minister in the Netherlands with respect to that country's plans regarding medical isotopes as well. We are on the issue. We are ensuring that Canada is playing a lead on this around the globe.

Domestically, first, we are ensuring that there is a safe return of the NRU to service to produce medical isotopes, and second, we are ensuring that the expert review panel has all the options in front of it to give advice to us.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CANADIAN FORCES**

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the television program *Enquête* has once again pointed out the lack of psychological resources for the Canadian military. The report revealed that National Defence did not inform Frédéric Couture's family of his first suicide attempt.

How does the Minister of National Defence explain that, in addition to not providing adequate psychological support, his department leaves the families of military personnel to their own devices?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the investments made in the Canadian Forces health system.

[English]

We continue, as we are seeing in the private sector, to reach out to try to find more professionals from the mental health field. We have recently been acknowledged and in fact commended by the Canadian mental health professionals for the work that is being done. Chief of the Defence Staff Walter Natynczyk continues to reach out to others within the Canadian Forces to support one another in an acknowledgement that we have to continue to do more.

I thank my hon. colleague for raising this issue. We will continue in the Canadian Forces to acknowledge the needs of our families and of Canadians who—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the health minister has appointed a Pfizer VP to the Council of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Having Dr. Bernard Prigent sit on the council is extremely alarming and should never have happened in the first place.

Having drug companies advise the government is like having the big bad wolf advising the three little pigs on how to build their homes.

Does the health minister have the common sense to see this as a huge conflict of interest and reverse the appointment?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will take the member's comments and review the matter.

In terms of the decision, there is a due process involved in reviewing all people who are interested in appointments. I believe that has been conducted to date to appoint the individual.

*Routine Proceedings***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, until last week, newcomers studying for the Canadian citizenship test were given a study booklet that did not include a single reference to our military history or the sacrifices of our veterans. In fact, it had more information on recycling and composting than on Confederation and failed to recognize important landmarks in Quebec's history.

Would the citizenship and immigration minister update the House on what he has done to improve the citizenship study guide?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that after extensive consultations with historians and experts from across the spectrum, we published last week the new study guide for Canadian citizens, which we hope will be used by all Canadians to develop a deeper understanding of our country and the values, symbols and institutions that are grounded in Canadian history.

It is entitled, "Discover Canada". It focuses not just on the rights but also the responsibilities of Canadian citizens. It includes an appropriate reference to the sacrifice of the 110,000 brave Canadian war dead. It talks about Canadian values, like the equality of men and women.

[Translation]

It also tells of the founding of Quebec and New France. We are proud of this new study guide for new Canadians.

\* \* \*

**MEDICAL ISOTOPES**

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has already said that Canada will stop producing isotopes. His government does not want to commit to renewing the Chalk River reactor's operating licence after 2016.

Why are the Conservatives throwing away thousands of jobs and doing nothing to guarantee supplies of medical isotopes for patients suffering from cancer and heart disease?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, as I indicated in the answer previous, we are ensuring that AECL is working on the NRU to return the reactor to service in order to produce medical isotopes because the health and safety of Canadians is our primary focus.

Second, the government has already announced that we are looking to strengthen Canada's nuclear industry, be it in medical isotopes or in research and development or in Candu. In fact, we are taking steps along that matter now.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NUCLEAR WASTE**

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal Nuclear Waste Management Organization has still not officially ruled out Quebec as a potential site for the permanent disposal of all nuclear waste in Canada. However, the Quebec

National Assembly has adopted a unanimous motion to prohibit the burial, on Quebec territory, of nuclear waste from outside Quebec.

Will the minister respect the wishes of the Quebec nation and remove Quebec from the list once and for all, so that we do not become Canada's garbage dump?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization has a very long-term mandate. The mandate is to find a safe place for nuclear waste in Canada. In fact, the key of it is to find a willing and informed host community that consents to the storage of the waste in that area.

By virtue of that, it would seem the member has answered her own question.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Carlos Navarrete Ruiz, Speaker of the Senate of the United Mexican States, and a delegation of members of the Mexican Congress.

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

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1505)

[English]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 44 petitions.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS****AIR PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS**

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my petition is a call on the government to adopt Canada's first air passenger bill of rights. Bill C-310 would provide compensation to air passengers flying with all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly. It includes measures on compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and unreasonable tarmac delays. It deals with late and misplaced baggage. It deals with all-inclusive pricing by airlines in their advertising.

It is inspired by the European Union law. Air Canada is already operating under the European laws for their flights to Europe, so the issue is why Air Canada customers should not receive better treatment in Europe than in Canada. It would ensure that passengers would be kept informed of flight changes, whether they were delays or cancellations. The new rules would be required to be posted in the airports and on the airlines to inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation.

Bill C-310 is not meant to punish the airlines. If they follow the rules, they would not have to pay one dollar in compensation to travellers.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to support Bill C-310, which would introduce Canada's first air passenger bill of rights.

#### SUICIDE

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by roughly 2,000 people from virtually all across Canada.

The petitioners call upon Canada to enable prosecution of those who encourage or counsel someone to commit suicide by updating our Criminal Code to reflect the new realities of 21st century broadband access and to fund education programs to help Canada's vulnerable youth protect themselves from online predators and find appropriate community support resources.

#### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to present three very different petitions.

The first is a petition from many hundreds of residents in Manitoba, calling upon the Prime Minister of Canada to initiate and implement an independent investigation into the missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. Like me, these citizens are gravely concerned with the disappearance of over 500 aboriginal women and girls across the country. It is a national tragedy that must be addressed by the federal government.

I join these citizens and call upon the Prime Minister to launch an investigation into this matter.

• (1510)

#### DARFUR

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am please to present a second petition from residents of Manitoba.

The petitioners have expressed support for an international criminal court process that is robust, efficient and sensitive to its short-term impacts on civilians against Sudan's Omar al-Bashir, who has been charged with murder, rape, extermination and forcible transfer by the ICC for acts against the people of Darfur.

The signatories call upon the government to honour our commitments to UNAMID and advocate for the mission's full deployment. For the ICC's work to be effective, it must be supported by a robust peace process.

#### Routine Proceedings

##### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition I am presenting is again from residents of Manitoba, this time supporting a universal declaration on animal welfare. The declaration is an agreement among people in nations to recognize that animals are sentient beings and can suffer, to respect their welfare needs and to end animal cruelty for good.

This would be the first international agreement on animal welfare, a very important initiative.

##### VETERANS

**Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of residents of Waterloo region.

The petitioners call upon the House to review and expand the level of medical facilities and services that are available to our veterans, with a particular emphasis on the number of beds that are available in rest homes.

##### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Immigration referred to gender equality in the new leaflet that the government put out. As we well know, the actions of the government have been quite the contrary.

The petitioners from southern Ontario and eastern Ontario, several hundred names, call upon the government to support my motion, Motion No. 384, which would rescind the provisions of Bill C-10, the budget bill from earlier this year, which violates workers' rights to collective bargaining, including arbitral awards and equal pay for work of equal value.

The government has to walk its talk. It is all well and good to produce a leaflet, but it is another thing to take concrete action to enhance women's equality in the country. That is exactly what these petitioners are asking the government to do.

##### PROTECTION OF HUMAN LIFE

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from hundreds of Canadians from British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to pass legislation for the protection of human life from the time of conception until natural death. They note that Canada as a country respects human rights, that in 1988 Canada struck down a law and that there is no law to protect the unborn at any stage of development.

They therefore call upon Parliament to enact legislation that would protect the unborn.

##### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition from the constituents of my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

*Routine Proceedings*

The petitioners request the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

## PENSIONS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today.

Since last April, I have been working with residents in my community who are former employees of Nortel and who continue to fight for pension fairness. These pensioners call upon Parliament to amend the Company Creditors Arrangement Act and the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect the rights of all Canadian employees and to ensure that employees laid off by a company and who receive a pension or long-term disability benefits during bankruptcy proceedings obtain preferred creditor status over all other unsecured creditors.

They also ask that the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act be amended to ensure that employee-related claims are paid from the proceeds of Canadian asset sales before funds are permitted to leave the country.

## ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns a private member's motion that was recently passed, sponsored by the member for Scarborough South-west, concerning animal cruelty. It passed the House, but it left out the reference to the United Nations, which I think is unfortunate.

The petitioners point out that there is scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain and suffer and that all efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering. They also point out that over one billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihood and many others rely on them for companionship. Finally, they point out that animals are often significantly affected by natural disasters and yet are seldom considered during relief efforts.

The petitioners therefore call upon the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration of animal welfare.

## ETHIOPIA

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, next month it will be one year that Birtukan Mideksa, the Ethiopian opposition leader, has been wrongfully imprisoned by the Ethiopian junta. I have over a hundred petitioners from the cities of Toronto, Mississauga, from Scarborough and southern Ontario.

The petitioners call upon the government to use all diplomatic means at its disposal, including using the forum that is provided at the United Nations, to exert maximum pressure on the government of Ethiopia to immediately and unconditionally release Madame Mideksa and allow her to participate fully in her position as the leader of a political party in Ethiopia.

\* \* \*

• (1515)

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker,

the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 427, 428, 433, 437 and 445.

[Text]

Question No. 427—**Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to the potential extradition of Marc Emery: (a) what discussions have taken place between Canadian and American authorities since the time of his arrest in July 2005; (b) who participated in these discussions; and (c) what positions were taken by the Canadian and American authorities at the varying stages of the discussion and negotiation process?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), the International Assistance Group is Canada's central authority dealing with incoming extradition requests like the one for Mr. Emery. The Office of International Affairs is the United States of America's central authority responsible for making the request for Mr. Emery's extradition. As part of their responsibilities, the International Assistance Group and the Office of International Affairs regularly discuss matters relating to extradition requests, including discussions with respect to the sufficiency of the evidence supporting the request and the timing of proceedings in Canada. These discussions occurred on the Emery request in the ordinary course of reviewing the request for extradition.

On July 22, 2005, the International Assistance Group on behalf of the Minister of Justice issued an authority to proceed pursuant to section 15 of the Extradition Act as a result of which counsel for the Attorney General of Canada applied for the issuance of an arrest warrant pursuant to section 16 of the Extradition Act. Mr. Emery was arrested on July 29, 2005. He consented to his committal on September 28, 2009. A consent to committal is an admission that the evidence provided by the requesting state is sufficient to justify extradition.

In response to (b), lawyers who work for the International Assistance Group in Canada and the Office of International Affairs in Washington D.C. participated in the discussions.

In response to (c), the extradition process does not involve negotiations. A request for extradition is made pursuant to an extradition treaty. Any discussion regarding plea negotiations that would have taken place in this matter were between the prosecutor in the United States of America and Mr. Emery's defence counsel. Because extradition is a separate and distinct process from the prosecution, the International Assistance Group and the Office of International Affairs do not take a position or participate in discussions relating to plea negotiations. In short, no officials from the Department of Justice have been involved in the plea negotiations on this case.

With respect to discussions in relation to the extradition request, the United States has maintained its interest in having Mr. Emery prosecuted in the United States either through his extradition or as a result of his voluntary surrender to the United States. Canadian officials have been pursuing his extradition in accordance with our treaty obligations.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 428—Ms. Libby Davies:**

With respect to Employment Insurance applications since January 2009 in Canada and in the federal riding of Vancouver East: (a) what is the increase in initial and renewed applications; (b) what is the average waiting time to have these applications processed; (c) have new staff been hired to deal with the increase in applications; (d) if so, how many people were hired and (i) what is the cost of this hiring; and (e) if not, how is the increase being dealt with and (i) what are the costs of processing the increase volume of applications beyond hiring new employees?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), current year claims intake data is not tracked according to federal ridings. For the 2009 calendar year to August 31, 2009, nationally, Service Canada received a total of 2.25 million initial and renewal claims. This is a year-over-year increase of 34.6%, or 579,328 more claims than during the same period in 2008.

In response to (b), the average time from date of application for benefits to the first payment was 23 days for the period of January 2009 to September 2009.

In response to (c), yes.

In response to (d), a total of 1,619 people were brought on strength to assist with EI claims processing nationally between January and August 2009.

In response to (i), the cost of hiring new employees for processing between April 1 and August 31, 2009, was \$33,233,000.

In response to (e), not applicable.

In response to (i), between April and August 2009, additional costs of processing the increased volume of applications above the hiring of new employees was \$9,673,000, including costs for postage, electronic post mark, IT infrastructure, and accommodation.

**Question No. 433—Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to the government's handling of the Omar Khadr and Abousfian Abdelrazik cases, for each case: (a) what is the total cost of all legal fees to date; and (b) what is the breakdown of all outside consultants hired for any purpose, including public relations, and the value of the associated contracts?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the federal Crown asserts that privilege and, considering the circumstances and context of the request, is prepared to waive that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total costs of the legal case on the part of the government. The total costs of the Omar Khadr legal cases on the part of the government are approximately \$1,747,279.64. The total costs of the Abousfian Abdelrazik legal cases on the part of the government are approximately \$880,089.58.

The government is not aware of any outside consultants hired for any purpose of either the Omar Khadr files or the Abousfian Abdelrazik files.

**Question No. 437—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to Mirabel International Airport: (a) what studies have been conducted since 1997 regarding reopening the airport to regular commercial passenger flights; and (b) based on these studies, what are the detailed estimated costs for reopening the airport to regular commercial passenger flights?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to (a), Transport Canada did not commission any study regarding the reopening of the Mirabel International Airport.

In response to (b), not applicable.

**Question No. 445—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:**

With respect to the National Research Universal (NRU) reactor at Chalk River, what contingency measures are in place to run the NRU reactor past the license expirations in 2011 and 2016?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Canadians is a top priority for the Government of Canada. In this regard, on December 15, 2008, the Minister of Natural Resources outlined the government's five-point plan to protect the health and safety of Canadians over the short and long term which includes: repairing the Chalk River reactor as quickly as possible in a safe and reliable manner; maximizing the use of existing medical isotopes supplies; working with international producers to increase production and co-ordinate reactor operations including downtimes; developing, assessing and reviewing alternatives to the current supply of TC-99m; and identifying and assessing possible alternatives to medical isotopes currently in use.

More detailed information may also be found at the following website: [www.nrca-nrcan.gc.ca/media/newcom/2008/200876s-eng.php](http://www.nrca-nrcan.gc.ca/media/newcom/2008/200876s-eng.php)

The plan also includes information on determining the requirements and options available for re-licensing the National Research Universal, NRU, reactor past October 31, 2011. The government continues to work with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, AECL, the medical community and Canada's global partners to move forward with this plan.

AECL and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, CNSC, signed the Protocol for National Research Universal Licensing Activities on August 4, 2008. The CNSC has been working with AECL to determine the regulatory requirements for extending the licence of the NRU beyond 2011. The CNSC will assess information submitted by AECL to determine whether the NRU can continue operation beyond its current licence period, and make recommendations to the commission regarding the renewal of the NRU's licence.

The government has provided funding to AECL in fiscal year 2009-10 to enable AECL to continue its efforts towards re-licensing the NRU during this period.

*Routine Proceedings*

In addition, with respect to supply of medical isotopes for Canadians, on May 28, 2009, the government announced the establishment of an Expert Review Panel on Medical Isotope Production to report on the best options for securing the supply of molybdenum-99 and technetium-99m over the medium to long term. The four members of the panel bring to the table expertise in health science, nuclear technology and business management. In response to a call for expressions of interest, 22 submissions on ideas for isotope supply have been received and are being reviewed by the panel, which will report to the government by November 30, 2009.

\* \* \*

[English]

**QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 422, 424, 425, 429, 431, 432, 434, 435, 436, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443 and 444 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 422—**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:**

With respect to the Communities at Risk: Security Infrastructure Pilot Program, what are: (a) the names of all applicants; (b) the amounts requested; (c) the amounts granted; (d) the descriptions of the projects; and (e) when applicable, the reasons of refusal?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 424—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to the current pandemic of new influenza A (H1N1) virus in Aboriginal (First Nations, Inuit, Metis) communities in Canada: (a) what were the containment measures taken to slow the spread of the virus within households, between households, and among communities; (b) what were the control measures taken in more remote areas to flatten the epidemiological peak; (c) what was the average length of time from symptoms to treatment for those Aboriginal peoples who required a stay in intensive care unit (ICU); (d) what percentage of hospitalizations, ICU cases, and deaths were among Aboriginal peoples, and how do these compare with the Canadian population at large; (e) what was the average length of time on a ventilator and the mean length of stay in an ICU for Aboriginal peoples; (f) what specific measures are being planned to reduce the time to treatment, hospitalizations, ICU, and deaths; (g) when will the results of the preliminary investigation in First Nations communities be available, specifically, (i) how many Aboriginal communities in Canada have a revised H1N1 pandemic influenza plan, (ii) how many have tested their plan, (iii) how many have necessary supplies in place; (h) what specific actions have been undertaken to address the fact that only two of 30 communities in northern Manitoba had a pandemic plan, and none had been tested; (i) where did the Minister of Health obtain the 90 percent figure she used in her August 28 response letter to Drs Bennett and Duncan; (j) what funding have Aboriginal communities requested, and what additional funds have been made available to Aboriginal communities for pandemic planning and response in 2009; (k) is there any encouragement to identify vulnerable people, such as pregnant women and those with underlying medical conditions, to take additional precautions, specifically, (i) how many communities lack necessary clean water for infection control measures, (ii) what funding and progress has been made to address this situation; (l) what measures are being put into place to decrease transmission in households where there is overcrowding; (m) are all Aboriginal people on the priority list for vaccine, or just communities in remote and isolated settings; (n) are anti-virals pre-positioned in all Aboriginal communities, should they be required urgently, and are there provisions for communities without registered nurses; and (o) what measures exist to ensure that remote and isolated communities will have the necessary human resources to ensure appropriate and timely treatment, particularly in communities where weather may impact help?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 425—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With respect to the current pandemic of new influenza A (H1N1): (a) who is at the top of the pandemic organizational chart for the country; (b) what gaps still exist in the government's overarching plan, recognizing that it is an ever-evolving plan, and by what date will identified gaps be addressed; (c) what money remains from the \$400 million contained in the budget of 2006 as 'to be set aside as a contingency to be accessed on an as-needed basis'; (d) what funds have been spent since the start of the pandemic in Canada to address response, specifically, (i) what government departments have tested their pandemic plan, (ii) what departments operationalized their plans or part of their plans in the spring, and updated their plans since the lessons learned from the spring; (e) should there be an election, what is the pandemic preparedness plan for Elections Canada, both to protect the health and well-being of its employees and Canadians; (f) what are the outstanding issues among medical personnel in terms of preparedness, and how are these issues being addressed; (g) what was the process for monitoring swine herds prior to April 24, 2009, and how has it increased since that date; (h) what is the purpose behind the absence of a Canadian notifiable swine influenza surveillance system; (i) what is known of the clinical spectrum of the disease at this time, and what are the possible long-term impacts on lungs, and other organs, and potential long-term costs to the healthcare system; (j) by what date are provincial and territorial vaccine distribution plans to be in place, what oversight exists to ensure they are in place, and will they be made public; (k) what contingency plans are being put in place should Canadian distributors run out of stock of N95 masks; (l) will there be a compensation package should there be challenges with the vaccine; (m) what recommendations are being made to those with chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and immunocompromised patients, and how is this information being relayed to these groups to see their doctor now; (n) what are the details of the "alternative strategies" being developed by provinces and territories; (o) what are the details of adding a "small amount of amantadine" to the National Emergency Stockpile System, and is its use in combination thought to be effective when the virus is resistant to amantadines; (p) are there any other alternative therapies being explored to address antiviral resistance and, if so, what funds are being allocated to the effort; (q) will 500 ventilators meet the potential intensive care unit (ICU) burden considering Canada's ICU cases were around 20% of its hospitalized, compared to 15% in

(Return tabled)

Question No. 429—**Mr. David McGuinty:**

With respect to Canada's oil industry: (a) what is the total amount of projected royalties or revenues to the federal government from existing and proposed projects to exploit Canada's oil sands in each fiscal year during the period of 2009-2018; (b) how much money is the federal government spending by itself, or in cooperation with other levels of government, private or non-government organizations, on environmental protection mitigation measures as the oil sands are exploited; (c) what is the status of oil and gas licensing and permitting with regards to the exploitation of fossil fuels in the Beaufort Sea; (d) what is the status of the proposed pipeline construction from Fort McMurray to the western coast of British Columbia; (e) what role is the federal government contemplating or playing in the process surrounding this pipeline, its potential construction, environmental assessment, and potential funding or financing; and (f) does this role extend to fiscal incentives, loan guarantees, Export Development Canada financing or other measures?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 431—**Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With respect to the use of government owned fleet of Challenger jets since February of 2006: (a) how many times has the fleet been used; (b) what are the names and titles of the passengers present on each flight manifest; (c) who authorized each flight; (d) what were all of the departure points and destinations of these aircrafts; (e) what were the total operational costs associated with each of these flights; and (f) what were the total food and beverage costs associated with each flight?

(Return tabled)



*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 432—Hon. Dan McTeague:**

With regard to the government's Economic Action Plan, for each of the project announcements in the electoral district of Pickering—Scarborough East: (a) what was (i) the date of the announcement, (ii) the amount of stimulus spending announced, (iii) the department which announced it; and (b) was there a public event associated with the announcement and, if so, what was the cost of that event?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 434—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to government revenue from offshore oil production under the jurisdiction of the government of Newfoundland and Labrador, specifically the existing projects of Hibernia, Terra Nova and White Rose: (a) what have been the amounts and sources of revenue received by the government of Canada from each of these projects for each fiscal year since 2005; and (b) what are the projected amounts and sources of revenue from these projects to the government of Canada for each fiscal year from 2009 to 2011?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 435—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

With regard to ongoing discussions between the government and the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO) regarding amendments to the existing NAFO Convention: (a) what are the specific proposed amendments that will change any aspect of (i) the current ability for NAFO to impose management decisions inside the Canadian 200-mile Exclusive Canadian Zone, (ii) the current decision resolution mechanism; (b) what members brought forward these specific amendments; and (c) has the government objected to any of the proposed amendments to the Convention, and, if so, (i) which amendments, (ii) what were the bases of the objections?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 436—Mr. Scott Andrews:**

What is the total amount of government funding, allocated within the constituency of Avalon in fiscal year 2007-2008 up to and including the current fiscal year, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 438—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to each of the 13 airports in Canada that are designated as international airports, what are the required noise abatement procedures and noise control requirements specified by the Minister of Transport in the Canada Air Pilot and the Canada Flight Supplement, including the procedures and requirements relating to, but not limited to, (i) preferential runways, (ii) minimum noise routes, (iii) hours when aircraft operations are prohibited or restricted, (iv) arrival procedures, (v) departure procedures, (vi) duration of flights, (vii) the prohibition or restriction of training flights, (viii) visual flight rules or visual approaches, (ix) simulated approach procedures, (x) the minimum altitude for the operation of aircraft in the vicinity of the aerodrome?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 439—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to Bill C-50, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act and to increase benefits: (a) what methodology is being used to estimate the number of Canadians to which this legislation will extend Employment Insurance benefits; (b) what timeframe is involved in the government's claim that this legislation will assist 190,000 Canadians; (c) how many Canadians are currently receiving Employment Insurance benefits; and (d) for each of the last ten fiscal years, including the current one, what percentage of Employment Insurance recipients exhaust their benefits before securing new employment?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 440—Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: (a) how much money has the department spent for each of the last ten fiscal years, including the current one, in pursuing free trade agreements between Canada and foreign entities organized as (i) a dollar figure by the country or multilateral

organization with which the free trade agreement was being negotiated, (ii) a percentage of the department's total operating budget organized by the country or multilateral organization with which the free trade agreement was being negotiated; and (b) how much money has the department spent for each of the last ten fiscal years, including the current one, on consular affairs organized as (i) a dollar figure by diplomatic or consular mission, (ii) a percentage of the department's total budget organized by diplomatic or consular mission?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 441—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With regard to housing promises made by the government: (a) of the \$1.9 billion investment promised in September 2008 to extend housing and homelessness programs for low-income Canadians, (i) how much has been spent, (ii) what programs has the money funded, (iii) what is the breakdown of this spending by province; (b) of the \$1 billion promised for social housing renovations and energy retrofits in the 2009 budget, (i) how much has been spent, (ii) what programs has the money funded, (iii) what is the breakdown of this spending by province; and (d) of the \$75 million for the construction of housing units for persons with disabilities promised in the 2009 budget, (i) how much has been spent, (ii) what programs has the money funded, (iii) what is the breakdown of this spending by province?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 442—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With respect to federal spending on advertising to promote the Economic Action Plan and the Home Renovation Tax Credit, what has been the total federal spending from April 1 to September 30, 2009, itemized according to (i) type of advertising, (ii) production costs for each ad, (iii) media outlets used to air or publish each ad, (iv) coverage area of each media outlet, (v) broadcast cost for each ad, (vi) total for advertising cost per month?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 443—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With respect to the use of taxis within the National Capital Region: (a) what has been the total amount spent for each fiscal year, from 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year for each department; (b) how many employees at each department have access to taxi vouchers; and (c) what is the cost of Environment Canada's Envirobus program for each fiscal year from 2005-2006 up to and including the current fiscal year?

(Return tabled)

**Question No. 444—Mrs. Michelle Simson:**

With regard to the Preparing for Emergencies announcement made during the 2006 budget: (a) how much of the \$1 billion over five years has been spent to improve Canada's pandemic preparedness; (b) what departments and agencies received money and how much money have they received; and (c) has any of the \$400 million slated to be set aside as a contingency been spent and, if so, on what has the contingency money been spent?

(Return tabled)

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Speaker's Ruling***POINTS OF ORDER**

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY—OPPOSITION MOTION—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** Order, please, if the House will grant some indulgence.

On Tuesday, October 27, the hon. government House leader rose on a point of order concerning the admissibility of an opposition motion placed on notice on October 26, in the name of the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North. The hon. member for Vancouver East intervened on the matter, as did the hon. member for Wascana. So that the work of the House could proceed without delay, I immediately stated that the motion was out of order and I promised to return to the House at a later date with a fully considered ruling.

I would now like to put before the House the reasons for my decision that day.

[*Translation*]

For the benefit of the House, the motion printed in the notice paper read as follows:

That Bill C-311, An Act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change, be deemed reported from committee without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

[*English*]

In explaining why he felt the motion was out of order, the government House leader's main argument was that what this motion was proposing to do could be done only by unanimous consent.

He added that in his view the best the House can do to expedite legislation, without the unanimous consent of the House, is to offer a motion that considers each stage separately with a separate vote. Otherwise, he argued, a situation would arise in which any opposition party could put forward a similarly draconian motion on any private member's bill and have it expedited through the legislative process.

For her part, the House leader for the NDP stressed the wide latitude given to opposition parties on supply days to propose motions of their choosing.

[*Translation*]

In support of this argument, she quoted from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 724:

The Standing Orders give Members a very wide scope in proposing opposition motions on Supply days and, unless the motion is clearly and undoubtedly irregular (e.g., where the procedural aspect is not open to reasonable argument), the Chair does not intervene.

[*English*]

The House will remember that on March 21, 2007, in a situation analogous to the one before us, I ruled out of order an opposition motion submitted by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. In that case, the motion in question sought to expedite the consideration and adoption of several government bills in a manner similar to the motion of the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

As I pointed out in a subsequent ruling on March 29, 2007, past interventions from the Chair regarding opposition motions have been rare, restricted to cases in which a motion is “clearly and undoubtedly irregular”. I also explained that there is nothing whatsoever in the relevant procedural authorities to suggest that opposition motions on supply days were ever conceived of as a means of fast-tracking bills already present elsewhere on the order paper. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* stresses, at page 701, that a key principle underlying the business of supply is that the House, and by extension the opposition via motions proposed on allotted days, has:

—the right to have its grievances addressed before it considers and approves the financial requirements of the Crown.

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

As I stated in 2007, (Debates, March 29, 2007, p. 8138) it is evident from their historical background that opposition motions on supply days were never envisaged as an alternative to the legislative process:

The very high threshold of unanimous consent creates a pivotal safeguard in ensuring that every measure before the House receives full and prudent consideration. What is being proposed not only does away with that safeguard, it takes advantage of the stringent regime governing supply days. In that regard, for example, it is important to note the precedence accorded to opposition motions over all Government supply motions on allotted days.

[*English*]

Furthermore, recent amendments to the rules dealing with such motions offer an especially stringent regime: first, the rules provide what amounts to an automatic closure mechanism since the motion comes to a vote at the end of the day, thus guaranteeing a decision on the motion; and second, no amendment to the motion is possible without the consent of the mover.

[*Translation*]

In stark contrast, any motion which could be brought forward by the government to expedite consideration of a bill would be debatable and amendable, and the imposition of time allocation or closure would necessitate a separate question from the motion proposing adoption of the bill at a particular stage or stages in the legislative process.

[*English*]

In addition, as mentioned in my initial comments when ruling the motion out of order, as worded, the motion fails to provide members any opportunity to debate the bill itself, in effect short-circuiting the legislative process. The Chair is mindful of the wide latitude available to the opposition with regard to supply motions, but as your Speaker, it is my duty to ensure that matters placed before the House are in keeping with our rules. The reasons outlined above make it clear why the motion of the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North was ruled out of order.

In conclusion, I would ask hon. members to bear in mind today's ruling and the ruling of March 29, 2007, when they are preparing future opposition motions. The Chair will continue to give the traditional latitude to the sponsors of motions to be debated during supply proceedings, but the Chair counts on the co-operation of the sponsors to respect, and not go beyond, traditional limits for such motions.

[Translation]

I thank the House for its attention in this matter.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACT (STIMULUS)

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-51, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on January 27, 2009 and to implement other measures, be read the third time and passed.

**The Speaker:** When the matter was before the House for debate the last time, the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona had the floor for questions and comments consequent upon his speech. There are four minutes left in the time remaining for questions and comments.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the aspects of this bill has to do with extending the borrowing authority of the CBC to what I believe is \$220 million from a nominal amount. I thought it was something like \$2 million.

In any event, this appears to be simply a facility for the CBC to be able to discount a future revenue stream from rental payments on buildings that it owns but does not use. In effect, I believe it represents that the CBC is mortgaging its future even further as a consequence of not being able to get the support from the government for its operations during this difficult time.

I would like to ask the member whether he shares my concern that we are hurdling toward the privatization of the CBC at fire sale prices?

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member is probably accurate in his assessment. Even under the previous Liberal government, the CBC was downgraded somewhat and being forced to rationalize its services, I thought in the interests of having the private sector move into the more profitable parts of the business. Certainly, with a Conservative government in place, that is even more cause for alarm because of its propensity to sell off crown assets.

In particular, the member will recall that last year the government made a statement that it was looking at selling off crown assets. It did not give a list of crown assets. The government did not decide to start selling off crown assets in 2006, 2007 or 2008 when the market was in pretty decent shape. It waited until Iceland declared bankruptcy and the world is in the worst recession in many years. All of a sudden, surprise, there is a list of government assets that it might be willing to sell off.

### Government Orders

That gets to the question of the member's reference to the issue of a fire sale. Many people would support the government selling crown assets under certain conditions. However, Conservative governments always tend to sell public assets at fire sale, cut rate prices.

If I had time, I would explain what happened with the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System in Manitoba. The government, under Gary Filmon, valued the shares at half their price and sold them. Shares which were worth around \$23 a piece and even today are trading in that vicinity were sold for \$13 and half of that \$13 was subsidized. That is exactly what happened. It was a big reward to the government's friends in the investment business.

So yes, the member is absolutely right.

• (1525)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the home renovation tax credit is pretty popular, but there are many small mom and pop businesses in Canada and these small businesses have not been included. I would like the hon. member to tell me, if this temporary renovation tax credit were expanded, should the mom and pop businesses across Canada be included so these businesses could be renovated to be more energy efficient?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, as we have said many times, the home renovation tax credit program is extremely popular, but it is not a new idea. Governments of all stripes have brought out programs like this over the years.

We think the government is about to announce the launch of an extension of the program into next year. We would hope that before announcing the program it would have the good sense to come to us in the opposition and ask for ideas.

The idea put forward by the member for Nickel Belt is an excellent idea. It is something that the government should consider. It should consider expanding the program to include small businesses and also look at applying the program to people at the low end of the economic scale through a tax credit system.

[Translation]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to explain to the House why the Liberal Party voted in favour of the first budget bill but will vote against the bill that is now before the House.

[English]

If we go back to the budget last January, we will recall that the Canadian economy was at the height of fears of recession and that the G20 had agreed that all countries should do fiscal stimulus to help to protect and save jobs. Moreover, unlike what it did last November when it had an absolutely disastrous economic statement that actually cut spending, the government in January at least proposed to expend many billions of dollars on infrastructure and other measures to support the economy and save or create jobs.

*Government Orders*

Given that we were at the height of fear and concern about the economy, it was our view that while the budget was highly imperfect, it would nevertheless have been irresponsible to provoke an election by bringing the government down, thereby delaying fiscal stimulus for at least a couple of months. That is why, notwithstanding some flaws in the budget, the Liberal Party decided to support it.

If we flash forward 10 months to today, why does it appear that we have changed our minds and decided to go against the budget? It reflects a triple-failure in implementation of this budget on the part of the government.

First of all, there is a failure to get the money out the door. This is important. We can have a stimulus of \$50 billion or \$500 billion, but if we do not get the money out the door, we stimulate nothing and create or save zero jobs. Therefore, the first failure is that the government did not get nearly enough of this money out the door to actually save or create jobs.

Second, and this point has been emphasized by the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the government failed in its responsibility to be accountable to Canadians for how taxpayer money is spent.

The third failure is the government's failure in managing the nation's finances.

Let me take each of these three failures in turn. At the time of the finance minister's budget, he said that to be effective the stimulus had to be out the door within 120 days. We are now approximately 300 days since the budget. The construction season is coming to an end. Therefore, one would have hoped that the vast majority of funding for infrastructure would long have been out the door and at work for months in terms of shovels in the ground and the creation and saving of jobs.

Far from it, the fact of the matter, thanks to research done by our infrastructure critic, is that only 12% of this fiscal stimulus is out the door and put to work in the form of actual jobs, actual shovels in the ground, and actual jobs being saved or created. Only 12% of the money is out the door some 300 days after the budget, despite the finance minister having said that the money had to be at work within 120 days.

That is entirely unacceptable. That is a big, fat juicy F for failure. The recession is now. The job losses may still increase in the future, but they have occurred in large numbers in the last 12 months. The fact that some 300 days after the budget only 12% of that money has been put to work illustrates and proves a lamentable failure of execution and implementation.

The second failure is one of accountability. This government makes a big deal about accountability, but it has been extraordinarily unaccountable in explaining to Canadians how their taxpayer dollars are being put to work. The government uses words like "implement", but their website and their reports say nothing about money actually out the door and put to work.

That is why our infrastructure critic had to get the information directly from the mayors. The government refuses to provide this information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. It has pulled off a stunt of dumping some 5,000 pages of information in his office as if

we were in the 19th century rather than the computer age. Day after day, the government has stonewalled and refused to give the most basic information to Canadians on what it is spending Canadians' money on.

• (1530)

Compare this with the United States, where citizens can go onto the U.S. government website and find out, in huge detail, in exactly what states and regions and on which programs the stimulus money is being spent and how it is being put to work. It is unclear to me why Americans are deserving of so much information, accountability and transparency from their government while Canadians, it would appear in this government's view, are undeserving of the kind of information our neighbours to the south are being provided with.

The third source of failure amounts to the government's management of this nation's finances. One year ago, at the time of the November statement, the government actually said this country would run nothing but a long string of surpluses. Then it was \$34 billion. Next it was \$50 billion. Then it was \$56 billion. I do not know what it will be next, but the reliability of the government's deficit forecasts is about the same as the reliability of its statements on the timing of H1N1 flu shot deliveries; in other words, totally unreliable.

In conclusion, yes, we supported the first budget bill because it was urgent to get the money out the door, but now, with the passage of some 10 months, we have seen this triple failure: failure to get the money out the door when it was needed, failure to be accountable to Canadians, and failure to have competent management of the nation's finances.

• (1535)

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville says that the Liberals are flip-flopping on Bill C-51. First they voted for it and then they voted against it.

The home renovation tax credit is very popular. The first-time homebuyers' tax credit is very popular also. I am not sure if the member has any farmers in his riding, but I know I have, and I know that dealing with drought conditions is also part of this bill.

I would like to know if the member is going to support the constituents in his riding who have renovated their houses and to support first-time homebuyers. Is he going to vote for this bill so they can get the money they deserve?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, I think it was Winston Churchill who once said, "When the information changes, yes, I change my mind, sir".

As I explained in my speech, it is not a flip-flop to support something in principle, and then to observe that it is badly implemented or not done, and then to withdraw one's support. That is our Liberal position. That is a perfectly principled position.

The Liberal Party has said many times that we support the home renovation tax credit and that Canadians can be assured that they will get that credit no matter which of our two parties is the government.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat disappointed today to hear my hon. friend's words, since we share a riding together and many of the same projects that he references.

He will know that across my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham, there are a number of projects that have started, including new ice rinks, and Hoover Park roads, which have been started. Many of the projects that people from his riding have advocated are actually under way, including a skating rink at Markham City Hall and an emergency measures centre. We have a new GO Train parking lot, which a number of his constituents actually use.

Thus I was disappointed to hear about all of the projects he referenced as not having started. I know he spent some time in the riding, because we were together last week at a number of Remembrance Day functions, and I know he would see many of the same projects that have started. But now that he is withdrawing his support, I wonder which projects he will no longer be supporting and if he will be making some suggestions to the mayor of Markham, who has been very supportive of what we have done together with the province.

Will he be making some suggestions as to which projects he would like to see wrapped up and no longer be completed as a result of his party now withdrawing its support for all of these wonderful job creation projects that are happening across my and his riding?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I are neighbours and we share a good number of events, like Remembrance Day and other occasions.

Notwithstanding his fine work, I think he is a bit subject to the same weasel language that comes from the government he is a member of. I know that the budgets in Markham have been approved. I know that in order to get that approval, the only thing the government was concerned about was to have its signs up, and it had very explicit directions as to when and how to erect the signs.

However, when I speak to the people of Markham and ask if the shovels are in the ground and if the people are at work on construction, the answer is no. Yes, there has been approval. Yes, there has been some engineering and architectural planning going on; but do they have shovels in the ground, do they have construction ongoing? Not in my riding. That is what counts in terms of the creation of jobs.

● (1540)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are two areas that perhaps the member could comment on. Bill C-51 is changing the rules of the game with regard to early withdrawal or commencement of CPP benefits. The effect is that if one takes CPP early because one needs it, one is being penalized; but if one defers it beyond age 65, one actually gets more. Therefore, the people who really need it get penalized and those who do not seem to need it get a premium. That confuses me about the government's intent.

The second one is probably equally as important, which is the EI commission and the so-called non-tax, according to the government, of increasing premiums on EI to enable the government somehow to start working its way back from this terrible deficit. It appears that

rates will have to go up by something like 35% to 45% to deal with the problem the government has created.

I wonder if the member could enlighten the House as to whether or not we have third party testimonials to these problems.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, the second point the member raises is a hugely important one.

The government is proposing a massive hike in payroll taxes, beginning in the year 2011. It acknowledges that this is going to occur in its budget. It is now a part of its fiscal plan.

The impact of that on a two-earner family is that their EI premiums will go up some \$1,200. For a small business employing 10 people, the EI premiums will go up some \$9,000.

Those are large penalties, large increases in taxes on jobs, especially if the economy continues to be fragile and unemployment continues to be high. The government should at least consider, if the Conservatives are the government at that time, which I do not assume they will be, increasing those premiums at a slower rate.

While we all agree that EI premiums have to be balanced over the cycle, it is all a question of defining what is the length of that cycle. The government has an extreme measure producing punitive hikes in EI premiums, whereas an alternative could be more gradual increases to balance the EI books over a longer cycle.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and if I am correct, I could actually spend some time with the hon. member this week and tour some of the massive amounts of construction happening around York region. The member might then actually consider changing his mind yet again and voting in favour of the bill.

Alternatively, and I know he can answer the question, which of the projects is he now considering going to the mayors in the towns of the York region and the regional chair to say he is now no longer willing to support? Is it the new arena that we are building? Is it the new tennis courts that are being built? Is it the repaving of Highway 27 that we should stop? Is it the soccer bubble and artificial turf that are going into Richmond Hill? Or should we cancel the emergency management centre, or cancel once and for all the largest outdoor ice rink being built in his riding at city hall, a project that was on hold for 20 years and that we finally got done and the mayor and the town are ecstatic about?

I wonder if the member might help me with that.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Speaker, since my colleague mentioned soccer fields, I will tell him about one project that we on this side of the House would never have done. We would have never paid \$500,000 for a soccer field for a private school with 160 students. I believe it is in Collingwood. If he is asking me about projects that I would not do, there is a project that would have liberated \$500,000 for something more worthy.

*Government Orders*

The member does not seem to listen. As I said in my speech and have repeated several times by now, it is not that we are opposed to these projects that he described; it is the fact that, in 300 days since the budget, the government has put money out for such a lamentably small proportion of those projects. Twelve percent of the money has been put to work for projects across this country. In our view, that is a totally inadequate result, and the government has failed in implementing this project.

• (1545)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have this opportunity to join the debate on Bill C-51 especially following my colleague with the Liberal Party.

This gives me a chance to point out to my other friends in the House of Commons what an odd and strange thing it is that after voting for the Conservative government 79 times in a row, the Liberals should choose this bill on which to vote against the government when this bill contains a number of features in which we in the NDP find enough merit in to warrant our supporting the bill. It is an odd set of circumstances to find the Liberals arguing against a populist initiative like the home renovation tax credit.

We can criticize the home renovation tax credit. We can point to lots of things that we might have done differently. But no one can deny the fact that the general public is enjoying it, using it, and in fact renovating their homes as we speak so that they can get in under the wire and get the deduction in their income tax.

We are mystified that the Liberals would now be voting against the initiatives in Bill C-51 that deal with drought and flood relief for farmers.

Granted, Bill C-51 is an omnibus kind of a bill, a ways and means motion that acts like an implementation act for the budget. I cannot imagine the political sense in voting against some of the initiatives in this bill that are clearly popular and clearly in demand across the country.

One of the other initiatives in this bill, which we can support in some measure, is the provision that would provide first-time homebuyers with that much more access to the home ownership market.

It is just hard to fathom the reasoning, if there is any reasoning, or logic behind the Liberals' position to date, in supporting the government 79 times on all kinds of initiatives with plenty of reasons not to support them and then doing this 180-degree flip-flop and voting against the government on Bill C-51.

With what little time I have for this speech, I would like to tell the House some of the things that we in the NDP would have done differently with respect to the home renovation tax credit for example.

We suggested to the Minister of Finance during a prebudget consultation that there should be a home renovation initiative, but it should be geared toward energy retrofitting, not toward anything one could imagine in terms of redecorating a house.

We did not really agree that it was necessary to provide a tax incentive for people to redo their sundecks at their summer cottage for instance, but we did agree that there would be merit in providing

a tax incentive so people could replace their energy-inefficient windows, put in a new furnace, insulate their homes, change their lighting ballasts to more energy-efficient lighting, or put computerized thermostat controls in their homes. Any initiative that had a green lens would have had a lot more merit.

A lot of us feel that the work that needs to be done to save the planet is the work that could be done to get us out of this economic slump. In other words, the economic stimulus money that we put forward should have had, and could have had, a transformative effect on the way that we conduct ourselves with our finite energy resources.

I remind members that a unit of energy harvested from the existing system is indistinguishable from a unit of energy created at a new generating station except for a few key considerations: first, it is available at about one-third the cost; second, it is available and online immediately to sell to some other customer. The moment a light switch is turned off in a room, that unit of energy can be reused somewhere else without the lag time necessary for building a new generating station. Third, and perhaps most important in this environmental climate, a unit of energy harvested from the existing system instead of being generated at a new generating station would create as much as seven times the person years of employment. We could accomplish all of these virtuous things at once.

• (1550)

We could harvest energy out of the existing system. I would remind members that the largest single untapped pool of energy in North America is that being wasted out of our inefficient homes, buildings and smokestacks. If we could reclaim that energy, it would be available at one-third of the cost; it would be online immediately, and it would produce three to seven times the number of person years of employment. That would have been a win-win situation that we could have enthusiastically supported instead of being tepid as we have been in our support for Bill C-51 with a number of provisos and our very qualified support.

Another thing we should have seen in the home renovation tax credit is an emphasis on removing asbestos from our homes. We know that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known, and yet it was the federal government from 1977 to 1984 that subsidized and paid for the installation of Zonolite asbestos insulation in over 350,000 Canadian homes. The government promoted it and said it was a miracle product that people should put in their attics to make their houses warm and to save money. What it did not tell people was that asbestos kills. Zonolite insulation was loaded with the most virulent type of asbestos known to man, tremolite. The government contaminated and stripped away the value of 350,000 Canadian homes at the minimum. That is just counting the ones that were directly subsidized by the government, never mind the ones where some innocent homeowner went to Beaver Lumber and got a couple of sacks of Zonolite and spread it around in their own attic. We do not know how many homes were contaminated that way.

*Government Orders*

Again I come back to the point that the work that needs to be done for environmental remediation or greenhouse gas emission controls is the very work that we could have launched into to get ourselves out of this economic slump and put the country back to work. God knows there is enough work to do. There are environmental disaster areas all over the country from the Sydney tar ponds to the place where I had a job, in Canada's Arctic, flying around in helicopters picking up all the old barrels of jet fuel left behind by the American military which are rotting into the tundra today. There are mine sites and tailing ponds, and there are Canadian homes that are unfortunate enough to have Zonolite in their attic. That would have been a very good target for the home renovation tax credit if we could have used it to make our homes more energy efficient and less dangerous by getting Zonolite out of attics so it will not take away from the value of homes.

We support Bill C-51 when it comes to a vote, partly because we believe in some of the issues such as the revenue-sharing agreement with Nova Scotia. The newly elected NDP government of Nova Scotia is anxiously looking forward to a \$175 million transfer payment, the enabling legislation for which is Bill C-51. We can support that, and I cannot believe that my Liberal colleagues in the House of Commons are not supporting something that the province of Nova Scotia has been waiting for and looking forward to so anxiously.

One of the things that also could have been done, if we were really serious about getting money into circulation quickly, and that should have been contemplated more thoroughly in these enabling measures is expanding eligibility for EI. As an aside, leading up to other comments on Bill C-51, when the Liberals gutted EI in the mid-1990s, and they made it so that virtually no one qualified anymore, the impact in my federal riding of Winnipeg Centre alone was a loss of \$20.8 million a year. That was just in my riding of Winnipeg Centre, not in all of Winnipeg. Federal money in the amount of \$20.8 million a year that used to flow into a low-income riding was now sucked back out by the federal government. Liberals did not use that money to provide income maintenance to other people in other places. They pulled that money back and used it to pay down the debt, pay down the deficit, give tax breaks to corporations, give tax breaks to the wealthy. They robbed Peter to pay Paul. It was like some perverse form of Robin Hood. They robbed the poorest people in the country, in the inner city of downtown Winnipeg, and they sucked that money out and gave it to their friends for political partisan purposes. That is what happened. That was the experience of EI during the 1990s.

•(1555)

Can anyone imagine the impact that had? The eligibility for EI was one thing but the amount per week under the new rules was another. The amount people were allowed to collect was reduced.

If we put a dollar into poor people's pockets, they will spend it the same day on the basic needs to support their family. Had the Liberals made the EI system fair so that eligible people actually ended up getting the benefits that they paid into all their lives, it would have had a dramatic impact on the amount of money that was in circulation in our communities and certainly in my riding of Winnipeg Centre.

As a carpenter by trade, one of the things that has always bothered me about the EI system is that for tradesmen on the tools who go to community college for apprenticeship training, the six weeks of school every year for four years, there is a two week waiting period. It is as if they have been laid off or lost their jobs. A lot of apprentices are struggling to get by on apprentices wages. I had two kids and a family when I was an apprentice. They cannot afford to have that two week interruption in their incomes. Many of them know it is their turn to go to community college now but they wait until they can save up some money.

There is no reason to penalize apprentice carpenters just because they are going to community college. They did not quit their jobs. They are not unemployed. Why are they being penalized? That would be one way to keep more people in the apprenticeship system with more income maintenance coming into our communities to apprentices and in the best interests of everybody concerned.

I am finding it hard to see any coordinated effort to address many of the social problems in my riding that stem from chronic, long-term poverty. I am not proud of the fact that my riding of Winnipeg Centre is the second or third poorest riding in Canada, depending upon what measurement we use regarding the incidents of poverty or the average family income. As a low income community, we have many of the predictable consequences that stem from chronic, long-term poverty and many of the social conditions that are not desirable in any way, shape or form.

The only response that we have seen from the Conservative government to date to address many of these social conditions is getting tough on crime and building more prisons. In the absence of a national housing strategy, the government seems to have a new housing strategy. The choice will be minimum security, medium security or maximum security.

Let me say how critical we are of this, not only because of the appalling lack of understanding of the social conditions that are the root causes of crime, but also the disproportionate impact this has on the aboriginal people in my community.

Twenty per cent of the people in my riding self-identify as first nation, Métis or Inuit. This is a statistic that will shock members, but 66% of all the inmates in the province of Manitoba's correctional institutes are aboriginal, first nations, Métis or Inuit. My riding has the highest concentration of aboriginal people in the province with 20%. Overall, only 8% or 9% of the population is first nations and aboriginal and yet they are 66% of the people in prison. They are going to jail at a rate that is nine times higher than the general public.

When we start putting in mandatory minimum sentences for property crimes, such as theft over \$5,000, substance abuse or drug offences, we will exacerbate what is already a national disgrace in terms of the overrepresentation of aboriginal people in those prisons and we will exacerbate it to the point that it will go from national disgrace to social tragedy.

*Government Orders*

Members can mark my words that this is so wrong-headed that we can find no one anywhere in the community of social development and social welfare who thinks for a moment that getting tough on crime by putting more people in jail for a longer period of time will do anything to make the streets of Winnipeg safer. If longer jail sentences resulted in safer streets, the United States would have the safest streets in the world. Let us face it. It locks up people at a higher rate than any other country in the world, and going that way is folly.

• (1600)

I said that as an aside to talk about Bill C-51 and some of the initiatives that the government has undertaken and some of the situations that it is trying to address. No one is denying that the world experienced an economic downturn but I suppose the only place we differ is in how we deal with it and the best way to stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I think you would be interested in the witnesses we are having tomorrow at the committee on government operations and estimates. We were unable to find out how many person years of employment are in fact being created by these stimulus proposals, infrastructure proposals and the spending put forward by the government so we decided to go to the industry itself.

In the absence of any other concrete way to measure job creation, we decided to invite the Canadian Construction Association to be our witnesses and the Building and Construction Trades Department, which is the plenary organization for the building trade unions. They monitor and keep very careful track of the people working in the industry mostly because they run dispatch union halls with job boards. They can tell down to a person how many people have been dispatched out to these jobs and they can also track the number of hours worked by each employee because of the dues check-off that comes into their building trade union offices.

We might be able to measure the efficacy of the infrastructure spending strategy of the federal government by using management and labour, the two actors in the construction industry. If we cobble those two together, we should be able to get an accurate picture. We are not convinced at this point in time that the type of infrastructure proposals and spending committed to by the federal government to date are the best bang for the buck that we will get from our tax dollars to stimulate the economy.

In fact, in many regions of the country, the construction industry was already quite busy. My home province of Manitoba did not feel any appreciable drop in the jobs in that industry's sector. There were jobs lost in light manufacturing, but the stimulus spending associated with new construction will not affect the light manufacturing sector. The same could be said for the province of British Columbia and regions of Quebec where there were terrible job losses in forestry and in light manufacturing.

However, if a bridge is being built in that community, it will not necessarily put the unemployed loggers back to work. This is where there may be a disconnect. Even though billions and billions of dollars are flying out the door at breakneck speed with very little accountability and true tracking of the efficacy, and even where the money goes, we would like to be able to measure with some degree of certainty that these dollars are being spent wisely.

Let us talk about the elephant in the room here. We now have a structural deficit of tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars that we will need to somehow find a way to cope with when the economy begins to recover. We have spent a bundle of money.

I am as guilty as the next in saying that the government needs to do something to help us through the economic downturn but was the money spent wisely? Did we get the best bang for our buck? Did we achieve any secondary objectives that would have been beneficial, such as a transformative shift in our energy policy, as I made reference to before? The work that needs to be done to save the planet could have been the work to do that would get us out of the economic recession in which we find ourselves.

Those are some of the flaws that we find in Bill C-51.

However, the House will note that the NDP is in support of the economic recovery act because it would put into effect things such as the home renovation tax credit, the first-time home buyers' tax credit and the revenue sharing agreement between Nova Scotia that will result in \$175 million of federal money being transferred to the newly elected NDP Government of the Province of Nova Scotia. Darrell Dexter is a happy guy because of this and so it is no big surprise that we are voting for it. It is a big surprise that the Liberals are voting against it.

• (1605)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one day when I leave this place I will remember the member for the work that we did together on the whistleblower legislation. We actually saved that and it became law in Canada because of the work of two opposition members.

The member has laid out his laundry list of some of the things that he specifically likes in this bill but also laid out some of the problems with Bill C-51. I think that has been the concern of all of the opposition parties.

The only difference right now is that members of the official opposition have the role of holding the government accountable and we cannot afford to pick and choose a little menu, which one do I like and which one do I not like. There needs to be a voice within this place at all times that shows that we are keeping the government accountable with regard to raising EI premiums on the backs of Canadians and changing the CPP by hurting Canadians with regard to taking CPP early.

The government is doing a number of things on a platform that has a \$60 billion deficit and the highest unemployment rate that we have ever had.

I hope the member will understand and perhaps comment on the need to keep the government accountable for its incompetence and mismanagement of the finances of the nation.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Mississauga and I have worked shoulder to shoulder on any number of issues in the House of Commons and I have a lot of respect for his views and the comments he makes today.



*Government Orders*

It is worth reminding Canadians that Conservative governments historically, provincially and federally, have been the most wasteful, overspending, deficit-building, debt-building governments in Canadian history. No one exploded the national debt like the Mulroney Conservatives.

We all know that the Grant Devine Conservatives in Saskatchewan not only exploded their debt and deficit and almost bankrupted the province, they now hold their cabinet meetings in prison. The premier should be—I will not even go there.

However, successive Conservative governments have been the most wasteful in Canadian history. There is no question about it. It is worth reminding ourselves of that as billions and billions of dollars go flying out the door with breakneck speed with only the faintest hint of accountability to it.

We are frustrated at the government operations committee just as they are frustrated at the public accounts committee and the finance committee trying to track where all this money is really going. We are not sure that it is being spent well.

All we know is that the bill at the end of the day will be unprecedented. I am afraid of what programs the government will cut to pay off this debt. It will be all of its favourite bugaboos that it does not support in any event, whether it is public health care or who knows what is in its crosshairs when the dust settles on this debt.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I hear the member talking about the money going out, the stimulus funds and the economic stimulus package as being administered in an incompetent way.

We are working with our provincial partners right across the country, with the provinces, the municipalities and the universities with the knowledge infrastructure fund. Which of those partners is the member calling incompetent?

Unlike the previous government that sent money out the window to individuals for advertising purposes, we are working with responsible agencies in every area of the country to ensure that projects of high value to Canadians are delivered.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member from Nanaimo is getting my speech mixed up with some previous speaker because I never used the word “incompetent”. I did criticize the priorities set out. In fact, I spent most of my speech saying that there should have been more emphasis on energy conservation and some transformative way to change the way we shift from a carbon based economy to one that is sustainable over time. However, I did not use the word “incompetent” at all in my speech. That was the member from Mississauga.

However, I will reiterate that we had a missed opportunity because I do not think we will see this kind of free for all spending coming up again for decades to come. There will be an era now of belt-tightening. I am concerned about the things the government will choose to cut to deal with the deficit that it created.

We should all take a deep breath and gird ourselves for the onslaught of cutting, hacking and slashing of every social program by which we define ourselves as Canadians because that has been the

hallmark of previous Tory governments and we have every reason to believe that sort of attack is about to begin today.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member about his speech, in which he referred to the home renovation tax credit, and said that the NDP was in favour of this measure.

I would like to know, based on the assessments he and his party did, whether this measure is as important as one might imagine, and whether it is worth carrying it over for another year.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is very real and practical.

I do not think there is any way to measure whether the renovation work being done by homeowners today would have happened anyway without this tax credit. I do not believe the tax credit is big enough to actually change a homeowner's mind. If a homeowner installs a \$20,000 kitchen, the tax credit would be \$1,350. I do not think that is enough to make or break that home renovation.

It has created some excitement and advertising, but I honestly do not believe they are dollars well spent unless the program is targeted toward energy retrofitting. Building a new sundeck is something the homeowner probably would have done anyway. If a homeowner needed a small addition to his or her house and was going to spend \$30,000 or \$40,000 on the addition, the \$1,350 from the federal government would not be the determining factor.

Therefore, the billions of dollars spent on the home renovation tax credit may be popular and may buy the Conservatives votes, but I do not think it will stimulate the economy in any way that would not have happened on its own accord.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre a question on the home renovation tax credit, which is very popular but, he is right, does not go far enough.

He said something about asbestos. A lot of homes and small businesses today are infested with asbestos. Could the hon. member tell me his thoughts on the following? If the home renovation tax credit is expanded, should homes that are filled with asbestos be included, maybe at 100% of the cost to remove it? As we know, asbestos is a burden on our health system and people have cancer because of it. Could I have his thoughts on that?

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the asbestos issue is very serious. In the 1970s and 1980s the federal government subsidized the installation of asbestos insulation called Zonolite. At the same time, it subsidized the installation of UFFI, urea formaldehyde foam insulation. As soon as it learned that UFFI was irritating to some people, it began a nationwide campaign to eradicate UFFI from all the homes it was put into and paid 100% of the cost.

*Government Orders*

Sometimes it was an enormous amount of money. People had to take off exterior siding, scrape off the UFFI and install new insulation and siding. André Ouellet, the minister of consumer and corporate affairs, within months of learning that UFFI was irritating, began a huge UFFI removal program.

We are calling for a similar program for asbestos. UFFI was irritating. Asbestos is deadly and is in just as many homes. There should be 100% financing to people to remediate their homes and make them safe and free of asbestos so their children can grow up in the safety and security of not being contaminated by a deadly carcinogen.

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-51, which is before the House today.

It is no surprise that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of this bill. I say it is no surprise, because it contains a number of elements that the Bloc itself proposed in the two recovery plans it released a while ago now, even before the last election.

For example, the home renovation tax credit was inspired by the measures proposed by the Bloc Québécois; I will come back to this in more detail. We would have liked to see this credit primarily for renovations that aim to improve energy efficiency, but overall, we are satisfied with the measure.

The same goes for the first-time home buyers' tax credit. Although the government's proposal does not go as far as the Bloc's, it is still a first step.

The bill would implement Canada's international commitments to the IMF, which were signed in 2008. This bill also amends the Canada pension plan, which Quebec is not a part of. So that does not affect Quebec.

I really want to emphasize that the Bloc Québécois supports the measures in this bill, many of which were in fact proposed by the Bloc. There is no poison pill in this bill. Unfortunately, many of the other bills that the government has introduced have contained interesting measures, but in many cases, they have also contained little measures that the government knew the Bloc Québécois or another opposition party could not accept. Unfortunately, people got caught up in political and partisan debates. That will not be the case today: we will vote for this bill because we are satisfied with it.

To those watching on television and the brave souls in the gallery, that might seem logical. We support these measures, so we will vote in favour of the bill. That sure makes sense to me. But apparently that is not always the case for all of the parties.

I want to go back to some of the things Liberal Party members have said. Last spring, the Conservative government introduced its budget. The new Liberal Party leader, the Leader of the Opposition, said that the budget was bad for Canada, that it was inappropriate, that it lacked vision and scope given the challenges we were facing. We agreed with the opposition leader that the budget was bad.

We had a hard time understanding what happened next. If they thought the budget was bad, then logically, they should have voted against it. However, the Liberals said that the budget was bad but

that they were going to vote for it. And that is what happened. During the summer, the Liberal Party adopted a number of strategic positions. Then the government came back with Bill C-51, and the opposition leader said that his party supported the measures in the bill.

So supportive was he that, in the heat of new session of Parliament in September, when people thought the government might fall and we were all wondering whether there might be an election, the Liberal Party said that it was so supportive of the measures in Bill C-51 that if the government fell and the Liberals were elected, it would implement those measures.

So it was not only in favour of them, but it thought they were good measures. So they think they are good measures, yet they vote against them. So when they are in favour of something, they vote against it, and when they are against something, they vote for it. That is a strange thing to do, and I think they are increasing public cynicism. Such behaviour smacks of partisanship and political strategy. It discourages citizens, who think they cannot trust politicians, because no one knows where they stand.

• (1620)

That is why the Bloc Québécois has always, since its inception, made a point of voting in a very simple, logical and understandable way. If we think it is good for the people we represent, that is, Quebecers, we vote in favour; if we think it is bad for them, we vote against. It is simple. We have been doing this from the beginning. It is not always easy or strategic, but people know they can count on their Bloc Québécois members to fulfill the most important and fundamental duty of a member of Parliament, which is to vote in the House, to pass legislation and to approve the government's budgetary measures. What purpose do the 308 elected members serve if they vote only strategically and not based on what they think is best for their constituents?

I say this because I am not happy about the behaviour of these political adversaries, who ultimately, are tarnishing the reputation of all politicians. This kind of behaviour unfortunately sometimes leads people to believe that we are all the same, that we say one thing before the election and do the reverse afterwards.

Even though technically this is a matter of confidence—a vote that could bring down the government and trigger an election—we will support Bill C-51, because it contains good measures. That does not mean that we have confidence in the government. When the Liberals proposed a motion of non-confidence, we supported it, because overall, we have lost confidence in this government because of everything it has done. When a motion says that, we vote according to our convictions.

*Government Orders*

But let us come back to the bill that is before us today and the best-known and probably most popular measure it contains: the home renovation tax credit. As I said earlier, the Bloc Québécois had been calling for such a measure for quite some time. We would have preferred that it be more specific and focus more on home improvements that help improve energy efficiency. Instead of coming up with a moderately generous program that applies to all kinds of renovations, the government could have introduced a more generous program that focused on certain areas or certain types of renovations to boost the energy efficiency of our homes.

We believe that this is important, because as a society and as individuals who want to leave the world in good shape for our children, we must reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Clearly, in Quebec and Canada, because of our climate, the energy efficiency of our homes has a major impact on our greenhouse gas emissions, especially if we really want to reduce global warming and the resulting climate change, which even the most conservative expect will be increasingly catastrophic. I am not talking about the Conservatives on the other side of this House, but about the most conservative, least alarmist scientists. Everyone agrees that we are headed for disaster.

We have to do this for the environment, and we have to do it for our economy as well. In the future, the best-performing, most prosperous economies will not be the ones that burn the most oil. If some members of this House do not believe that, then I am sorry to have to bring them back to reality. In 40 or 50 years, a country's economic performance will not be measured by the amount of oil it can burn and the amount of greenhouse gas it can spew into the atmosphere.

• (1625)

That is clearly a dead end since hydrocarbons such as oil are a non-renewable source of energy. Such a source inevitably costs more, is more difficult to find and will eventually run out. There needed to be a response at the turning point and we would not have been alone. A number of countries have devoted a significant part of their recovery plans to a green shift. I am not talking about the Liberals' green shift, but a true willingness not just to stimulate the economy or protect our planet, but to do both and position ourselves for the economy of the future, which will be based on sustainable development. When we improve our home's energy efficiency, we decrease our energy consumption, which is good for Quebec's society and economy.

In Quebec, we have a wealth of hydroelectricity. We can export it to the U.S. Nonetheless, if we do not want to harness every river in Quebec to export even more hydroelectricity, then we simply have to consume less. This will leave us with more to sell abroad and will allow us to become wealthier. Socially this is good. It is also a good measure for individuals. I do not know many people in this country who are truly excited when they receive their energy bill. Energy is expensive. It is a significant expense.

Speaking from experience, this summer the home renovation tax credit applied to my personal situation. Like anyone else who can afford to own a small home, I wondered how I could benefit from this program. I was true to the Bloc Québécois position and asked myself how I could improve the energy efficiency of my home. I

decided to convert my heating system to geothermal. This is still a very expensive undertaking. For new homes it is not so bad, but to convert an existing home, it is rather expensive.

Let me explain to make this clearer. Geothermal heating or cooling, because this applies in the summer as well, works the same way as a heat pump. In a heat pump, there is a compressor with a radiator inside. A liquid circulates through a second compressor and a second radiator outside. In the winter, it draws heat from outside and brings it into the house and in the summer it does the opposite. It draws heat from inside and sends it outside. Heat pump systems are more affordable than radiant heating with those good old electric furnaces or hot water radiators in our homes. Using a little energy, it is possible to get more energy from outside to heat our home than we consume.

How does geothermal energy work? The energy comes from the ground. For example, near the entrance to my home, a 300 foot well was drilled in a U loop in which a liquid circulates. Depending on the season, there is a thermal exchange using the liquid to either heat or cool the house. At that depth, the temperature in the soil and rock is fairly constant, hovering at about 7°C throughout the year. That temperature may seem cold but an air-source heat pump would have to draw heat from the air when it is -10°C. It is obviously going to be easier to obtain heat from a source that is 7°C.

• (1630)

Conversely, in the summer, when it is time to cool the house, the heat from the house is sent into the ground, which is still 7°C. It is easier to put the heat into ground that is 7°C rather than putting it outside where the temperature could be 30°C. Geothermal systems have the advantage of using only one compressor. The second heat exchange is passive and simply uses a pump to circulate the liquid through the tubing in the soil.

Why am I explaining this? Because geothermal technology allows us to significantly reduce our energy consumption. That is but one example. I could have given others but I only have a few minutes left and I have personal experience with this system.

Depending on the model and specific applications, the energy savings can be between 50% and 70%. We can also save on hot water heating and air conditioning.

Geothermal is a good application for Canada and Quebec. In fact, it is rather unusual that it is used so infrequently and that we have done so little in this area.

*Government Orders*

The United States uses geothermal energy more for strictly air conditioning purposes than Canada does. But in Canada, it is useful for air conditioning and heating. We are behind. How can we explain this? Obviously, attitudes need to change. In the beginning, although the volume is not high, it is expensive. We need to introduce incentives to encourage people to make the transition. Unfortunately, that is not yet being done on the large scale. I must admit that there are grants to encourage this type of energy, but more could be done.

The program before us, the home renovation tax credit, could be used to help move this type of technology forward. This is not the only technology; there are many others, but this is the one I had the time to talk about and that I have personal experience with. This type of technology is becoming more common. We could significantly reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and our energy consumption, make money and be more prosperous.

These types of measures are lacking in the Conservative vision. Obviously, this government does not believe in the science of climate change. The Prime Minister once wrote to his constituents that the Kyoto protocol was a socialist scheme—and probably even a separatist scheme as well.

Do you really think that the people who signed the Kyoto protocol, that is, the leaders of governments around the world, have been manipulated by the environmentalists? I personally doubt it. The reality is that this government is largely controlled by the oil companies and that the Liberal Party also gives in to the blackmail used by the oil companies.

I would like to quote the leader of the Liberal Party. When he was in Montreal, he said, “The stupidest thing you can do is to run against an industry that is providing employment for hundreds of thousands of Canadians.” He was talking about the oil sands industry. According to the Alberta government, the leader of the Liberal Party is the best defender of the oil sands industry; he is even better than the Prime Minister.

There is a lot of work to do. The Bloc will support the bill, because it is a step in the right direction. However, we must continue to vigorously defend a greener economy and truly sustainable development.

• (1635)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the member make his speech on Bill C-51.

I recall him talking about the fact that he had installed geothermal heating in his house. I am really super impressed with that because I believe roughly 50% of all geothermal housing installations are in our province of Manitoba. We are very keen on the whole idea. As a matter of fact, a new hydro building, which is an award-winning building, has just been opened in the last two or three weeks. It is, in fact, being heated and cooled with geothermal heating.

Waverley West is a huge housing development. The announcement was made about five or six years ago that we were going to put that throughout the development, but complications arose. It is great to have the intention of doing these things, but sometimes there may be technical problems. There were technical problems with the level of the water tables and so on, so that it could not be done.

Geothermal, as the member knows, is still quite expensive. It does cost about \$15,000, for example, to install it, but then the payout is over a longer period of time. It is great for the environment when we do these things. I want to really applaud the member for doing this. I would like to see many other people do the same thing.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments and for applauding what I have done.

I must say I did it for environmental reasons and because of my convictions, but as he pointed out himself, it also has clear economic viability. I am no more virtuous than the next person; I am equally concerned about where my dollars and cents are going.

I would like to tell everyone watching us that, although converting to geothermal or building a new home with geothermal heating requires a relatively substantial initial investment, it pays for itself rather quickly. It remains a very valuable investment in one's home, especially given that, as energy costs increase, the value of this kind of equipment will also increase and as a result, when people sell their homes for example, they will get back much more than they originally paid for it.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the speech by my colleague, who spoke about the public's lack of trust in politicians. He was speaking rather sarcastically about politicians. And yet he had the opportunity to rise in this House to support the economic action plan, which helps workers, provides home renovation tax credits and tangible measures to help Quebecers make it through this global downturn. He says that his party defends the interests of Quebec but when the time comes to rise and to vote, he remains seated.

I would like him to explain why he will not vote for Canada's economic action plan, a real measure to help the people of Quebec in these tough economic times.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House for nearly four years, and I have been present for the vast majority of the votes held here. Every time I have been present for a vote in the House, I have risen. I have voted every time. When the measures are bad, I stand up to vote against them. The home renovation tax credit is a measure we find to be useful and I am going to stand up and vote in favour of it.

*Government Orders*

Yes, the budget is a major piece of legislation. It is several hundred pages long. We have to look at the overall thrust of the budget. Yes, some of the measures in it are good, but unfortunately, the budget was developed primarily for the oil industry and auto workers in Ontario. It contains precious little for Quebec. It contains precious little to help Quebec's manufacturing industry. The same goes for the forestry industry. And there is still nothing for the environment and sustainable development, nothing to suggest that a carbon exchange might be set up in Montreal anytime soon. Before we can do anything else, we need absolute greenhouse gas emissions targets and a carbon exchange.

I have never remained seated here in the House. I will continue to vote against bad measures, and I will be glad to vote for good measures whenever the government introduces them.

• (1640)

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I heard the Conservative member's question to my colleague about not rising to support certain measures. I would like to ask my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, who just gave an excellent speech, if it was not the member opposite who should have risen more often in his Conservative caucus to more forcefully defend the interests of Quebecers. He could have ensured that the Quebec manufacturing and forestry industries were given the same treatment as the Ontario automotive sector, which received \$10 billion in assistance. Unfortunately, that was not the case.

I would like to hear what the member has to say about that.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that in the Conservative Party, as in other parties, there are party lines and the members are often obliged to vote against their constituents' interests. For example, it is sad to see the Conservative caucus from Quebec, which is proud and aggressive even when it sometimes votes against unanimous resolutions of the National Assembly. The same is true of the Liberals. If memory serves, the members from Newfoundland and Labrador were able to break ranks and vote against the budget. But the members from Quebec, who knew that the budget was just as bad for Quebecers, were unable to do so. In my opinion, this is deplorable.

Let us consider a recent vote on the gun registry. I see the member for Lévis—Bellechasse smiling. This is not really a laughing matter. The National Assembly has taken a unanimous position. All the Quebecers elected to represent the Quebec nation are in favour of maintaining the gun registry, yet the Conservative members proudly voted against that position. That is nothing to laugh about.

We in the Bloc Québécois have defended every consensus in Quebec. We have never opposed any unanimous resolution passed by the National Assembly. But the Conservatives and the Liberals have ignored dozens of unanimous resolutions of the National Assembly with the utmost disdain.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois to explain something to me.

We know that the budget bill was bad for a number of reasons. We voted against the budget and one of the main reasons was the absence of fair pay for women, which did absolutely nothing to stimulate the economy. However, there were some good aspects to

the bill, such as the renovation tax credit, the first-time homebuyers' tax credit, and measures for Radio-Canada/CBC.

The hon. member has been here much longer than I have. Could he explain to me why the Liberal Party would vote against that part of the budget that helps so many people?

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, it is quite surprising. I touched on that in my speech. It is even more surprising because the leader of the Liberal Party clearly said that he was in favour of the measures before us and that if he were in power, he would implement them. He shows enthusiasm for these measures, but for purely partisan reasons, because he wants to bring down the government or does not want to align himself with the government or whatever the case may be, he felt he needed to vote against this. We do not share that attitude and I hope that other parliamentarians in this House will not have this same crass partisan attitude.

• (1645)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Minister of Natural Resources; the hon. member for Willowdale, Canada-U.S. Relations.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

[*English*]

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on the stimulus package, parts of it arising from the government budget, the implementation of a package that is really a mirage. The fact that the government of the day stands with a lot of audacity and pretends with fervour that it is doing something for ordinary Canadians does not make it any more substantial.

[*Translation*]

I am a bit surprised by the position my Bloc Québécois colleague took, which indicated he was somewhat satisfied with the approach and methods used by the governing party.

[*English*]

It is funny to see some of the opposition parties satisfied with the crumbs of the appearance coming from the government of the day, a government that would rather spend money on advertising than help unemployed people actually have substantive access to jobs at a time when they could sustain their dignity and their ability to work in the marketplace. It is a government that seems completely given over to the politics of pretending that it has taken on a role for government.

*Government Orders*

Let us just rehearse from where the present bill comes. It comes from a commitment by the government in budget 2009 to take “immediate” action. On behalf of the government, the finance minister said that it had to be measures that took place within 120 days. Did one member opposite stand behind that warranty? Did one of them apologize to his or her riding and other ridings across the country when in fact not one substantial measure of employment was ready by May 26, by the 120 days. The only thing that had started by then was an advertising blitz.

We have seen the depths of cynicism plumbed when a government first flip-flops on what it says is its philosophical position. It did that for what some people would credit pragmatic purposes. Whether political or genuine revisionist concern for the economy, it was acceptable if the government would actually take the action. However, it is frankly reprehensible when a government, in a calculated fashion, fails to create the jobs it said it would.

Look to the credibility on which the bill is built. The report of the Prime Minister was not made in the House, suborning the privileges of every member of Parliament. It was not made in the House because the Prime Minister could not warrant it as being factual. In fact, it does not say that jobs have been created. If we shake it upside down, if we look for the actual facts and figures, we see only a promise for jobs next year, and there is a reason for that. The jobs do not exist.

The bill is about committing further dollars. Only 12% of the dollars committed so far are even creating any jobs. That does not mean 12% of the potential jobs. We contacted directly over a thousand projects and posted on a website. The is the most comprehensive status available to Canadians because of step two of the government's mirage of an economic program, this economic inaction program, this excuse not to make government act when it should, when Canadians and communities out there need it. Step two is to be able to cover up, to actually change people's perception by trying to bend the reality, hoping that people will not be looking under the covers, will not be looking more closely. That is fundamentally what people have started to discover. The government has failed to divulge any of the information that it has collected. It has collected information. It knows its jobs creation program is a failure. It knows that in community after community it is making this recession worse.

The government has worked on a well orchestrated chorus of how this is a synchronized international recession. What it does not say is how it is a synchronized effort to camouflage its failure to put even a modicum of competence or effort behind being able to assist people. At 12%, that means fewer than 4,800 jobs at a time when the country has lost jobs at a rate of 5,000 per week. For 10 months, the government has held the reins of power, was given the benefit of the doubt by Canadians and by members in the House and failed utterly.

The other stuff in which it failed is this. It is one thing not to do well and it is one thing to say that this is the factors and the reasons for it. Then there might be a modicum of faith that the government might repair itself, might fix its problems, might actually bring things out, but no. Instead it has devoted a tremendous amount of effort in ducking even the smallest amount of accountability for billions of dollars, something in the order of \$11 billion new dollars

over two years. That is the context in which we have to see the bill today. Dollars are being requisitioned for suspect purposes.

● (1650)

In fact, a breach of trust with Canadians is what each member opposite wants us to go along with, a breach of trust with the unemployed, their very misery and their loss of jobs, which has deepened in the months since the budget. Notwithstanding some lightening in recent months, it is still tremendously worse off out there for those communities and families that have been hit hardest by the recession.

The government promised Canadians it would target communities and individuals most in need. This was the express commitment the Prime Minister and the finance minister said that they would uphold for Canadians, with the billions of dollars they borrowed on behalf of Canadians from the next generation. They said that they would deliver those results to people. We cannot match the grants. There are so few of them that have actually put shovels in the ground. There are so few that the government quakes in fear of releasing the data.

I challenge any member opposite to stand and enumerate, to release a list, to show anywhere where there is substantial job creation activity, paid for with federal dollars.

[*Translation*]

It was not until yesterday, 11 months after the budget was introduced, that the Government of Quebec announced the start of infrastructure projects in municipalities in Quebec. That is unbelievable. For most Canadians, that is unacceptable. But there is a problem: Canadians do not know the actual conditions.

[*English*]

The government thinks it is going to get away with a conceit, a camouflage, a misuse and abuse of government authority to conceal the failure of its job creation program. Instead of targeting communities and individuals most in need the way it said it would, it has taken out ads in the millions of dollars to conceal the fact that the only correlation between the dollars is with ridings it has chosen, not all the ridings that are Conservative but ones of certain cabinet ministers and of certain seats that have been recently acquired.

It is a political strategy that runs the gamut from 300% as much money in British Columbia to 40% more money in Ontario for the recreation funds, and huge piles of money for ministers like the Minister of Industry to have in his own riding for a variety of purposes which are not linked to the public interest. The members opposite in the government ranks stand united in favour of that kind of behaviour with public funds. They celebrate it in an unseemly fashion.

I would challenge each and every member opposite who held up cheques with their signatures on it to let the communities they handed it to cash that cheque. That is right. It is legal tender. If members' signatures are on them, they should stand behind them. It is not their money. Do they not realize it is not their dollars? It comes from taxpayers, hard-working Canadians, and it is an abuse to pretend it comes from their personal largesse or that of the Conservative Party of Canada. It is nothing less than an abuse.

*Government Orders*

The members opposite, who once upon a time advertised themselves as people who held forth a critique of government, now meekly go along with the public relations machine, meekly sell off their principles to hide from their voters this job creation failure because it is massive. Billions of dollars were spent and there is no yield. Nothing is happening for average Canadians. Average Canadians are being thwarted in their ambitions.

The Conservative government is full of itself at the moment because it thinks somehow it has gotten away with this. It thinks somehow that Canadians are not, in their instincts, starting to appreciate what is happening, that the Conservative Party is not looking after them, that some time ago the switch was flipped, and it has decided to look after itself, to maintain itself in power, to do whatever it takes.

There is no line on the principles that the Conservative Party used to talk about. The fact is that it has abused the apparatus of government, spent scarce dollars, all of it borrowed from grandchildren of members in the House and, more importantly, from people right across the country. That is when it is going to be paid back, with all this reckless advertising the government is doing.

Some of the members opposite spent \$80,000 in five months last year bombarding their constituents with print ads, but that is just the beginning. Huge amounts are off that budget and have been used by the government in a propaganda play. It is not ethical. It is not moral, it is not acceptable when it is at the suffering and expense of families who are going without.

The government could have decided to distribute dollars in an arm's length fashion through the gas tax, for example. The Canadian Construction Association implored the party to do it and said, "If you want jobs and good infrastructure, do it that way". The government, instead, took five months to set up a scheme, a system that it could control and identify the projects. A government that used to believe in communities reached right into those communities and chose the projects that it wanted, chose the communities it wanted to have them in, instead of actually helping the people and communities it said it would.

This is not ambiguous. The facts are clear and not only by the research put forward by the Liberal Party but by the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, by the *Ottawa Citizen*, by *The Canadian Press*, and by the *Globe and Mail*. Every single time they added up the dollars, there are two things absolutely clear: the jobs have not been created and the dollars have gone astray.

It may be that the people opposite somehow think they are immune, that it is not going to catch up to them, that their sanctioning of this behaviour is just how politics should be done and has always been done. I say to them that they sit here only at the pleasure of Canadians who are looking for something else from the House. They are looking for bipartisanship. They are looking for people to actually roll up their sleeves and get the job done.

• (1655)

Time after time in committee the minister in charge of infrastructure, this \$11 billion trust fund, was asked on behalf of Canadians to expose what was happening, to prepare Canadians for problems, to let Canadians know about opportunities to improve.

Instead, he covered up and hid the facts on behalf of all members opposite.

Some members opposite might think they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. They are bringing home the bacon. They are getting money for people in their ridings so therefore they are doing a good job. Members opposite know the difference. They know what is coming at the expense of the majority of Canadians who live in other ridings. They know there are hard-working Canadians who are being short-changed. Projects that could benefit Canadians, that could put them to work, that could help their neighbourhoods, are not being funded simply because the representative is from the wrong hue of political party. Those are tactics of the 1890s and maybe the 1990s. Canadians are not prepared to put up with those tactics today.

In 1991 and 1992 there was a government on its way out the door that the Conservative government would rather forget. The Conservatives really do not remember that a government that once rode high went low very quickly. The seeds of the same kind of arrogance that reduced the former Conservative Party to nothing are here now. To say it is a question of their just desserts in self-justification is for them to be doing the one fatal thing that brings down governments time after time and that is discounting the Canadian public.

This is a different age. The Conservatives cannot get away from the facts even if they wished to. The facts are there in black and white. Incredibly, the Conservative government thinks it can get away with spending money on advertising. It might help them win one or two byelections where that kind of firepower makes a difference, but when all Canadians are focused, when all Canadians are sitting in judgment, they will ask: At a time of difficulty, did the Conservatives look after me or did they look after themselves? Unfortunately, the government has passed the point of no return.

In province after province, in program after program, the Conservatives have tried to look after themselves even if the programs they pick take longer to happen, even if they could be coming for those who still have a shred of interest in the real economics of this, at the wrong time in the economic cycle.

What Mr. Flaherty said was actually based on a reasonably sound approach, that investments should be made—

• (1700)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The member knows not to use the proper name of any member of Parliament.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, I meant to refer to the august finance minister whose words in the spring indicated that the money had to be spent or it could be harmful to the economy. Now that same finance minister is trying to justify why none of the projects took place, why none of them are actually happening.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer applied a model from the United States. He looked to see if there was any economic evidence that the flattening out of the recession has anything to do with the efforts of the Conservative government. The answer is no. There is no evidence because the government has been so late in getting the dollars out to the field.

*Government Orders*

Yet, the government did not have to change administrations the way the Obama administration did. The Conservative government did not have to fight to get requisitions for dollars from the House. Those dollars were expedited. They were put on a platter for them. What did the Conservatives do? Did they live up to the finance minister's promise? They did not.

I am sorry, I am used to the finance minister in another context. I have heard some of these promises before in another House. We found out then that we had a \$6 billion deficit. We now have ten times the range of that deficit.

Canadians were prepared to go with the government and the House and take on debt if it was for a worthwhile reason. What will Canadians do now when they find out that the basic objectives have not been met? What will Canadians do now when they find out that the government failed in its principle assignment to make Canadians more secure? The government's principle assignment was not to make the Conservative Party of Canada more secure, not to give away recreation grants to some people, not to stimulate construction in some areas because it is set with the Prime Minister's Office. That is not good enough. That is not the standard under which the Conservatives were sent here. That is not what the circumstances of this economy demand from each member of this House.

Which committee of the House is even bold enough to look straight at the facts of the stimulus package?

[*Translation*]

Some members from the other party, from the Bloc Québécois, refused to accept the results of the examination of stimulus spending. Why? Who is afraid of the results?

I unfortunately understand the government members' concerns here. But what about the other members?

[*English*]

Each member here has a responsibility to stand in this place. This \$11 billion is a trust that has been broken and been replaced with the thinnest of gruel. This \$100 million advertising program is a re-creation of reality that the government hopes will stand up instead.

I think the government does not realize that when people are not paying attention or are hoping for a better outcome, they extend that goodwill to the government of the day. They say that they will put it on better behaviour. They said that they did not want an election right now. They said that they would extend the full measure of goodwill. However, the government ought not to mistake that for the success of its policy of misleading Canadians.

It is a mirage. Not one member in the House, in defence of this bill or any other measure of the government, can point to concrete results such as the pouring of concrete, the lifting of shovels or the actual generation of substantial jobs. The Prime Minister made 16 announcements leading up to this session of Parliament and 14 of them were not about stimulus infrastructure. They were about the lack of spending of the government on regular infrastructure.

When the government was leading us and teetering into recession, did it put the money out the door more expeditiously? Did it move consistently with what it said? No, it underspent infrastructure spending last year by \$1.5 billion, according to public accounts.

Most of it was spent in the last two quarters and most of it was spent when Canadians could have been working. That is the choice the government made, against Canadians and, sadly, for itself.

● (1705)

**Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I heard a lot of criticisms in the member's speech. The one suggestion he did offer was around the gas tax funding. He did not specify any details beyond that, such as whether he recommends provincial and municipal support under the current system. All three levels are in the projects together. I wonder if he could comment on that.

The riding of Huron—Bruce, which I represent, is a rural riding. It is a very big, broad riding. There are over 22 arenas in my riding. There are over 10 municipalities. There is a lot of road to cover. I understand that the staff of one road paving company alone has increased to nearly 70 employees. It is a 50% increase.

First, I wonder if he could comment on his gas tax funding. Second, I wonder if he could comment about all of the jobs that have been created, just like the ones I have described, all across this country.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite may realize, there was a motion put constructively forward in the House by myself on behalf of the official opposition that he and all members of his party voted against. It was to use the gas tax, work with the provinces, work with the municipalities and not have it go out on September 1, when the entire construction season is gone.

If there are any hirings taking place, they are hirings that could have been done in April and May. There are tenders that could have been let. Only 12% were in the construction phase by the beginning of September. That is a miserable failure of a record. The provinces could have matched and the municipalities do match the gas tax more often than not, but I do not know why the member opposite, who represents many small municipalities, would want municipal property taxpayers to be forced to pay the cost of the recession.

Why not let those who can participate and help out relieve some of those high property taxes for people, especially at this time, when businesses are still hurting and still finding it difficult? That was our proposal. Unfortunately, he voted against it.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very attentively to the member's speech, which attacked the Conservative government. However, it seemed to me to be slightly incoherent. I will say why. Just a few days ago, we saw in the byelections that the Liberal vote basically collapsed across the country. In my neighbouring riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam, the Liberals did not even get their deposit back. It is a riding that they used to hold.

Part of the problem is this difference between the rhetoric and the reality. On the one hand, Liberals are saying that they disagree with the government. On the other hand, they are supporting it on the HST. We have the harmonized sales tax, which in British Columbia and Ontario is going to cost the average Canadian \$500. That is \$2,000 for a family of four, taken right out of their pockets as a salve to big business.



*Government Orders*

My question is very simple. Why are the Liberals supporting the HST when people in Ontario and British Columbia see it as unfair?

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the question. I can understand the member is a little reluctant to address directly why he is planning to vote for the government on stimulus. He would like to change the subject to the HST.

I am not sure if he is going to vote for the government on this, but let me just say we are not. We are not voting for the government on those measures.

On measures of finance and confidence, when the government betrayed and breached the trust of the Canadian people, even before it became widely known, and we are going to make it widely known, that was the turning point. There is a very thin line linking us across, but it was the principle of whether they would put Canadians first. According to this member, I believe, there are several tests.

If members pick the test that they like and if it is one that they are comfortable with, then it allows them to vote for the government. That is not how we feel, not at all. In fact, the only championing we are doing here is the championing of Canadians' interests.

It has been such a colossal failure that I do not see where members opposite find that wiggle room. It is very artistic. The member has been here longer than I have. Maybe there are methods, means and devices one uses to go to sleep at night, but frankly when there has been a failure of this size, it is catastrophic for Canadians and it is important that they get the message that it is not being condoned by other parties.

• (1710)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I make my comment, the NDP members can be assured that we will tell Canadians how they betrayed them.

The member for Parkdale—High Park talked about the Prime Minister making announcements during the campaign and so on. There was all this money that was supposed to be put out. As I recall, and perhaps the member can correct me, at the time the Prime Minister and the finance minister were campaigning, and even right after the election, they were telling Canadians, “Don't worry. Be happy. There is no recession. We don't have to worry about anything”.

Could the member take us back to those comments and to what the Prime Minister said at that time? The member referred to how the Prime Minister misled Canadians during the campaign. Could he touch upon that?

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, I can.

I cannot understand, on the basis of this question, how it is that the members opposite abandoned their principles. They think that because misdirecting the Canadian public and telling them what they want to hear instead of what is really happening has worked before that it can work again and again and again.

The last election, which should have been about the economic future of the country, was instead about a government denying, from its official position, what it could clearly see, that the recession was upon us. Every other objective authority said so.

There is nothing wrong with a government changing its mind if its actions match its words.

What I am saying today is that the evidence is very clear. In the stimulus package so far, the money has not been spent where they promised it would be. Therefore the jobs have not been delivered. The government has pretended otherwise and the jobs instead have been put on a future promise, mainly where the government thinks they will do it some partisan good.

That is a debasement of the promise just as what the Prime Minister said is a debasement, not a change of heart, not a healthy change, but rather a debasement, of the whole way we do politics and interact with the public.

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that the member of Parliament over there is angry. He is obviously angry that we worked together closely with our provincial partners, a government that he once served in. He is angry that we worked with our municipal partners, the mayors and councillors across the country. He is angry that university presidents and college presidents support our initiatives.

He is obviously angry that the Governor of the Bank of Canada has suggested that 1.2% of our economic growth in the third quarter was as a result of the government's interaction with the economy.

He is angry that thousands of Canadians have taken advantage of the home renovation tax credit, which he did not support and clearly will not support.

However, I wonder if the member will have the guts to stand up in this place today and be honest with the people that he represents. Is he now suggesting that he wants the government, he wants the province in which he was once a member of the government, he wants the city of Toronto to stop construction of a subway? Does he want them to stop construction of the Sheppard Avenue light rail transit? Does he want to stop the construction of the reference library? Does he want to stop the expansion of the Boys and Girls Club of Scarborough? Does he want to stop the expansion of Seneca College? Does he want to stop the expansion of Centennial College? Does he want to stop the emergency measures centre in my riding? Does he want to stop the construction of the new arena in my riding? Does he want me to go back and take away all—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the member was cut off in mid-sentence because his enthusiasm shows how desperate he is. The provincial government in Ontario did not take political advantages. There is an analysis in the paper today showing that they did not do what your government did. Municipalities had no choices. They put in their projects. You chose the ones you wanted. You put them over a barrel. You made them do it, and look at the result. It is clear.

*Government Orders*

The universities receive funding on a per student basis—

• (1715)

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I know that the debate is quite heated, and I know this is obviously an issue the member is trying to score some points on, but you would know and he should know, not only as a member of this House but as a previous member of a legislative body, that all questions and comments should be directed through the Chair.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Thank you, and I would remind all members that all comments ought to be directed to the Chair.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park to finish his answer.

**Mr. Gerard Kennedy:** Mr. Speaker, university presidents are going to say thank you even when they get less on a per capita basis if they happen to be in the riding. Forty per cent more money goes to Conservative ridings. The thumb is on the scale even there, even for students, even for people we should look to because they do research and so on. There is 40% more.

As far as the idea goes that we would somehow stop projects, they have to be started first. When was the Spadina subway promised by the government? It was in 2007, two years before the recession started. The government stands up again and again and pretends there is fairness. Eight billion dollars' worth of transit is planned for the Toronto area and only 10% will be paid for by the federal government. That is the lowest amount by any federal government for a major transit expansion in the country.

There is no fairness. There are no jobs being created. There was a colossal failure and a colossal cover-up and each member opposite unfortunately knows that and chooses to do nothing about it.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise and speak on Bill C-51.

I know that some children come home from school and rather than watch *Hannah Montana*, they watch the Parliament of Canada and hope to learn something. Just for the youngsters at home, “No, you did not fall through the rabbit hole and you are not sitting and having tea with the Mad Hatters in the Liberal Party.”

We are talking about the implementation of a budget that was decided last spring. For the youngsters back home, I will just put it in context so that we are very clear about what this is about. The Budget Implementation Act that is being examined now includes some of the key elements that were in the Conservative budget back in the spring.

The New Democratic Party will be supporting this implementation because there are some key elements of the budget that we think will be very important for Canadians, for example, the home renovation tax credit. That was promised to Canadians in the spring. Canadians went out and spent money based on the belief that when tax time came around, they would be able to make the most of the home renovation tax credit.

Our colleagues in the Liberal Party, however, are telling Canadians “No. Do not look to the home renovation tax credit. Look to giving us government. If we are given government, then down the road we will implement the home renovation tax credit.” It

is the Liberal Party putting themselves and their power ahead of average Canadians.

It is the same thing for the first-time homebuyers' tax credit. It was in the budget. Canadians who believed it would help them went out and bought homes. The leader of the Liberal Party said, “No, little people wanting to buy your first homes, you are not going to get that until we get government.”

We see the issue of income deferral for farmers breeding livestock in drought conditions. Anybody who represents a rural riding knows the crisis we are seeing in agriculture. That is something we in the New Democratic Party would support.

There are changes to the working income tax benefit.

These are elements that will help average Canadians. Again putting this in the context of last spring's budget, the Liberal Party supported the budget, and we are going to work through how it was that they supported the budget. The New Democratic Party at that time opposed the budget because we felt that the government was on a very rocky and erratic course in terms of Canada's economy.

I am going to go back to how that budget came about, but I want to say that at this point in the life of this Parliament there are elements in that budget, the overall vision of which we opposed, that will help average Canadians. Our job as members of Parliament, especially in a minority context, is to examine the various pieces of legislation and say, “What is the overall impact? Will it help or will it hurt?”

In terms of the overall implementation of these key areas, we support that. It does not mean we support a blank cheque to the Conservative Party to carry on as they have.

Let us go back for the youngsters at home who are watching, just so that they get a sense of how things unfolded here. Some day in a history lesson they will probably read about the famous finance minister's fiscal update when he came into the House soon after this Parliament was reconvened and said he was going to bring an economic update. Now, that economic update was happening as the world economy was melting down.

We had seen the warning signs in the U.S. for some time with the collapse of the sub-prime mortgage market. We saw the U.S. market going south long before it happened in Canada. As the stock markets began to crash, and Canadians' private equity and savings were eaten up at a staggering rate last September, our Prime Minister was saying there were going to be lots of good bargains out there and that people should pick up some good bargains.

I am sure that if Canadians had taken the Prime Minister's advice then, they would have seen what savings they had disappear even further. This was the sense of bizarre unreality that the Conservative government had.

*Government Orders*

In November the government came in with its economic update. Now, of course we put this against the threat of a complete global meltdown and what do we have? Well, it said we were in surplus and would remain in surplus. We now know that the government was already \$10 billion in the hole because of its bizarre spending habits in terms of giving everything over to the corporations in tax cuts. So we were already in the hole, and the government said that in order to get out of any further holes, it would just sell off all our public buildings, which we know is a fundamental action of these free marketeers.

• (1720)

However, in terms of the November economic stimulus plan the government had four key elements. It was going to cut pay equity. How that was going to help the economic stimulus, I do not know. It was going to strip environmental protections on our river ways and waterways. How that would help the economy, I am not sure. It was going to cut the rest of Kyoto. We know that party basically exists to protect the tar sands. It was going to cut funding for the political parties of Canada.

For those back home who are paying attention, there were four issues the Liberals could have stood up on: cut pay equity; strip environmental protection of river ways; gut Kyoto; and cut funding for political parties. What did the Liberal Party decide to get up on its hind legs over? It was not about pay equity. The Liberals stood with the Conservatives and supported it. It was not about protecting the acts that were in place to protect our river ways. The Liberal Party said there was no problem with that. It was not about gutting Kyoto. The former leader of the Liberal Party almost had to put down his dog named Kyoto. The Liberal Party supported the government.

However, when it came time to rolling over about the funding for the Liberals as a political party, that is when the Liberal Party said no, that it would form a coalition.

The Conservatives were howling in outrage. I remember some of my dear colleagues over there said that I should be taken out and hung for providing an alternative such as a coalition. They were howling at the moon. They were pounding their chests. They were saying that this was unconscionable. However, we knew the Liberals were not going to follow through because the Conservatives rolled over and said that they would not take our electoral funding away. At that moment, it became okay for the Liberals to back everything that was in the budget. They were fine with that.

For the folks back home, I noticed all day long the Liberals have kept referring to themselves as the official opposition. Because branding is so important in politics, I think they are concerned people will forget exactly who they are. Seventy-nine times in a row, they did whatever the Conservative Party wanted until this last September.

Again, we will jump forward to another piece of very strange political history, about which I am sure the future Pierre Bertons will talk. It is that famous weekend in Sudbury, when the Liberals decided they were once again, and I do not know how many times they decided to do this, going to reinvent themselves. Going into that caucus meeting, they were saying that people did not want an election, that they had to get this thing through and that they had to stay stable. Nobody had heard from the great Liberal leader for some

time. He had been off at his cottage, thinking great thoughts. He came out and said that from now on the Liberals would oppose everything. It did not matter, but they had to reassert themselves because they wanted the government.

**Mr. Royal Galipeau:** Your time is up.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** He said, "Your time is up".

I have to admit I thought it was a pretty bizarre and erratic piece of behaviour from the Liberal leader, but, no, his troops got their marching orders. When we came back to Parliament, the NDP said that we needed some action to help the unemployed. The Conservatives said that they would move forward with the 15 to 20 weeks extra. However, the Liberals said that the unemployed could wait. It was about them forming government.

Now we have a bill that would bring forward the home renovation tax credit. It would bring forward support for farmers in drought. However, the Liberal Party is saying, "You little people, you peons, you have to wait till we get government again".

I find that absolutely unconscionable. However, it speaks to the erratic nature of our Liberal leader. There is this myth that the Liberals always used to put out there that they some how embodied the best of what Canada was, they were somehow the vision of Canada. However, when we read the writings and we hear the speeches of the Liberal leader, we wonder what the Liberals were they thinking.

For example, let us talk about arts. The Liberal leader, when he was a writer in England, was asked how he felt about state support for arts organizations. He said, "While the level of arts funding was miserly in Thatcher's Britain, the principle of weaning the arts of public subsidy to the greatest possible extent was surely right. After all, the moral independence of culture" itself depends on it.

Here is a man who quotes Maggie Thatcher about arts funding. This is the same man who was basically a front piece for George W. on the invasion of Iraq.

• (1725)

I have looked at our present Prime Minister. I have looked at all the crazy crackpot things that came out of the National Citizens Coalition. Even with him, I cannot find anything where he says that we should starve the artists for moral independence. I know some of his backbenchers probably believe that. That is red meat to some of the old Reformers. They go home to their summer barbecues and say that when they get a majority government, they will starve those artists and it will teach them to be morally independent. They could look to the Liberal leader and say that here is a man who has stood up to say it.

This is the kind of erratic nature of the Liberals. They elect a guy to be their leader who will say things that the Prime Minister would never have the guts to say in public. Maybe he would say it if he had a glass of sherry on his own, but the Liberal leader did.

*Government Orders*

I want to stay on this because this is about what happened with the budget and the erratic nature of the Liberals now coming in and flipping themselves inside out, saying that they have to stand up against the home renovation tax credit, that they have to stand up against EI. Why? Because they want to be government again. It is erratic. They have to call themselves the official opposition because people do not really know where to place them in any political panorama.

I would like to continue with a bit of history.

On the same day that the horrors in Abu Ghraib were exposed to the world on *60 Minutes*, which was April 28, 2004, the present leader of the Liberal Party was being interviewed on *Charlie Rose*. The same day the stories of the horrors of Abu Ghraib were broken internationally, he was speaking about being able to draw clear lines between stress and sleep deprivation, not called torture. He said that it was okay, as long as some basic rules were set on how to mistreat these people, they would not be mistreated too much.

That same day that the story of Abu Ghraib broke, he talked about the need for target assassinations, as long as it was done in a democratic context. I am not sure what the backbenchers of the Reform Party might say at a barbecue function in the summer, but I have never heard the Prime Minister stand and say that as long as the government brings to Parliament a list of people to be shot, targeted assassination is okay. However, the man who is now leading the Liberal Party said that on *Charlie Rose* on the same day that the whole world was recoiling in horror, regardless of one's political stripes, of what was happening at Abu Ghraib.

In terms of a foreign policy vision, the same day that he was on *Charlie Rose*, he was trying to explain what went wrong in Iraq. He said that we should go into Iraq. He believed in it. He said that he thought the Iraqis would greet us as liberators. A lot of other people in the world did not think that, but he said that he believed the invasion was worth it. He tried to explain why there was a sudden backlash against America for the invasion of Iraq. He said, "America is deeply hated because we are supposed to have magical powers. The assumption is that the minute we take over a piece of real estate like Iraq, the lights are supposed to go on".

The world was not angry at George Bush because he took over a piece of real estate. The world was justifiably outraged that the U.S. believed that a sovereign country, anywhere it was, regardless of whether it was run by a tinpot dictator or not, was treated as a piece of real estate. Yet this is the view of the present Liberal leader. I would think those views are very erratic. They have been proven very wrong and they are deeply out of touch with what average Canadians feel.

We are on Bill C-51, the budget implementation bill, and that party, which has never stood up on anything that I can recall, is now suddenly standing up to fight the home renovation tax credit. I wish those members good luck. How do they explain that to average Canadians? Good luck in telling farmers that the deferrals they are asking for after the drought can wait because it is more important for him to be leader than for them to get support.

Once Canadians begin to realize the erratic views, and frankly very outrageous views, they will think twice about accepting the

piece of advice that we should vote down support for EI because it is inconvenient, because we should be supporting the Liberal return to power.

● (1730)

I will not gloat, but in the recent byelections the Liberals were fighting with the Green Party to get their deposits back in some ridings. I do not think average Canadians are falling for it either. What we are supposed to do if we are politicians and we have hit a dead end is to go back and revitalize ourselves. We need to start being honest. We need to look in the mirror. That is something the Liberal Party could do right now.

There are a lot of serious problems with the Conservative government. There is a serious lack of vision on the environment, of where we go with Copenhagen, of how we deal with the tar sands, of how we deal with the fact that we are now some \$50 billion and climbing in structural deficit and how we get out of it. However, I do not think we can sell to the Canadian people that the best way forward is to oppose measures, which the Liberals have already supported, that will actually help them. That is not being an effective opposition. That is being erratic. We have to move beyond that.

The New Democratic Party, in terms of the House and this parliamentary minority situation, is continuing to look for the opportunities, regardless of political stripe or party, to move forward an agenda that benefits Canadians.

Right now there is deep unease in the country about pensions. People are worried. They are frightened and they are justified in being frightened. We need to move forward an agenda on pensions. We have been trying to do that. There is serious unease about EI reform. I believe the New Democratic Party has 12 bills that try to address the various shortfalls in EI. We recognize the importance of getting a win in one area, taking it and continuing to advance the cause. Our Liberal colleagues are saying that it does not matter. If there is one element of the government's offer for EI, they will reject it all unless they get the whole enchilada. They know very well they will not get it. That is not being an effective opposition.

We are continuing to work on the areas of pensions. We are working on the issue of seniors. Too many of our seniors live in poverty. We want a green strategy, so that at the end of this, Canada is not just like the hangover after all the wild spending by the Conservatives. There needs to be a plan to retool our economy, to rebuild our cities, our municipalities and our rural areas. That is where the green strategy is so important, the need to have a vision so what we are spending money on today, which is putting us into structural deficit, is going to create benefits down the road.

*Government Orders*

I would not be one to stand up in the House and say that I think the Conservatives have had this vision. I do not believe they do. They have made serious mistakes on how they have spent the money and how they will spend the money. We will continue to hold them accountable for that.

However, on the basic issues of what is in this budget implementation bill, the home renovation tax credit, the first-time home buyers tax credit, the revenue-sharing agreements with the province of Nova Scotia, which includes \$175 million payment, and drought relief for livestock owner, these are elements we will support because they will help average Canadians.

As elected representatives of our people, how can we go back to our ridings and say that we are sorry, that we had the chance to get them help but we decided to take the advice of the very erratic Liberal leader and jump off the political edge with him. That is not our job. Our job is to fight for clear, winnable goals and we will continue to do that.

• (1735)

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it was with great interest that I listened to the comments of my New Democrat colleague. He was speaking about being erratic and the importance in opposition to be constructive and to support the government, when necessary, to advance a good policy.

I can remember when the member's party and his leader voted against the throne speech and wanted to defeat the government three weeks after the last election. In fact, I remember the hon. member and his leader speaking and voting against the government last January during the budget when many of these measures were proposed during the depths of a global financial crisis.

I can remember 79 times that the member, his leader and his party voted against the government on the basis that it was the government proposing legislation and they were going to vote against it. Now he is saying that the government is good, that he and his party will support and work with the government.

It is like he considers the Prime Minister and the government like a wine that will age well. He may view the government as some nice Bordeaux but I think it is plonk and aging very badly. Only good wine ages well but he may not understand that.

My point is that I would like him to explain why his party and his leader voted against the government's throne speech and wanted an election three weeks after the last election if his party is sincere about being constructive in opposition. Or, is his party simply playing political games?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I do not know if my hon. colleague is in his cups with his references to wine, but I am glad that he mentioned the 79 times that the Liberals rolled over, because hey got nada, nothing. They were not interested in getting anything. They were just trying to buy themselves some breathing space.

When it came to cutting pay equity for women, the Liberals rolled over. When it came time for cutting Kyoto, the Liberals rolled over. When it came time for cutting the waterway protections for Canada, the Liberals rolled over. They rolled over again and again and again.

Suddenly money is being put on the table for EI and they are saying that they need to take a principled stand and stop these monsters. Suddenly there is a home renovation tax credit and the Liberals are standing up. Why are they suddenly standing up when they never stood before? It is because their erratic leader said that he could not stand sitting at the cottage all summer with nothing to do and that he wants to be prime minister. That is not a principled position. That is absolutely crazy.

I would suggest that the member lay off the Liberal wine for a while and get some political sobriety so he can really see what is happening to his party.

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, it is very hypocritical, regardless of whether we are on that side or this side, to listen to a party that defeated the opportunity to have an early learning program that the Liberals had put on the table.

**An hon. member:** And Kelowna.

**Hon. Judy Sgro:** Aside from Kelowna and so many other good initiatives around the table.

We all have a responsibility, whether in government or the official opposition, to conduct ourselves in a proper manner. It is very easy for that irrelevant party to stand and make all kinds of accusations and the rest of it because it will never be government.

The member talks about all these other issues that are so important. Does the member think about the children who still do not have early learning opportunities or early learning centres and about single mothers who want to work but do not have a safe place for their children? When he goes to bed at night does he not remember the way the NDP voted? Otherwise, we would have an early learning child care program in this country.

• (1740)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, I am concerned for my hon. colleague because she continues to fall into that terrible Liberal trap. Whenever the Liberals look at the New Democratic Party, they somehow give us the credit for finally throwing them out. However, we did not throw them out. The Canadian people threw them out and they threw them out for their corruption and for their red book of promises that they stood up election after election and promised an early learning program. They promised to meet all the Kyoto objectives and they promised to help first nations. However, they did nothing because they were not interested in that. They were interested in power.

After how many red books covers were ripped off and dates changed from 1993 to 1997 and then rip that off and put on 2000? They just changed the date and just scratched it out. Canadians were fed up because they wanted some action.

The member can say what she wants but the Liberals were never willing to move until they were lying on their deathbed and begging the Canadian public to give them one more chance. They said that if they were given one more chance they would do everything they never did in 13 years but the Canadian public said that was enough.

*Government Orders*

If the member wants to give the New Democratic Party the credit for finally fumigating the Houses of Parliament of a Liberal majority, I will take that credit, but I believe it belongs to the average smart Canadian citizen at the Tim Hortons, the gas stations and the restaurants who finally said “enough of this lot, throw them out”.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to go back to something the member for Timmins—James Bay said about arts funding. I want to quote the member's very good question in the House about the CBC. He said:

Mr. Speaker, we are now seeing crippling losses at CBC in Windsor, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. While we are talking about pink slips, he should be giving them to the Conservative MPs from Quebec who will pay for his decision to blow 260 jobs yesterday in Montreal alone.

I wonder if the member could talk about the importance of something he called for in terms of providing the CBC with the ability to borrow some money to stay in business. I wonder if he could talk about the importance of that part of Bill C-51 and the importance of ensuring that there is adequate support for the CBC.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, there is an element in Bill C-51 for the CBC to start to deal with some of its structural problems but it does lead us back to the overall issue of why we are here tonight. The government does not have a coherent vision for where we need to go. The CBC will continue to be in shortfall. We will continue to see the bleed off of jobs at the crown corporation. It is vital that we have a national strategy to ensure a robust public broadcaster. Even the private broadcasters recognize that we need a complex infrastructure in place to maintain the diversity of voices.

The government does not get it. It has made a few steps in Bill C-51 in terms of addressing the terrible fact that CBC is having to sell some of its assets, but we will definitely be looking for it in future budgets. A budget to the folks back home is a vision statement for the government, of where the government is in terms of its willingness to invest in our public broadcaster. That is something we will be watching very closely next spring.

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's comments about Liberal broken promises. I would like to give him the remaining time to reflect on those Liberal broken promises and maybe expand on the promises made and the promises broken.

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Madam Speaker, that is a very difficult question to answer because it is the sheer audacity of the party in assuming its basic natural governing right. The only governing right that exists in this country comes from the people and the only way to get that right is by living up to basic commitments to those people. We are bound to those people back home. We see a party that has cut itself adrift from that fundamental sense of obligation.

The Liberals now have a new guy, Donolo, who is the new saviour of the party. I think he is the fifth guy they have had this year. It is not about finding the saviour of the party. That was the mistake they made bringing in the guy from Harvard. The saviour for a party is to go back to the grassroots when their trust was betrayed. We go back and listen to people. We find out why they are angry and we build a new vision. That is the only way to get out of palookaville politically. It is not by bringing in some guy from Harvard, a guy who, for the record, said that when it came to national arts funding he supported Maggie Thatcher because she cut

the artists off funding, which is something that should be done. That is not something we in the New Democratic Party would support and we challenge the Liberals on their support of a leader like that.

• (1745)

**Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate because I certainly support the measures in Bill C-51 that we have discussed, particularly the home renovation tax credit. Many people in my riding have availed themselves of this tax credit. I will support it because these people have pursued it in good faith.

Unfortunately, however, this budget bill did not go nearly far enough. It was very limited in terms of its application. I regret that it did not focus on home retrofits, energy saving, money saving and environmentally saving our communities in terms of making a real effort to be practical, and retrofits would have done that. They would have also created green collar jobs. With home retrofits, we would have seen new windows, new doors, insulation and perhaps the installation of solar panels that homeowners could then utilize to save energy and even generate their own clean energy.

What was missing in terms of this bill was the increased investment in not just retrofits but in the technology around the new green jobs and the training for green collar jobs like computer control operators who can cut steel for wind turbines, mechanics trained to repair electric engines and manufacturers of solar panels. These are good jobs. They pay enough to raise a family. They are jobs with purchasing power that in turn create more jobs.

Another positive component to this is that these jobs are very difficult to outsource. Unlike the current corporate strategy of sending jobs to low wage jurisdictions with lower environmental regulations, these jobs stay in the community. A house cannot be picked up and sent to China to have energy efficient windows, doors or solar panels installed. It simply cannot be done.

That is unlike the Ford motor company. In the riding adjacent to mine, Ford Talbotville is closing down. We are losing 1,600 direct jobs and 8,000 indirect jobs because Ford is saying that it cannot make money or that it cannot afford to retrofit the plant. Meanwhile, it is spending \$500 million to build a plant in China. These are jobs that are gone. These are jobs that we will sorely miss and that will impact our community. However, green jobs and retrofits would have helped and supported us.

*Government Orders*

Transportation costs are another consideration when one starts to look at all of this. With the decline in the supply of fossil fuels and the increasing expense associated with oil and gas production, it makes more and more sense to develop local industries that provide local goods and services; hence, back to these green jobs. Unfortunately, that is where the government missed the boat. With the help of the official opposition, it voted against my made in Canada bill. It deemed it protectionist and completely ignored the fact that we are the only G20 country without a local procurement policy.

When all Canadian businesses have been undermined by a government that ignores their needs and the needs of Canadian workers, who will be left to produce the goods that will be needed for the green economy? Who will be there to make those turbines locally? Who will be there to grow the food products locally? When we have cut off our own people and said that they do not matter and that we do not want to be protectionist but that their jobs are insignificant, who will be there to produce this green economy? Who will be there to save our environment? Who will be there to keep our communities strong?

There has been no interest from the government on that, nor has there been any interest in going to Copenhagen with something substantive. The fact is that the government is going empty-handed because it has refused to take any kind of leadership role when it comes to the environment. Instead, the Conservatives quietly tabled their so-called Kyoto protocol implementation act but it does nothing. It imposes no binding target, delays actions on emissions from coal-fired power generation and grants broad exemptions to industry.

• (1750)

The Conservatives could have brought forward the NDP's Bill C-311. That bill sets out a very clear path for Canada to help fight climate change. It provides greenhouse gas targets consistent with those of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

One of the members of that panel comes from my city of London, Professor McBean, a University of Western Ontario professor and a very respected Nobel Prize winner. Unfortunately, he and the other Nobel Prize winners were ignored by the government.

At any rate, our bill is consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and would impose legally binding, tough but achievable, reduction targets. Instead the government is trying to stop our bill in committee and is refusing to acknowledge that this kind of inaction is no longer acceptable.

All of this is despite the urgent call for action from Canadians, from scientists, from environmentalists and from the international community.

We have lost our international reputation. We have lost our reputation as being progressive and a leader. There was a time when the world looked to Canada. Whether it was with regard to women's rights, children's rights, environmental protection, or the kind of services that we provide in our health care system, we were leaders. People looked to Canada as the peacekeepers, the peacemakers, the leaders. Now we are scorned. We are scorned across the globe for our inaction and our apparent complacency.

We need budget measures that are directed at environmental protection. We need a government to create budget measures that could and should create opportunities for a better economy, a green, strong, sustainable economy with all the dividends of energy conservation, job creation and environmental protection.

We did not get those and we are not likely to get them, but I want Canadians to think about what could have been.

New Democrats also support the first time-home buyers' tax credit. It is a very important step. There are a lot of young Canadians who would love to be able to provide their family with a home, and they cannot. Therefore, this is a positive thing, as is the income deferral for farmers breeding livestock in drought conditions.

It is interesting that this tax credit is here when, again, the government does not seem to understand that we need to have local procurement policies. We need to support our farmers. We need to support production in order for our communities to thrive, but that is beside the point.

As well, it is very good to see the changes to the working income tax benefit that increase the percentage of the tax credit and increase the top-up of the payment. This will help low-income families. There has been precious little to help low-income families from the government.

All of these are very important and all will have a significant impact on the lives of people in our communities.

However, we need to be cognizant about what is missing from this bill and I would like to go back to that. While the CPP adjustments are very good, providing an increase in security for seniors, some flexibility, and a reduced incentive for early retirement, these are still lacking. They are lacking because they do not provide enough security for seniors.

As CARP says, 30% of Canadians are still without retirement savings. The proposals that have been put in place are not grandfathered. They do not address the need for enhancement of the OAS and GIS, and there is no retroactive claim beyond the current 11 months.

In Quebec, the QPP allows for a five-year retroactive claim. I can tell the House that there are people who have come to my office who did not understand their rights and their pension benefits, and who were cheated out of a secure and decent standard of living and could not claim back any further than 11 months. That is simply not acceptable.

I would like to say that as acceptable as this is, what New Democrats presented to the government last spring and what we would still like to see is preferable, and that is the expansion of and increase to the CPP, OAS and GIS.

• (1755)

In fact, it has been shown that a 15% increase to OAS and a doubling of CPP would create the kind of income security that seniors absolutely deserve.

*Government Orders*

This country can afford it. Since 1996, \$400 billion has been given away in tax cuts to profitable corporations. That is four hundred thousand million dollars given to profitable corporations, to those deserving banks and oil companies. Imagine if just some of that \$400 billion were invested in those seniors who had invested their lives in the building of this country.

We would also like to see the self-financing of a pension insurance program to make sure that when companies fail or choose to abandon retirees, there is a plan in place to protect our grandmothers and grandfathers from poverty. It would have helped the people of Nortel. It would have helped if the government had thought of that.

It would have helped if the government had thought about violence against women and had invested some money in women to prevent the violence these women feel, instead of spending millions and millions on their campaign to undermine the very few protections we have.

There is a great deal that the government could have done and chose not to do. I regret that very much, because it had the opportunity. It has had many opportunities.

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for at least itemizing a number of things, both for and against, and also for her support for this bill.

I must ask the member, as she was talking about the \$400 billion we gave away in tax breaks to profitable business, who does she think takes a tax break but a profitable business? Who does the member think keeps people working in this economy, but profitable businesses?

I want to ask my hon. colleague, does she really believe that the right thing to do is to overtax Canadian businesses, both small and large, so they do not have the capital to hire the people we need working in our economy?

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Madam Speaker, I wish the member had listened very carefully. I said \$400 billion since 1996, which implicates the Liberal Party as well.

In terms of profitable corporations, it would seem to me that they are doing fine. I have a real problem with this notion that somehow the oil sands, and Imperial Oil and the Bank of Montreal need the largesse of the people of this country.

I have very significant problems when I look at the struggling companies, the struggling businesses. Small business creates jobs in this country at a rate far exceeding that of any of these big corporations, and yet there has been no mention of how they should be treated. There has been no benevolence to them in terms of the kinds of tax breaks that we have seen for the large corporations, the \$60 billion from the government alone in the last couple of years.

We could have done a great deal to generate jobs and to secure communities. We could have built affordable housing for the 200,000 Canadians who are homeless. They are families with children. We could have done that. We could have put in place a national child care program so that young families could get back to work, get jobs, create wealth, but no, it had to be tax cuts instead. That is regrettable.

● (1800)

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Madam Speaker, like my colleague, we certainly appreciate the NDP members who, after many years or 79 votes, have actually come to their senses and are recognizing the very important things our government is trying to do for Canadians.

I listened with interest. I know that my colleague across the aisle is sitting on a committee with me, where we are looking at pensions for seniors. We recognize that our system, compared with other countries, is very generous in terms of the GIS and OAS.

Does the member recognize that the things supporting our seniors on top of our pension system are those profitable corporations, and maybe the small dividends that the seniors make from them? If she actually took those tax breaks away from corporations, it would actually be taking money out of the pockets of the seniors she says she is trying to protect.

**Ms. Irene Mathysen:** Madam Speaker, I am afraid I have to say that is chop logic. It is an interesting proposition.

The maximum that a senior can gain from OAS and GIS is about \$11,000 a year, which is about \$7,000 below the low income cut-off. We do not call it the poverty line because, I think, we are a little timid about calling it the poverty line, but it is.

In terms of those seniors who have investments in these profitable corporations, does the member mean a corporation like Nortel? I can remember a time when Bell stock or Nortel stock meant something, but it certainly does not mean anything now. People have taken a bash from the stock market.

The same thing goes for RRSPs. People were told to save in RRSPs, put money away, and benefit from freedom 55. What has happened to those RRSPs? In the last few years we have seen them decline significantly, to the point where seniors feel duped. They feel duped by the promises.

RRSPs in a 35 to 45 year period are charging 40% for management fees. Imagine that. That is nearly half. People thought they were saving for a secure retirement and they were duped into believing that somehow giving money to big banks, to those profitable corporations, to invest on their behalf would secure their future. They found out differently, and it is to our great shame.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Madam Speaker, there is not a lot left to say after hearing my colleagues from London—Fanshawe and Timmins—James Bay speak to this issue, but I would like to add a few notes.



*Government Orders*

I do not think the Conservatives are going to like my presentation as much as they liked some of the others about the lack of action and erratic nature of the Liberal Party. That is a matter of public record. Certainly the byelection results last Monday show that most Canadians agree. We saw a collapse of the Liberal vote across the country. In New Westminster—Coquitlam, as everyone well knows, the Liberals did not even get their deposit back. That is a seat they used to hold. Now, west of Toronto they have a handful of seats and east of the West Island of Montreal they have a handful of seats. Basically, they have been reduced to two areas of the country. I do not doubt they will be competitive in those two areas, but generally speaking, the Liberal Party simply does not reflect Canadian values and where Canadians want to go.

On the harmonized sales tax which is gouging Canadians in Ontario and British Columbia, the Liberals simply say that they are supporting it. Sure, they support it; it is a great idea to rip \$500 out of the pockets of each and every person in Ontario and British Columbia.

Enough about the Liberals. I think the verdict from the electorate in four parts of the country was very clear. The verdict also was very clear in New Westminster—Coquitlam. The issue of the harmonized sales tax was front and centre in that campaign.

The Conservative Party dumped hundreds of thousands of dollars of partisan Conservative material into the riding. It spared no expense. It simply flooded the riding with partisan political advertising. The Conservative Party sent in its members of Parliament and ministers. It had a good local candidate. What the government was saying was that British Columbians should not be concerned about the HST.

The verdict from British Columbians was clear. In what was a very competitive riding, there was a landslide for the NDP. Fifty per cent of the vote went to the NDP. A split that was only 3% went to 15%.

If we apply the results of the byelection in New Westminster—Coquitlam across British Columbia, there are a dozen Conservative MPs in B.C. that would lose their seats. There is also a handful of Liberals left in B.C. and they would lose their seats.

My point is this. For the Conservatives to say that somehow the HST is not an issue and that British Columbians should just forget about it as it will be imposed come hell or high water would be a serious mistake, because British Columbians said no to the HST last Monday. That is something that will have an impact whether we talk about Abbotsford, Kamloops or any other riding in British Columbia.

The Conservatives, working with Gordon Campbell, trying to force the HST on people is simply not going to wash. I hope they will heed the very clear message from the byelection in B.C. and that they will step back from the brink on this because British Columbians do not want the HST.

I need to mention that the reason the NDP is supporting Bill C-51 is to try to save the government from itself. With a great deal of pomp and circumstance last spring, the government announced the home renovation tax credit and the first time homebuyers tax credit.

Particularly with regard to the home renovation tax credit, the Conservatives went out and picked up buckets of money from the Canadian taxpayers, ran off to build their signs and put up their Internet ads and all their partisan ads that are paid for by taxpayers, but they forgot one thing. They forgot the paperwork. They were telling Canadians to use the home renovation tax credit, that they would actually get their money back, but the Conservatives did not do their paperwork. They did not actually introduce the legislation for the tax credit. Can anyone believe that? Can anyone believe how irresponsible a government would be to tell Canadians to do their renovations and then the government does not do the paperwork to put the tax credit in place?

● (1805)

All of those Canadians who in good faith saw the buckets of money the Conservatives put into those huge signs that they love to put up everywhere, the Internet ads and all the other ads that they put in with taxpayers' money, thought that meant the Conservatives had done their paperwork, but they had not. If this bill does not pass, people will be left high and dry, having budgeted for the home renovation tax credit, having budgeted to make those renovations. Because the Conservatives did not do their paperwork, we would essentially be having people go even further into debt.

The average Canadian family over the past 20 years of Liberal and Conservative financial mismanagement has seen the family debt load double. That is a crisis. Many of the families who sorely needed renovations to their homes got them on credit. The NDP, because we are the conscience of this Parliament and often the only party that actually reads the legislation being brought forward, realized that if we did not adopt the bill, Canadians who in good faith went through the process would be stuck with the bill, and that is simply unacceptable.

On the home renovation tax credit, on the first time homebuyers tax credit, on the income deferral for farmers, on the working income tax benefit and on all those measures announced in pomp and circumstance, we are voting yes because we simply believe that Canadians need to see government keep its commitment.

We are appalled that the Conservatives did not do their paperwork, that they just ran off with their partisan advertising rather than do the first step, which most responsible Canadians would do, which is after they promised something they should introduce the legislation to make it real, but no, they did not do that. They spent all their time running off with buckets of money and putting up signs to advertise themselves. They got those big cheques with the big Conservative "C" logo on them and they ran around the country showing them, but they did not do step one, which was to introduce the legislation.

Of course, we will be voting for this in an effort to save the government from itself, but does that mean it has a blank cheque, as the Liberals have done 80 times? Does it simply mean we will let the Conservatives do anything they want? Certainly not. We have been very, very clear.

*Government Orders*

For example, the harmonized sales tax will have a profound negative impact on Canadians living in British Columbia and Ontario. The governments are in damage control. We saw the Conservatives and Liberals in Ontario announce that they are giving Timbits that are HST-free, but it is absurd to give back a few pennies when they are ripping \$500 off the average individual, and \$2,000 off the average family of four.

When they take all that money in a tax shift to appease the biggest companies in the country, the companies that love to offload their money and their jobs into the Caribbean, or Houston if it is an energy company, they are essentially saying to ordinary Canadians that they have to pay for this massive tax largesse that they are giving out for free. There is no performance required. The companies do not have to keep jobs. They can shed jobs; they can cut jobs; it does not matter. They will give those companies a gift in Ontario and British Columbia. It is a gift from the Conservative government to the biggest companies and there is a shift in the tax burden, because we always have to balance our books. As a financial administrator in the past, I know that well. The money has to come from somewhere. The Conservatives said that they would give all this largesse and ordinary British Columbians and Ontarians will have to pay for it.

It does not only impact the families. Two thousand dollars for an average family is a horrible impact. That is why the results in New Westminster—Coquitlam were so clear. Any time there is a byelection, or if there is an election in the spring, it will be the same verdict coming back to the Conservatives, unless they reverse engines and pull back from this phenomenal unjust tax imposition, this tax shift on the backs of ordinary Canadians.

We have said we will not support the HST. We will vote against it. Unlike the Liberals and the Conservatives who are working together on this, we will simply fight the penalty of the HST because of what it does to ordinary families, and also for what it does to community businesses.

● (1810)

In my prior life before coming here, I was very fortunate to be honoured with two business excellence awards. I have worked with the local Chamber of Commerce and the Board of Trade, and I have worked in the business community with social enterprise. I believe profoundly that community businesses need to have the tools for growth. The NDP's approach has always been to provide an educated population that provides that additional level of productivity to ensure that community businesses prosper, because when families prosper, community businesses do. We do not believe, unlike the Conservatives and the Liberals, that we offload money to Houston and the Caribbean and that somehow magically creates a strong economic development initiative here at home.

What we are saying is when there is more support for health care services, more support for social services, when people in the community have a higher quality of life, that has a positive impact on community businesses.

The HST does exactly the opposite. By ripping off ordinary British Columbians and ordinary Ontarians, there are people in the community who have less money to spend. I have not talked to a single small business owner in Burnaby or in New Westminster who supports the HST. I have talked with the hairdressers and barbers

who are really concerned because, of course, there will be an increased tax on their products. I have talked to people who are involved in restaurants, not just in the Lower Mainland but also in places like Kamloops and Calgary. They are concerned that when we have an HST increase like that, essentially their clientele has less money to spend and it affects the community business and starts a vicious spiral downward.

For those reasons, this is not a blank cheque for the Conservative government. We are saving the government from itself on Bill C-51, but we are going to be fighting in this House to ensure that the HST is not brought in. British Columbians have very clearly told the Conservatives to stop the HST. British Columbians have told them to roll back this misguided, irresponsible attempt to give even more big business largesse and tax credits to the largest companies and to put the focus where it needs to be, on a better quality of life for Canadians and on more supports for community businesses. That is where we want to see this government going. We are going to vote yes on this bill, but the Conservatives are on notice that they have to start acting responsibly.

● (1815)

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am sure the House is very impressed with the accolades the member has received from business organizations.

In Ontario the manufacturing sector is collapsing. The hollowing out of the city of Toronto, in terms of the loss of jobs, is extremely traumatic.

The bill does not deal with the HST, but the bill does deal with the stimulation of confidence and the creation of capital investment. I would point out to the member that the leakage of capital in the province of Ontario is undermining the manufacturing industry somewhere to the tune of \$80 billion. That has been established as the capital loss.

I believe in community development, but if we cannot create the capital because we are overextending ourselves with deficits, where is the money coming from to create jobs?

It is one thing for the member to be asked questions about the HST, which is part of the issue in terms of a strategic economic plan, but is the member also giving people the straight answers with respect to if we do not replace that capital the jobs will not be created, and the knowledge economy that we have talked about will not be created? Is the member being honest with respect to answering completely those kinds of questions? I did not get any confidence from him today that he would be totally up front with respect to that kind of reasoning and leadership that this House is required to give, the legacy we are trying to create.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, number one, the NDP always believes that the strength that this Parliament has comes from actually listening to the public, a bizarre concept for Conservatives and Liberals to swallow, I think.

*Government Orders*

What we have heard from British Columbians overwhelmingly was that they simply do not buy the argument that more handouts to corporate CEOs, more handouts to the energy sector in Houston, and more handouts to the banks in the Bahamas is some intelligent attempt at economic strategy. Taking \$500 out of the pockets of an individual, whether a pensioner or a student, or taking \$2,000 from a family of four so that they can pay for this incredible largesse to the biggest and most profitable companies in Canada is simply irresponsible.

The public spoke last Monday. Liberals lost their deposit. Conservatives were blown out. They were simply flooded right out of New Westminster—Coquitlam. They can heed that call or they can keep going the way they are going, but if they keep going the way they are going, there will be a lot fewer Conservatives from British Columbia and Ontario, and there will be a lot fewer Liberals from Ontario in this next Parliament.

They better heed what Canadians are telling them.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I really enjoyed the member's speech and I know he did talk about the HST issue, where certainly in Ontario and B.C., it has actually now become a vote-determining issue.

It is rather strange that we have a government office that is on the verge of announcing an extension of the home renovation tax credit for next year, which by the way we applaud, but by the time the homeowners are in full swing next summer doing their renovations, they are going to be faced, in B.C. and Ontario, as of July 1, with new taxes on all these home renovation projects, which essentially are going to wipe out any benefits that they would get under the program in the first place.

I would like to ask the member whether he has any comments regarding that potential scenario for next summer?

• (1820)

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member for Elmwood—Transcona asking this question because that is the perversity of what the Conservatives are trying to impose on Ontarians and British Columbians, with the complacency of the Liberal Party.

Essentially, all of these little tax credits that they have been doling out while they shovel money off the back of a truck to the most profitable banks and energy companies in Canada, in the guise of this somehow being some sort of economic strategy, in the end, with the HST, they end up taking more than they have given over the past couple of years.

They give out these little tax credits to ordinary families who are struggling with lower incomes over the last 20 years. Two-thirds of Canadian families are actually earning less now than they were 20 years ago. Their tax load has been doubled. Liberal and Conservative economics is really an oxymoron. Essentially what they have done is produce permanent poverty for the middle class in this country. Instead of addressing those overall economic fundamentals, they impose the HST, so community businesses have less and will have to cut back on their staff and employees. Ordinary Canadian families have less to spend and less to clothe their kids, less to pay for their

housing, less to pay for their meals and all of those things. It is absurd.

That is why, in this corner of the House, we are saying to Conservatives that they have received a very deep warning from New Westminster—Coquitlam and they better heed it.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the hon. member talked about the HST. The government is trying to make Canadians believe that the final say on the HST belongs to the Premier of Ontario and the Premier of British Columbia.

At this end of the House, we know that that is not true. The NDP knows that is not true. The Bloc knows that is not true and the Conservatives know that is not true. We are not sure what the Liberals believe so we are going to leave them out of that scenario because they are not even sure what they believe themselves.

I would like to ask the hon. member this. How do we make the government understand or make Canadians understand that the final say for the HST in Ontario and British Columbia belongs to the federal government and not the provincial governments?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Madam Speaker, the member for Nickel Belt is a terrific member of Parliament who stands up for northern Ontario. We need more of that in the House. We need people to stand up willingly for ordinary Ontarians and ordinary British Columbians.

The public was very clear. What was a competitive seat is no longer. The Conservatives were simply blown out of the water in the lower mainland of B.C. on the HST. The public clearly understands what the member for Nickel Belt is saying.

The question is: Are the Conservatives going to get the message? There are a dozen British Columbia Conservative MPs who will not be in the next House unless they listen very carefully to the verdict and the message that was given last Monday. I hope for their sake they are willing to listen to the public. It is a bit different listening and taking a message from British Columbia to Ottawa rather than what we see from Conservatives who generally bring their message from Ottawa to B.C., and they try to ram it down the throats of British Columbians.

One of their messages was that the HST has nothing to do with them despite the \$2 billion in bribe money. They claim they have nothing to do with the HST. People in New Westminster—Coquitlam heard the debate. They heard the comments of the Prime Minister and the finance minister. They saw the budget. They have seen everything the Conservatives have done to force this on British Columbians. British Columbians have said they do not want it. The Conservatives should understand the message. Conservatives have to heed what B.C. has told them.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

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

[*English*]

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The chief government whip has asked that the vote be deferred until tomorrow at 3 o'clock.

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor:** Madam Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 6:30 p.m.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*Translation*]

MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, last June, I asked the Minister of Natural Resources a question about medical isotopes. I asked her what the government was doing to ensure that Canadians diagnosed with cancer or whose doctors suspect cancer did not have to wait for diagnostic procedures because of a shortage of medical isotopes due to the closure of the Chalk River nuclear facility.

[*English*]

The minister went on about how the government had considered it a very serious issue since November 2007, but the reactor at Chalk River served to produce industrial and medical isotopes which, as I said, are used to diagnose and treat various cancers and heart disease.

There are approximately two million cancer tests using radioactive isotopes that are normally performed in Canada every year. According to the specialists here in Canada, about 80% of these tests will not be able to be performed while the reactor is shut down. That is not me talking. These centres are being forced to import isotopes at a much higher cost to the provinces in order to conduct the tests.

There have been delays. Thousands of cancer patients or Canadians suspected of suffering from cancer have been told that the diagnostic tests will not be performed within the normal delay but will be further delayed. It has led to a worldwide shortage of medical isotopes because Chalk River supplied approximately one-third of the world's supply. The lives of thousands of Canadians and around the world are at risk.

According to AECL, the isotopes supplied by Chalk River on a daily basis in the past were used by 76,000 individuals spanning 80 different countries throughout the world. The first shutdown of Chalk River was clearly a warning call to the government to begin a plan for an alternative source, to secure suppliers for that, and to determine what Canada was going to do on a long-term basis.

The concerns were first raised almost two years ago after the first Chalk River shutdown, but we lost critical time because the government did not come up with a plan the first time that Chalk River was shut down. In fact, it was only this past summer that the Minister of Natural Resources announced an expert panel to assist her in reviewing and assessing proposals submitted by the private and public sectors for alternatives to producing molybdenum-99 and technetium-99m, which are the key medical isotopes that are currently in short supply around the world.

She only launched this expert review panel on June 19, 2009. That in itself is proof that the government did not take the first shutdown of Chalk River in November 2007 seriously or begin to produce an alternative plan should it be required to shut down again. According to the government's own press release, the expert panel will report to the Minister of Natural Resources by November 30, 2009. That is some 10 months after the second shutdown of Chalk River.

As a result of this, we have provinces that are being forced to supply themselves with isotopes from outside of the country at a much greater cost. It is—

• (1830)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue because, although it has been months since the member asked the question, we have been busy taking care of this issue in ways that she obviously does not understand. If she had talked to medical providers, provincial governments and the federal government she would have known that we are working together to address this problem and deal with a tough situation.

We actually owe thanks to the medical providers and to the governments for being able to deal with the situation as we find it. We should avoid the politicization the Liberal Party has engaged in with so many of these health issues over the last few months.

If the member were to take the time to talk to the people in the medical community, they would tell her of the people who are willing and have been working overtime and of the people who have been moving their shifts in order to accommodate the supply of isotopes. They would talk about administrators who will admit that they are now working far more efficiently than they have in the past in order to get the procedures delivered to the patients. They will talk about patients who are receiving appropriate care. She can go to the news media to find those reports but she certainly can talk to the healthcare providers who would give her information about the fact that adjustments have been made, Canadians are receiving their treatments and this issue is being dealt with.

It is interesting that we have also been able to work with the international community in ways that the Liberal government never could. It seems to me that there is no use in politicizing these issues. The Liberals are struggling to get traction on any issue and it is obvious that they want to politicize these issues. It is almost like they are throwing lines out trying to snag something desperately that they can use to try to save themselves but it is not working. It is not working with isotopes and it is certainly not working with H1N1 because the government, led by the health minister, has been able to come up with an emergency plan to see the approval process through in record time. We have been able to work with the provinces and healthcare providers to distribute the vaccine across the country and we began to move ahead on the immunization process ahead of schedule.

Do the Liberals thank us for a job well done? Of course they do not. They want to politicize this as much as possible, and that was seen in the H1N1 discussion when one of their members had to apologize for the types of communications that she was sending out to deal with this issue.

I plead with the Liberal opposition to stop this bottom trawling. It is time for us to begin to work together and recognize what has actually been happening. As the member opposite is well aware, the resources have been put into AECL. The minister has instructed it to give absolute priority to the safe and reliable return to service of the NRU as soon as possible. AECL has advised us that based on the evidence collected to date, those vessel repairs can be made and the NRU will be safely returned to service in the first quarter of 2010.

The member mentioned the international leadership the minister has provided, and she certainly has done that. As well, we have chaired a high level group to carry the international agenda forward and the expert review panel will be making its report in just a few short days here. We look forward to it coming forward with suggestions. As far as I know, it has received 22 different proposals on how to move ahead with the nuclear industry and the isotope production in the future. We look forward to seeing the report and to moving ahead on those issues.

• (1835)

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Madam Speaker, I am quite dismayed that the member would accuse me and my colleagues of trying to politicize the situation. In fact, with the terms that he used in his speech, he and his government are politicizing this. I asked simple questions and I asked for simple answers. I did not blow anything out of proportion. For instance, the Minister of Natural Resources pointed out in a speech in September that:

### *Adjournment Proceedings*

Canada is by no means obligated to coordinate global efforts or ensure global isotope supply levels.

That is not me speaking, that is the minister for the government speaking.

[*Translation*]

The Coalition Priorité Cancer au Québec said:

In 2009, in Quebec, more than 40,000 people will be diagnosed with cancer and 20,000 people will die of the disease. "The federal government owes it to these people to address the issue immediately", said a spokesperson for the Coalition Priorité Cancer au Québec.

[*English*]

That is not—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. David Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the thing that is clear here is that this government has gone beyond obligation. It has gone toward cooperation and leadership, which is what we can be most proud of. In every area, not just in terms of the medical isotope issue, this government has brought Canada to new levels on the international scene.

We are proud of the fact that we are leading the way in fostering a new global direction for medical isotope productions. A reliable, resilient global supply will be dependent on more than one provider. We look forward to working with the expert review panel and its solutions and the presentations that it will be making for the future direction for isotope supply in this country and around the world.

### CANADA-U.S. RELATIONS

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay (Willowdale, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my question this evening relates to the buy American clause of the U.S. stimulus package known as the U.S. recovery act.

It states that only American-made iron, steel and manufactured goods can be used in U.S. stimulus projects. Because the clause is subject to U.S. trade obligations, it is subject to NAFTA and thus applies to the U.S. federal government. However, it is the U.S. states and municipalities that are not subject to NAFTA, and it is exactly the states and municipalities that the buy American clause is directed at. That, unfortunately, is exactly what is happening to the significant detriment of Canadian business.

Let me quote a description of just one example from a recent Canwest article, if I may. This was an article from just this past week.

For the second time in six months, pipe fittings in California are being ripped from the ground because they were stamped "Made in Canada," a move manufacturing companies say hurts both sides of the border.

Cambridge Brass Inc., a Canadian brass fittings manufacturer, discovered Thursday that it stands to lose more than \$1.5 million in this most recent fallout from the Buy American protectionist measure.

Greg Bell, vice-president of sales and marketing for the Cambridge, Ont., company, received a call Thursday from the City of Sacramento, where the parts were being fitted into the public water system. He was told his product was no longer acceptable because it was not made in the United States.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Two months ago in this House I asked a question of the Minister of International Trade. I stressed at the time that words were not enough because, to the minister's credit, the minister acknowledged that the buy American clause was problematic and that we who stood for free trade found that the U.S. protectionist measures were offensive to the concept of free trade. We acknowledged that it was harming Canadian business. To the minister's credit, he said all of the right words.

Unfortunately, and as I raised in my question two months, words are simply not enough. We needed to see action. The minister acknowledged at the time that in fact Canadian provinces and territories had gathered together and agreed on a procurement process, which is a very big step in the right direction. We all agreed, acknowledged and wanted to congratulate Canadian provinces and territories for coming to such an agreement.

The real question remained unanswered, because Canadian action clearly was not going to be enough on its own. The real question, and this was what I had asked the minister, was what the government had done to recognize that a quick visit did not address the fundamental issue that states and municipalities were in fact continuing to cause real problems for Canadian businesses by being required, under the stimulus act in the United States, to not buy Canadian products but to buy only American steel and iron and manufactured goods. By a quick visit, I am referring to the fact that the Prime Minister's last visit to Washington for photo opportunities was a mere 42 minutes long.

I will repeat the question that I had asked at the time, with a reminder to the government and this House that we are no further along, now two months after the original question, in dealing with the buy American clause, which is causing such difficulty for Canadian firms.

It is not words but action that we must have from the United States. That is not how it works in the United States. It is not enough to write letters, to have nice words and to provide weak protest. It was 42 minutes with the president, giving the Prime Minister a photo op and a few pat-on-the-back words, but that was it. We must have people on the ground right from the beginning, not just premiers and territorial leaders, but the municipalities and the states throughout the United States—

• (1840)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Willowdale for her interest in this subject. It gives me an opportunity to further explain the buy American issue.

Our government has been working on a number of fronts to resolve the Canadian industry concerns regarding the expanded buy American requirement in the recent U.S. legislation. We are also working closely with the provinces and territories to secure immediate relief for Canadian businesses from the buy American provisions of the recovery act.

The provinces and the territories have truly stepped up to the plate. They have reached an unprecedented agreement on an ambitious

package of sub-federal procurement commitments. This has given the government the consensus needed to engage the U.S. administration and seek an exemption for Canada from the buy American provisions of the recovery act.

Canada's proposal also seeks agreement from the United States to explore a permanent reciprocal government procurement agreement, an agreement that would help us avoid these kinds of challenges in the future. The government sent this proposal to the U.S. in late August and the Minister of International Trade announced that Canada's chief negotiator, Mr. Don Stephenson, assistant deputy minister, Trade Policy and Negotiations, would lead Canada's negotiations efforts.

Since then Canadian and U.S. negotiating teams have held several sessions to work toward an agreement on this issue.

Senior members of government, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade, continue to raise Canada's concerns with the buy American provisions at every opportunity, including at the Prime Minister's meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama and with key members of the Congress and the administration. As President Obama noted, our teams have been working together to ensure that these sources of tension diminish.

However, we are not stopping there. We also recognize the importance of getting our message out to all levels of decision makers in the U.S.

We are pursuing a robust advocacy strategy, building a coalition of U.S. allies to advocate in favour of keeping procurement markets open with Canada and engaging consuls general and the industry groups. Provinces and territories are supporting these efforts, while working to ensure that U.S. decision makers understand that open procurements are in the best interest of both our economies.

The Government of Canada has also undertaken traditional advocacy, delivering our messages directly to U.S. legislators, the U.S. trade representative, the secretary of commerce and their respective officials.

Finally, the government is conducting information sessions for Canadian industry to inform businesses about the opportunities created by the recovery act and strategies to access U.S. government procurement.

In particular, we are helping to clarify the process for obtaining waivers from the buy American requirements. A number of waivers have been issued so far for Canadian products, a testament not only to the integration of supply chains between Canada and the United States, but to the fact that the U.S. recognizes the importance of the integration.

For example, of the 17 project specific waivers issued by the Environmental Protection Agency, 10 have been for Canadian products, many of which are state of the art water treatment products.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Our efforts will continue in the time ahead. Both Canada and the United States depend on strong unfettered trade between our countries. Canadians can count on their government to work with our American counterparts at all levels to address this issue as quickly as possible.

I appreciate having the opportunity to address it here this evening.

• (1845)

**Ms. Martha Hall Findlay:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate very much the comments from my colleague. I think we both appreciate the legion of other colleagues here to give us our respective support.

However, we continue to have the same problem of words. We have heard words, “we have been working”, “the provinces and territories have done their work”, which I have already acknowledged full credit there, “but we continue to raise Canada’s concerns” and “there is a coalition of effort”.

These continue to be words. We have not seen any reduction in the buy American effort that requires U.S., states and municipalities to buy only U.S. steel, iron and manufactured goods when using any of the stimulus funds that have been provided by the U.S. federal government.

This continues to be a problem. Could the hon. member please provide some concrete answers to Cambridge Brass that has been based in southern Ontario for more than a century, but has acknowledged that this might be the final straw that causes the company to—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. parliamentary secretary.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** On the contrary, Madam Speaker. We are moving forward. The Government of Canada is working hard on a number of fronts to keep markets open to Canadian suppliers, particularly in a time of global economic downturn.

Both the Prime Minister and the Minister of International Trade continue to raise Canada’s concerns with the buy American provisions and press the U.S. for a quick resolution at every opportunity. Our objective is for both countries to partner in economic recovery by providing Canadian and American companies with secure, predictable access to procurement markets on both sides of the borders at all levels of government.

Quite frankly, these are not simply words. We have pursued this at every level. We are continuing to negotiate with the Americans and fully expect, at the end of the day, to have a better agreement in place than we presently do. Unfortunately, with the buy American provisions of the economic recovery act, it presents a challenge for us but that is a challenge we are working on non-stop 24/7 and we intend to overcome.

**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 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)





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