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OFFICIAL REPORT
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Monday, March 8, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

CONTENTS

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 8, 2010

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1100)

[*Translation*]

BROADCASTING ACT AND THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT

Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ) moved that Bill C-444, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act (broadcasting and telecommunications policies) be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Madam Speaker, in 2006, the Conservative government recognized Quebec as a nation. Since then, that same government has resisted giving Quebec the tools it needs to protect its identity and enable its culture to flourish.

This bill addresses the problem by making it possible for the federal government to delegate to any province that requests it authority to provide for the regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications within its boundaries. This bill would therefore enable the Government of Quebec to create its own broadcasting and telecommunications commission.

By giving the Government of Quebec the authority to regulate broadcasting and telecommunications, this bill would give Quebec full control over its cultural development and national identity. Guiding principles for the sector must take into account conditions in Quebec and the French fact, as well as regional differences within Quebec.

Given the impact of telecommunications and broadcasting on Quebec culture, oversight of this key sector must fall to Quebec. The purpose of regulation is to change the telephone services market, to determine its guiding principles and alter marketing strategies. It would also ensure the orderly development of telecommunications, ensuring access to people in all regions of Quebec. With respect to broadcasting, this bill would ensure diversity of voices and French-language content.

This is not the first time Quebecers have asked for this. This is something they have always wanted. Since the early 20th century, Quebec has argued that broadcasting should be within its

jurisdiction. In 1929, Quebec's premier, Alexandre Taschereau, passed a provincial broadcasting bill. In 1932, the Government of Canada responded by passing the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Act, which established the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission, forerunner to today's CRTC.

In 1968, Daniel Johnson said that Quebec should have more control over the sector. He said:

The assignment of broadcasting frequencies cannot and must not be the prerogative of the federal government. Quebec can no longer tolerate being excluded from a field where its vital interest is so obvious.

A few years later, then-Premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, said:

In cultural matters, the decision making centres we need for our own cultural security will have to be transferred, particularly in the telecommunications sector. Here again, it is a simple matter of common sense—

Jean-Paul L'Allier, when he was communications minister in the Bourassa government, said:

It is up to Quebec in the first instance to develop a global communications policy. This policy is indissociable from the development of its education system, its culture and everything that comes under Quebec's domain.

As we can see, Quebec has been claiming this right for a while now. It has been claiming this right because it affects all forms of expression of Quebec's culture, its very soul.

This claim has nothing to do with partisanship. Quebec governments, of every political persuasion, have claimed control over broadcasting and telecommunications from Ottawa. In this regard, I would like to quote the member for Pontiac, when he was communications minister in Quebec.

Quebec must be able to establish the rules for operating radio and television systems, and control development plans for telecommunications networks, service rates and the regulation of new telecommunications services—

Quebec cannot let others control programming for electronic media within its borders...To that end, Quebec must have full jurisdiction and be able to deal with a single regulatory body.

This is nothing new, you might say. But I wanted to share my colleague's statement to once again illustrate the many contradictions that are so typical of this government. Does this mean that the interests of Quebec vary based on where they are being defended?

•(1105)

More recently, in 2008, Quebec's minister of culture, communications and the status of women and the minister of Canadian intergovernmental affairs and the reform of democratic institutions wrote to the federal government in an attempt to negotiate agreements for the broadcasting and telecommunications sector.

Private Members' Business

The letter was written to inform the federal government of Quebec's desire to begin talks, as soon as possible, with a view to concluding a Canada-Quebec agreement for the broadcasting and telecommunications sector and an agreement relating to culture. Considering the distinct culture of Quebec, the only French-speaking state in North America, they said they felt that concluding such an administrative agreement would make it possible to better reflect the specific characteristics of Quebec content in broadcasting and telecommunications, and would serve as recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting Quebec's specific culture.

The letter also pointed out that the Government of Quebec has always insisted that it should play a role in this area and that, in 1929, it was the first government to legislate the broadcasting sector, given the need to safeguard Quebec culture and identity.

The letter goes on to say that Quebec believes that the federal government must not act alone when it comes to broadcasting and telecommunications, and that Quebec would like to see the creation of concrete input mechanisms for the development and definition of government policies, particularly concerning decisions related to activities that primarily affect Quebec and concerning content.

More recently, in 2009, the minister of culture, communications and the status of women of Quebec had this to say:

Entering into a communications agreement would guarantee that Quebec's specific content would be taken into account more in broadcasting and telecommunications. It would also mean recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting Quebec's unique character.

In light of these statements by men and women of all political stripes, there is no doubt that Quebec agrees with the basic principles of the bill.

It has become increasingly urgent to take action on these issues since this government came to power, because it is proceeding with a massive dismantling of the telecommunications regulatory framework.

This government even issued an order, which was condemned by the Union des consommateurs and thousands of small telephone service providers in Quebec, calling on the CRTC to regulate telephony as little as possible.

Action is also urgently needed because technology is evolving extremely rapidly nowadays and regulatory authority is a huge issue.

I would like to quote from the report the CRTC submitted to the Telecommunications Policy Review Panel:

On 16 December 1992, prior to coming into force of the Telecommunications Act, the Commission initiated a public proceeding to examine whether the existing regulatory framework should be modified in light of developments in the industry. In that proceeding, the Commission noted that, in an information-based economy, a modern and efficient telecommunications infrastructure is a fundamental component of, and vehicle for, the production and consumption of goods and services.

The Commission noted further that, in recent years, technological change and increasing competition had significantly altered the nature of the telecommunications industry, so that, in addition to fulfilling the basic communications requirements of all subscribers, telecommunications had evolved into a tool for information management and a productivity enhancer for business.

These changes had allowed the telephone companies to develop a wide range of new audio, video and high-speed data services to satisfy the demands of both business and residence consumers in the local and long distance markets.

It becomes essential to regulate telecommunications when you understand that they have become a "tool for information management".

It is therefore impossible to take a purely commercial approach to telecommunications. The very nature of this business affects the transmission of information throughout Canada.

We condemn this approach, but we know that in the current context, Quebec can only play the role of a lobbyist and is unable to have any effective influence on the federal government. Telecommunications also affect the cultural sector.

As a group of Quebec cultural organizations underscored in a memoir to the Telecommunications Policy Review Panel in July 2005, "changes in technology are bringing about the convergence of computer science, telecommunications, radio and television".

● (1110)

In closing, there are a number of reasons to pass this bill and there is general consensus in the nation of Quebec on its basic principles.

The CRTC makes its decisions based on Canadian realities and not on Quebec's reality. Quebec is viewed as just one of several regions in Canada, which means the regional differences within Quebec are not taken into account.

The cultural development of the Quebec nation hinges on its ability to determine its own terms of transmission. Quebec has no control over these.

Should the government deem a decision to go against the interests of Quebec, it is the National Assembly, and not the House of Commons, that would have the power to call for a review.

Partisanship aside, the nation of Quebec has been convinced for a number of years now that having its own regulatory power over the instruments essential to protecting and promoting its culture through telecommunications and broadcasting is what is required to ensure its full development.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I can remember the debate we had in this place on the question of establishing Quebec as a nation. I think all hon. members will recall that the issue of what constituted a nation was not agreed to by members of the House.

Notwithstanding that, during that period of time we also understood that Quebec and its broadcast technology and cultural agencies were representing all French-speaking Canadians, both inside and outside Quebec. There is a substantial number and, in fact, a disproportionate amount of funding for cultural development that goes to Quebec to support francophone Canadians all across the country.

I want to ask the member whether that constituency of French-speaking Canadians outside of Quebec would also be served by a new mandate for a Quebec telecommunications commission?

Private Members' Business

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Madam Speaker, it is rather obvious to us what constitutes the Quebec nation: it is the culture of the only French-speaking state in North America.

There is a huge divide between the Quebec's cultural vision and that of Canada, as demonstrated by this government every day. It believes that culture is inherently entertaining. The Olympic relay is a good example of that.

I have spoken with a number of organizations and people in my riding. The only reason we are seeking sovereignty is because Quebec needs to develop its culture and to be master of its own house.

I am a sovereignist simply because to properly promote its culture Quebec must control 100% of its tools.

I am not alone in thinking this way. The minister of culture, communications and the status of women in Quebec's Liberal government is in full agreement with our position.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am somewhat surprised by the answer of the member promoting this bill to my colleague's question about Canada's French-speaking community outside Quebec. My colleague has chosen to ignore this community rather than honestly answer the question.

I will ask the question again: does he not give a damn about francophones outside Quebec?

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Madam Speaker, that is not it at all. The French fact, and not only from a Quebec point of view, was treated in an outrageous manner during the Olympic games.

When I go to the other country, that is, west of the Outaouais River, I am often asked what will happen to francophones outside Quebec when Quebec becomes independent.

And yet, it is quite simple. When I see the statistics showing the decline of the French fact in the rest of Canada, I am just as outraged as my colleagues from across Canada.

If there were a strong francophone state in North America, we would be able to preserve the French fact at least in one corner of the continent. It would not be like Louisiana and we would be able to help our colleagues in the rest of North America.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Sherbrooke has 50 seconds, so he should keep his question brief.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, my question will also answer my Liberal colleagues. In June 2005, the CRTC approved licences for SIRIUS Satellite Radio Canada and Canadian Satellite Radio Inc. to operate subscription radio services. The licence stipulated that 10% of its services had to be Canadian, 2.5% of which were to be in French.

Is that how the CRTC and the Liberal government of the day protected the French fact?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Repentigny has 20 seconds to respond.

Mr. Nicolas Dufour: Madam Speaker, I will be brief.

This is a strong point that bolsters what I was saying. Unfortunately, the French fact appears to be in decline, and if Quebec were to take full control of a Quebec broadcasting and telecommunications commission, we could protect the French fact in Quebec at least.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Being the lone woman among the occupants of the Chair, I take this opportunity to wish an excellent International Women's Day to all Canadian women inside and outside the House.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women has the floor.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Madam Speaker, you took the words right out of my mouth since I was just about to wish an excellent International Women's Day to all women in Quebec and in Canada, to all our female assistants who give their all to help us day in and day out, and to all empowered women.

I have the privilege to rise today to speak to this bill that would create new regulatory authorities in Canada in the area of communications. I want to explain why we believe that this approach would be detrimental to the development and competitiveness of Quebec's communications businesses.

First of all, I want to stress the importance of communications for Canada and for Quebec as well as for our future. Broadcasting and telecommunications have a significant impact on local and regional distinctiveness throughout the country and in Quebec.

The Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications industry is transforming because of the growing presence of digital technology. Businesses in that industry are adapting to the change to maintain or even increase their competitiveness in a market where consumer expectations are more and more pressing.

Not only does this digital transformation change the way the industry operates, but it also creates numerous opportunities in Canada, in Quebec and abroad for our dynamic businesses.

In fact, our Canadian broadcasting and telecommunications companies show good potential for becoming key players in the global communications market, and we take great pride in that.

However, to achieve this potential, our companies need an efficient and responsive regulatory framework that fosters their competitiveness. We believe that Bill C-444 does not support that.

Bill C-444 would fragment regulatory control and supervision. In fact, companies would be governed by both a federal regulator and a provincial regulatory body.

Having two responsible bodies would create numerous problems which would hinder the development of these sectors of strategic importance to Quebec as well as Canada. Having two responsible bodies would create contradictory policies applicable to the regulated companies, not to mention the inevitable negotiations between the two levels of government and associated delays.

Private Members' Business

In addition, the management of the airwaves by two separate bodies raises other issues. First, to ensure interference protection for spectrum users, bilateral and international agreements have to be entered into. However, there are no simple solutions that would allow the CRTC, Industry Canada and a potential Quebec body to ensure the coordination of airwaves.

Besides, none of Quebec's major telecommunications companies are limited to that province. The key players in the private sector—the likes of Quebecor, Astral, Corus, Cogeco and Bell—have broadcasting, and some even have telecommunications, interests outside Quebec.

Cogeco, for instance, has cable broadcasting activities in Quebec, Ontario and abroad, while Quebecor has television broadcasting activities in Quebec and Ontario, with some services also being offered in other Canadian provinces.

Creating a Quebec version of the CRTC would make things more complicated rather than simpler, and it would be contrary to the wishes expressed by the industry for streamlined regulations so as to foster the competitiveness of companies.

Moreover, this would come at a time when broadcasting is facing structural challenges beyond the economic circumstances because of technological developments, new consumer habits and new business models.

For example, the transition to new digital platforms represents a major challenge that segments of the broadcasting industry, such as traditional direct-to-home broadcasters, have to address.

• (1120)

Given that the system needs a consistent regulatory approach as a result of media company convergence, the national scope of this industry and the need to adapt to this new reality, the creation of another regulatory authority would only add to the administrative burden and increase duplication and confusion, and would not serve consumers or businesses.

Furthermore, the cost of another regulatory authority would probably be assumed by consumers or the industry, and in the end, taxpayers would be the ones left to foot the bill.

At time when the broadcasting industry is undergoing major changes and devoting all its energy to adapting to those changes, the government must not do anything to impede innovation. On the contrary, it must ensure that the system serves the interests of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

These interests are protected by the existing system, given that the Broadcasting Act and regulatory framework take into account the interests and demands of francophone and anglophone broadcasting markets across Canada, particularly through public consultations held by the CRTC.

Our government is convinced that the current regulatory framework allows French-speaking communities and businesses in Quebec to express any concerns that may need to be addressed.

Furthermore, when a licence is granted, renewed or modified, the objectives of the Broadcasting Act must be taken into consideration.

That is how the Broadcasting Act and current regulatory structure are contributing to the protection and promotion of Quebec's social, cultural and economic objectives in the communications sector.

The current structure is also what has allowed broadcasting companies and dynamic cultural communities to thrive in Canada and especially in Quebec, which is something we can be very proud of.

Thus, we believe there is no need to change the existing regulatory framework, as Bill C-444 proposes. Nor do we need to change a system that works, one that is adapted to the needs of current markets and that protects the interests of Quebecers and Canadians.

• (1125)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-444, tabled by my colleague from Repentigny.

This bill has to do with the structure of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC.

Before going any further, I would like to point out that the CRTC's mandate is to ensure that both the broadcasting and telecommunications systems serve the Canadian public. The CRTC uses the objectives in the Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act to guide its policy decisions. It is very important to understand that.

The CRTC plays an important role in protecting and promoting Canadian content. To quote Ghandi:

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.

That is exactly the role of the CRTC, to ensure that the different cultures are fairly represented on radio and television. It protects Canadian culture from other more imposing cultures—in particular that of our neighbours to the south—but it also aims to reflect the face of Canada and the regional diversities within the country.

The CRTC plays an important role in protecting culture, and I believe that we must strengthen the role and mandate of the CRTC, not weaken it in the way my colleague and friend from Repentigny proposes.

In fact, I do not see how splitting up the CRTC would strengthen its mandate. Would five, seven or even ten regional or provincial CRTCs do a better job than the current CRTC?

For these reasons and many others, I will vote against the bill tabled by the hon. member for Repentigny.

I will do him a favour and make a suggestion. I know he has worked very hard on his bill. However, rather than presenting it in this form, I invite him to take our approach and to concentrate on the challenges facing the protection and promotion of Canadian content. Naturally, that includes Quebec content which, we must say, is absolutely extraordinary.

Our society is changing at a dizzying pace. Everything is moving very quickly. We are moving into a digital economy, which has an impact on just about everything, and most certainly on culture. The means of telecommunications are evolving at lightning speed, as is broadcasting.

Private Members' Business

We must react quickly to all these changes, anticipate them, and even take a leadership role in them.

With all due respect, I do not see how this bill will help achieve these objectives.

I would like to make another important point.

I have had the opportunity to meet people from just about everywhere in Quebec and I have yet to be told that this bill is a priority or that it is a step in the right direction that will deal with future challenges.

As the heritage critic, I have been able to travel to all regions of Canada to address the matter of culture.

• (1130)

I do it every time I have the opportunity. Just last week, I went to Île Perrault and visited the Pointe-du-Moulin museum. I also went to Chicoutimi, or I should say Saguenay, to Quebec City, to Sherbrooke and to other places. I met with artists, broadcasters, producers, people who spend every day of their lives working in the arts and culture sector. They all told me about the importance of reinforcing that sector. For example, they told me about the importance of increasing the budget of the Canada Council for the Arts, which plays an extraordinary role and has great credibility. Projects are evaluated by peers. There is unanimity, both in Canada and in Quebec, about the need to increase the budget of the Canada Council of the Arts. I am sure my colleague agrees with me on that.

People, not only across the country but also across Quebec, told me about the importance of bringing back programs that were cut by the Conservatives and that played a crucial role for our cultural institutions. I heard a lot about that in Quebec City, as well as in Montreal and in the various regions. I heard about that, but not necessarily about my colleague's bill, even though I appreciate the importance it has for him. I did not hear once about this bill. People told me about the Canada Council of the Arts, about restoring programs that were cut, about the importance of continuing to support the CBC because it plays a crucial role in the various regions of Quebec and of Canada.

Consider the role of Radio-Canada in francophone communities outside Quebec. In the regions of Quebec, Radio-Canada's role is absolutely essential. People talked to me about that. Unfortunately for my colleague, no one talked to me about the bill before us. We have to ask ourselves the following questions. Will the bill that would split up the CRTC make it possible to meet the challenges I was referring to earlier? Will it help us meet the challenges stemming from the government's decision to deregulate the telecommunications sector? In my opinion, it is clear that the answer is no. Not only does the CRTC need to be split up, but it needs to be given more power to intervene. It needs to have the necessary muscle to make decisions and apply them.

I agree that Quebec has its own unique characteristics. I am from Quebec and I am proud to be a Quebecker. There are also challenges common to all our artists, creators and broadcasters. There are challenges common to Quebec artists, artisans and creators and their counterparts in Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia. That does not detract from Quebec's unique characteristics that we recognize and will continue to defend. These characteristics have to

be taken into account. The current system does that and will continue to do so.

In Quebec, the cultural sector is absolutely fascinating. It is vibrant. Real treasures are being created in Quebec, as they are elsewhere. We have to support our creators and artists. The CRTC plays an important role in doing that.

Earlier, I invited my colleague from Repentigny to join us in finding common solutions to the challenges raised by the economy of the future and by the dizzying pace of change. Similarly, I invite him to continue to fight against the ideological cuts made by the Conservative government. I am talking about the brutal cuts to the programs that are essential to our artists. As I was saying, I have toured Canada and Quebec.

• (1135)

I invite my colleague to fight with us to reinstate these programs in order to strengthen Canada's culture.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would first like to offer you my congratulations on this International Women's Day.

I am proud to stand today to speak on behalf of the people of Timmins—James Bay, a region that reflects the inclusive character of Canada. Forty per cent of the population of Timmins is francophone, 50% is English-speaking or multicultural and perhaps 10% speak Cree of the James Bay region.

My Bloc colleague believes that the French language outside Quebec is weakened. That is not so. I invite him to come to Timmins with me and see the phenomenal efforts the Franco-Ontarian community is making to maintain a very strong and vital identity in my region.

I have seen how much the francophone and aboriginal communities have grown closer and influenced each other in my lifetime. In my riding of Timmins—James Bay, we believe that sharing our cultures with each other has made us stronger.

I have the honour today to speak as the spokesman for the NDP on matters of culture and heritage. As an artist, musician and writer, I have travelled across this country, and I know the needs of artists. I support the programs that support the development of strong cultural industries across Canada.

As the spokesperson for arts, I have met with many artist groups in Canada and Quebec. And what do the artists, actors and producers tell us? There is a need for greater support for touring and promotion of Canadian artists, including those in Quebec. There is a need to improve tax credits to support film and television projects across Canada. There is a need to support the Canada Council and support programs for musical and artistic diversity.

As for the role of the CRTC, there is much room for improvement. The artists demand more accountability, more transparency from the CRTC. The CRTC must have the ability to impose administrative financial penalties to ensure that cable companies and broadcasters meet their responsibilities under the Broadcasting Act.

Private Members' Business

Certainly, a key element of cultural policy in this country is the role of the CRTC. The issue today is whether the Broadcasting Act supports the development of Canada's cultural and linguistic communities. This is an important question for the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, of which I have been a member for six years.

In 2005, I participated in a study on the future of Canada's film industry, and in 2006, in a CBC/Radio-Canada study. We held hearings across the country. Did any witnesses suggest that we separate the CRTC into regional operations? No.

In 2007, our committee studied the Canadian television fund. Producers, actors and artists all spoke with one voice. They wanted the government to support the CRTC in its efforts to ensure that the cable giants put money into the system.

In 2009, our committee studied the local television crisis. Not a single witness called for the dismantling of the CRTC as a national agency.

Nevertheless, I do not object to studying my Bloc colleague's bill. Certainly, the NDP supports Quebecers' efforts to maintain a strong cultural identity. We support the Canadian Broadcasting Act provisions respecting maintenance of Quebecers' cultural voice.

• (1140)

However, if we do send this bill to committee, we will have to study many different issues. I would point out to my colleagues that one of the CRTC's key responsibilities is to reflect Canada's regional diversity and to serve the special needs of Canada's regions.

If we fragment the CRTC into regional units, how will we protect the rights of Acadians, Franco-Ontarians and other cultural and linguistic communities across Canada? That is a very important question.

Although we have some questions about Bill C-444, we believe that the only way to talk about the issues, hear from experts and find solutions is to study the bill in committee.

We must not forget that the House has recognized the Quebec people as a nation within Canada. The NDP supported that.

The NDP will therefore support sending this bill to committee, not because it wants to break apart telecommunications regulation in Canada, but to ensure a strong framework for protecting linguistic and cultural diversity within the province of Quebec and across our great country.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to start by congratulating my hon. colleague on a very eloquent presentation. Unfortunately, during questions and comments, I have seen two members from Quebec, one a Conservative and the other a Liberal, take the defence of the CRTC because they were under the impression that the CRTC was under attack. That is not it at all.

My friend from Honoré-Mercier should be reminded that a former colleague of his, Liza Frulla, told us that it was not likely that a body like the CRTC would be able to continue much longer to decide alone what is good for the provinces, and the French-speaking province in particular.

As for the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou, another member from Quebec, she should perhaps be reminded that, not so long ago, the hon. member for Pontiac and Minister of Foreign Affairs stated the following:

Quebec must be able to establish the rules for operating radio and television systems, and control development plans for telecommunications networks, service rates and the regulation of new telecommunications services... Quebec cannot let others control programming for electronic media within its borders... To that end, Quebec must have full jurisdiction and be able to deal with a single regulatory body.

It is clear that the Conservative MP as well as the Liberal MP, who are both from Quebec, are turning their backs not only on their former colleagues, but also on their current ones by defending the CRTC to the detriment of a potential QRTC. Also, I might add, these two members from Quebec are thumbing their noses at and turning their backs on the Quebec National Assembly.

We will recall that more recently, in a letter to the Minister of Canadian Heritage dated March 23, 2009, Quebec's Minister of Culture, Communications and the Status of Women, Christine St-Pierre, wrote:

Concluding a communications agreement would make it possible to better reflect the specific characteristics of Quebec content in broadcasting and telecommunications. It would also recognize the importance of protecting and promoting Quebec's cultural distinctiveness.

Quebec's culture is indeed a major argument, but a QRTC would also play a fundamental economic role. In fact, the Minister of Industry recently decided, in an order, that Globalife was a Canadian company, despite the fact that, in its final ruling, the CRTC had said that this was not a Canadian company and should therefore not be sold what it was seeking to buy.

This is a huge and very dangerous precedent. We are prepared to defend Canada when the interests of Quebec are also at stake.

How can a country allow a foreign takeover of its telecommunications?

Whoever has control over telecommunications has control, end of story. One day, that control will extend to content as well.

So we must understand, when we are talking about the CQRT, a Quebec radio-television and telecommunications commission, there are two important words to look at—in both the CRTC and the CQRT: telecommunications and radio-television, that is, broadcasting.

Telecommunications means the transmission, emission and remote reception of messages, signals, writing, images, sounds or information of any nature, by wire, radio, optical or other electromagnetic system, and any other means by which a message can be transmitted.

Under these conditions, it makes sense that a society would want to regulate this transmission capacity in order to have effective control over its territory.

• (1145)

Radio-television, the broadcasting component, refers to the use of waves to transmit a message, either sound over the radio or sound and images on the television. These are two important points in the definition of telecommunications, if a society wants to have effective control over its territory.

The Conservative government even wrote in its budget that it wants to sell effective control in its territory over telecommunications tools, which could be called the medium, and broadcasting, which could be called the message.

We must protect the CRTC in order to protect Canada and all of its residents. Quebec is not the only nation to want a decentralized CRTC; others want the same thing.

In 1991, the House of Commons research branch produced a document entitled *Culture and Communications: The Constitutional Setting* written by Mollie Dunsmuir. It stated:

In the early days of communications regulation, radio exemplified broadcast technology and telephones exemplified telecommunications. Radio seemed to fall most naturally under federal jurisdiction, as the transmission waves could not necessarily be confined within provincial boundaries, while telephone regulation seemed most amenable to provincial regulation because telephone “networks” were geographically controllable.

The inability to confine transmission waves within provincial boundaries was a major argument that justified federal jurisdiction. Yet many countries allow their provinces or regions authority over the airwaves. This is true of Germany, which has 15 provincial regulatory bodies and an association of regulatory authorities.

Spain has an audiovisual council for Navarre and another one for Catalonia. Belgium has two separate regulatory bodies, based on language: one Flemish and the other Walloon. So it is possible, despite the inability to confine waves, to regulate broadcasting at the provincial level.

Regarding Belgium and Spain, it is rather significant that the regulatory bodies are linked to the different cultures that make up those countries. Quebec's distinct culture amply justifies the creation of a regulatory body in Quebec, since those organizations basically regulate content.

It is also important to note that many countries have decided to separate telecommunications and broadcasting, opting instead for two separate bodies. Thus, in France, the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel regulates broadcasting, and the Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques et des postes regulates telecommunications. This model prevents possible conflicts of interest between the regulation of broadcasting content and telecommunications content, one of which is the responsibility of the minister of culture and communication, and the other, of industry.

This model could work for Quebec. Considering the Conservative government's approach—granting ownership of telecommunications to foreign interests—it is our duty as Quebeckers to protect this area. In fact, the competition created by this approach would not be unfair, but rather fierce, because foreigners want to invest here.

In closing, I would remind the Liberal and Conservative members that there are people in their parties who agree with us.

• (1150)

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-444.

First, Madam Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to you today on International Women's Day. You are the first lady of this chamber. You preside over our debates with impartiality and dignity. On

Private Members' Business

behalf of the hon. members in my party and on behalf of all hon. members in this House, I thank you.

This bill, if passed, would open the door to creating regulatory authorities for broadcasting and telecommunications in other Canadian provinces.

• (1155)

[English]

I will attempt today to shed some light on the current business environment that communications companies are facing, and why adding another regulator and bureaucracy would hinder Quebec companies from growing and competing in the new digital world.

Broadcasting and telecommunication systems around the world are in the midst of a fundamental transformation. These changes are being brought on by the rapid adoption of new digital technologies which are opening up the operational environment for communications in unprecedented ways.

Traditional gatekeeper powers are falling away. Barriers to entry are being lowered, meaning that companies are facing competition from new, unexpected players. Lines between companies, devices, platforms and content are disappearing, and consumers are beginning to control and participate in their content experiences.

The introduction of digital platforms are also dissolving the territorial and technical boundaries that formerly limited Canadian companies, including those from the province of Quebec, from reaching and exploiting global audiences.

[Translation]

Today, there is not a single major broadcasting or telecommunications company in Canada that is limited to a given province. In fact, the key players in the communications sector—whether Quebecor, Astral, Corus, Cogeco or Bell—have broadcasting and, in some cases, telecommunications interests outside Quebec. And it is a very good thing too, since this helps them to compete in an increasingly competitive environment.

Given the convergence of the media and the national scope of the broadcasting and telecommunications industries, an additional regulatory framework would only create overlap and confusion, which is not in the best interest of consumers or the companies.

[English]

Increasing the regulatory burden and confining one's view to provincial mindset smacks of analog thinking, thinking that is totally out of step with the borderless reality of the digital world. Adding complexity to regulation, which the bill would do, would only hinder the capacity of the industry to meet the promising opportunities ahead to further develop and prosper, and to continue to offer Canadians a diversity of content and service choices.

The Budget

This government's current approach is already responsive to the needs of Canadian companies, including those that are headquartered in the province of Quebec. It recognizes that these companies are better served by just one set of rules that allows them to compete in a world of choice.

[Translation]

Taking such a risk at this time needs to be avoided at all costs, given not only the dramatic changes affecting communications but also global economic uncertainty.

[English]

If we want our communications companies, in Quebec and in the rest of the country that we all love, Canada, to be successful in the modern communications world, it is essential that we maintain a single, streamlined approach which encourages them to be innovative and adaptable in a world of change.

Let there be no doubt from my remarks that I have just made about where I stand on this issue.

[Translation]

Allow me to end the suspense as to how I intend to vote. I am voting in favour of the workers in the broadcasting and telecommunications sector. I am voting in favour of the economic development of Quebec's companies that are doing so well all across Canada. I am voting against Bill C-444.

• (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member should have four and a half minutes left the next time this bill is called for debate.

The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 5 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as you know, the Liberals are opposed to this budget because it is a bad budget, and they will therefore vote against it. At the same time, we are well aware that Canadians do not want an election. We will therefore vote so as not to trigger an election.

We have worked hard over the past few months, especially during the time when Parliament would have been working if it had not been prorogued. We held about 30 round tables and meetings that produced some very good ideas and some new policies that are different from the Conservatives'. We will continue working in this way in order to win Canadians' trust as an alternative government.

Why do we say that this is a bad budget?

[English]

Let me count the ways. It is a bad budget because it does nothing for one of the main challenges facing Canada today, which is the state of retirement income and pensions. Liberals and others have proposed a supplementary Canada pension plan and amendments to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. This budget does nothing except offer yet more consultations: consult, consult, consult. We believe the time is for action.

It does nothing on the environment. It guts Canada's renewable energy programs, which are critical not only for the environment but for green jobs. Our situation now is pathetic if we compare Canada with other countries, notably the United States.

I could go on endlessly about the bad things in the budget, but I want to be a little more focused. I want to focus on only three areas: jobs, innovation and the way in which the government is proposing expenditure restraint.

We have said time and again that the top priority for the Liberal Party in the year 2010 is jobs. We have an official unemployment rate of over 8%. We have real unemployment of some 12%. We have the prospect for only a very gradual recovery in jobs. We have the government itself in the budget saying the unemployment rate this year will be higher than the unemployment rate last year.

We came up with three very concrete proposals for the creation of jobs in three of the most important areas: manufacturing and forestry, which are suffering; youth, who are suffering with an unemployment rate twice the national average; and the high tech jobs of tomorrow, which are critical for building new jobs in the new economy of the future.

The Conservatives might ask how we will pay for this plan and what about the deficit? Let me provide the answer to that. The Liberal plan is carefully costed at some \$200 million to \$300 million a year. At the same time, we identified extravagant, wasteful, partisan Conservative spending amounting to \$1.2 billion a year, which could be cut immediately. This includes rolling back partisan advertising spending to the levels of 2005-06, substantially less wasteful management consulting, limiting ten percenters to members' own ridings which would save some \$20 million, and a rollback of the unwarranted expansion of the Prime Minister's own department. If we add up those savings, they amount to \$1.2 billion a year.

The Budget

I think even Conservatives know that \$1.2 billion is a bigger number than \$200 million. Therefore, they could have funded our jobs proposals worth \$200 million to \$300 million, cut the wasteful \$1.2 billion, and would have had close to \$1 billion left over. What could they have done with that? Why not beef up renewable energy? Why not give money to hard-pressed students who got nothing in the budget? Why not do something for seniors and pensioners? Why not pay down the debt or some combination of all of the above?

The Liberal proposal addressed the most critical issue of the day, jobs, and it did so in a fiscally responsible manner, proposing a financing mechanism that would more than pay for these proposals and leave almost \$1 billion left over for other worthy initiatives.

However, the Conservative policy in this budget is worse than doing nothing for jobs. In fact, it destroys some 230,000 jobs. This is in two ways. First, the estimates indicate that the Conservatives failed to spend at least \$1.4 billion of infrastructure money which was allowed to lapse. According to their own methodology, when that number is combined with contributions from other levels of government, it is worth 30,000 jobs. They failed to get the money out, as Liberals have been saying for months. Now the facts have become clear in the estimates and that has led to a loss of 30,000 jobs.

• (1205)

Worse than that, the Conservatives are proposing punishing hikes in employment insurance. They are proposing, beginning next year, to raise EI premiums at the maximum rate allowable under the law for several years. This is a tax on jobs. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, this act alone will destroy 200,000 jobs. I have verified with some of my economist friends that this is indeed a reasonable number. The government will raise an additional \$6.3 billion from EI premiums in the fourth year, which is about the same amount it would get if it raised the GST by one point. The government is coming in through the back door, without having to go to Parliament, imposing a punishing tax hike on the companies and workers of Canada to the tune of \$6.3 billion a year, the effect of which will destroy 200,000 jobs.

I criticize the government on two counts. First, it does not even have the honesty to admit that it is raising a tax. Yet every first year undergraduate in economics knows that a payroll tax is a tax. It could at least come clean and acknowledge it is indeed raising taxes.

The government members like to talk about a third party agency at a distance from the government, which miraculously sets these premiums as if that agency were located in outer space and as if the Government of Canada had no impact or influence over the agency. That is clearly untrue. The Government of Canada has already overruled the agency two years in a row.

Everybody knows there is only one person in the country who effectively sets the EI premiums, as he decides everything else in Ottawa, and that person is the Prime Minister of Canada. The Prime Minister of Canada is not obliged to have these punishing job-destroying EI premium hikes; he could just say no or raise them at a more gradual rate. It is entirely the fault of the government that these job-destroying tax hikes are taking place.

The nub of my point on jobs is this. First, the government could have implemented the Liberal Party's job proposals, financed by cuts in the government's own wasteful spending, with much money left over. It did not do that. It did not do anything. Worse, the government has measures that, through the lapse of infrastructure money, because it failed to cut it out, 30,000 jobs will be lost and because of punishing job-killing payroll hikes another 200,000 jobs will go down the drain.

The government has done a terrible job on jobs.

The next point is innovation. Sadly, all members know that not all the manufacturing and other jobs that have been lost during the recession will come back, some will, but not all. If Canada is to emerge from this global recession in a leadership position, we have to do research, innovate and commercialize. We have to come up with more BlackBerry-type leading-edge products to serve the global market. We will not compete with China, Vietnam and India on low wages. We have to compete with our brainpower, through innovation and getting these ideas to market and by being a successful player in the new economy.

Part of that is the green economy. As I have already said, the government has completely opted out of support for renewable energy and all the progressive green jobs that come along with it. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out in his speech, the government has opted out of support for research and innovation. It cut funds to research granting councils and then it boasts about increasing grants this year, but the grants are still below where they were before the Conservative Party came to power.

The government let the space agency funds lapse and got rid of the government's leading scientists. In all these ways it has utterly failed to support the innovation agenda, which is critical for the future success of Canada's economy.

Let me back this up and illustrate the sheer hypocrisy of the government by giving quotes from leading commentators following budgets from the time the Conservative Party came to office. After budget 2006, here is what well-known economist Jack Mintz had to say:

The one policy that could have some impact on productivity—a rollover to avoid capital gains taxes when replacing one taxable asset with another—failed to even get mentioned in the budget.

• (1210)

Following budget 2007, Nancy Hughes Anthony, then president of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said:

The government promised in November that they were going to make Canada more competitive and control spending and I think they broke that promise today.

What about budget 2008? Marc Lee, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said:

The funding announced today may fulfill its role as a PR strategy but it doesn't come close to the kind of investment that our cities need to stay vibrant and competitive.

The Budget

Finally, we have budget 2009. Here are two quick quotes.

Chantal Hébert said, “Tory budget lacking in innovative thinking”.

Elizabeth Church and Daniel Leblanc said in the *Globe and Mail*, “Money for bricks, but not talent”.

This explains the mentality of the Conservatives throughout their period in office. It has been clear, as these commentators have said, that they have no time for innovation, no time for research, no time for science. They grudgingly will support bricks and mortar to help renovate or build new buildings in universities, but then they shut down the funding for the people who would occupy these buildings. Therefore, their record illustrates a total neglect and a lack of priority attached to this area, which is so important for the future of the Canadian economy.

In ending this part of my speech, the Conservatives talk as if there is only one deficit in the country that matters, the fiscal deficit, that this has to be paid down and nothing else matters. We have the track record for paying down and getting rid of big, juicy Conservative deficits, so they do not have anything to tell us on this topic.

However, there is more than one deficit in the country. The Conservatives have to walk and chew gum at the same time. They cannot focus uniquely and solely on the fiscal deficit. We also have an innovation deficit and a productivity deficit. If we are to succeed in this world in competition with countries around the planet, we have to be more innovative, more productive and we have to address that deficit.

There is also a pension deficit, which the Conservatives do not understand because they propose no action on either the supplementary CPP or the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to help people stranded in failing companies. There is a retirement income security deficit.

There is a care deficit. Anxious middle-class families are at their wits' end to care for their children and to care for older people.

Finally, there is an education deficit.

We need to be able to do more than one thing at one time. Yes, we have to deal with the fiscal deficit, but the Conservatives ignore all the other deficits that the country faces, whether it is the education deficit, the innovation deficit or the productivity deficit. It is equally important that the Government of Canada address all these things, and the government has lamentably failed in that regard.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

My third and final point concerns the way this government is trying to reduce government spending.

All economists agree that the worst way is to make the same cuts or apply the same freezes across the board.

[*English*]

Across the board cuts or freezes are a mindless, dumb, stupid way to go. It implies that every program is equally good or equally bad, so we have the same medicine to every department, except defence, across the government. This is not the way to go. What the

Conservatives need is to apply their brains, if they have any, to assess which programs are really good, which programs are okay and which programs leave something to be desired.

That is precisely what we did in 2005. We had an expenditure review committee with ministers getting submissions from departments and picking and choosing where it would be least painful or most expeditious to find savings so we could shift from lower priority to higher priority areas. By mindlessly applying exactly the same freeze to every department, the Conservatives have abdicated their responsibility to play any thinking role in this business of restraint on government spending.

My last point is the Conservatives are deluding Canadians. They are pretending that this will be a painless exercise. If they freeze a department's budget for one year, they might get away with it. However, if a department's budget is frozen for one, two, three or four years, it will undoubtedly eat into the fabric of social programs and other services provided to Canadians. All the experts agree on this, but the government is not telling us what will be hit. Will it be the funding for training? Will it be that it will take forever to get a passport? Will it be that student funding will somehow no longer be available? Will it be that the arts will suffer because there is no money? The Conservatives are setting up a system where, without doubt, Canadians will be hurt, but they do not have the courage or the honesty to tell us which Canadians and which programs will be hurt. It is all veiled at the macro level as if this will be a painless exercise when that is the last thing that it will be.

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Markham—Unionville for his comments about a great budget. Obviously, it is as I believe the Liberals will end up supporting it.

Back in the days when I was in municipal government and the Liberals were in power in 1995-96, I remember when the provinces were slaughtered. They received 25% cuts in the health and social transfers. Those cuts and responsibilities were transferred down to those of us at the municipal level.

The member also talked about EI, which at one time the Liberals overcharged the Canadian people about \$59 billion or so and then took it and spent it. I guess that was kind of falsely helping to wrap up their financial issue. On February 26, in the Peterborough paper, the member said that even though he was a Liberal, some of those cuts had some negative effects.

What are the negative effects that the member would see?

• (1220)

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I would point out, and perhaps he did not hear me, at the beginning I said that we opposed the budget. I did not say we supported the budget. Oppose means we will vote against the budget.

With respect to the situation in the mid-1990s, I remind the hon. gentleman that we had a state of fiscal crisis induced by the reckless spending and budget of the Conservative government led by Brian Mulroney. We inherited a \$42 billion deficit, which relative to the size of the economy is way bigger than the deficit we have today.

The Budget

I remind the hon. gentleman at that time *The Wall Street Journal* was saying that Canada was about to become a third world country. It said that the IMF was about to come in and run the country because the Conservative government, under Brian Mulroney, had spent so recklessly that we were in a state of a real crisis.

The Liberal government came into power and dealt with this crisis where we were the basket case of the G7. Yes, the measures did cause some pain. We cannot inherit a big fat juicy \$42 billion Conservative deficit and get rid of it totally painlessly, but we did it. We paid that debt down to the point where we are now the best in the G7 and not the worst.

[Translation]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to ask my colleague some questions. I enjoyed listening to him speak about deficits.

The deficits obviously include the failure to distribute wealth and the deficit in sensitivity towards the most disadvantaged. It could also be said that there is a deficit with respect to women and I invite my colleague to comment on that.

In its prebudget document, the Bloc Québécois pointed out that women have particular difficulty in accessing employment insurance, that most caregivers are women and that there is a sensitivity deficit in the budget. We also point out that the budget makes cuts to Status of Women Canada. Thus, there are deficits in terms of distribution and treatment.

I would like the member to help me to understand, given that I have little parliamentary experience. Why is he speaking against the budget but will not be in the House during Wednesday's crucial vote? If he is going to be present, how can he accept that a good number of his colleagues will not be here?

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I agree completely with the hon. member that there is more than one deficit and that the deficit with respect to the status of women is an important one.

My colleague from Ottawa has reminded me that there is also a democratic deficit, attributable in part to the prorogation imposed by this government. Money will not resolve that issue.

I thought I had explained what we are going to do and why. First, we will vote against the budget because it is not a good budget, for the reasons I have listed. We are quite aware that Canadians do not want an election at this time. Therefore, we will vote against the budget in a way that does not trigger an election.

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy listening to my hon. colleague because the longer he speaks, the more he sounds like the government. I have a couple of points and then I would like to ask a question.

First, the member talked about the government raising taxes which indeed it is, but it so happens that he and his party are also supporting the harmonized sales tax in Ontario and British Columbia. That will be perhaps the biggest tax shift in the history of Ontario. He will shortly be approving the billions of dollars going to Mr. McGuinty in this budget.

In northern Ontario I see seniors every day who cannot pay their electricity bills. They are going to be hit even harder. The member and his party are supporting that.

My second point also involves seniors. The opposition party clearly supports corporate tax cuts. There is a choice that governments and opposition parties could make and that would be to freeze corporate tax cuts for the next three years. Some of that money could be used to make sure that not one senior lives in poverty in this country. That would seem to be a good choice.

When will the hon. member and his party stop adopting policies that keep seniors in poverty in this country?

• (1225)

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, I do not think the Conservatives would agree that I was supporting their budget given the tone of their questions and reactions while I was speaking.

I am afraid the problem is the NDP still lives in the sort of ancient world of class warfare from back in the 1950s. I am referring to the federal NDP. Because the NDP members have never had the experience of governing, and they never will, they live in this dreamworld which does not exist.

As for the harmonized sales tax, the fact of the matter is that the provinces decide. If the legitimately elected government of British Columbia or Ontario decides to do the harmonized sales tax, then we at the federal level cannot say, "No, Ontario, you cannot have the harmonized sales tax but, yes, Nova Scotia, you can". That is a purely logical thing and I do not understand why the NDP fails to fathom it.

In terms of corporate tax cuts, we are not proposing extra corporate tax cuts; these are already legislated. In terms of our position, especially given that we now have a strong dollar instead of a weak dollar, Canada needs a hook to attract foreign investment to create jobs and to retain domestic investment to create jobs.

If the NDP is in favour of jobs, which I assume it is, then I do not think that party would be talking this way unless the problem is that the NDP really does not understand these measures.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the last time Canada was in a recession, three things happened. First, there was a significant increase in health care costs. Second, there was an increase in social services requirements. Third, there was a very significant increase in property crime in Canada. All are funded by the provinces. The crime rate actually tracked the unemployment rate very well.

The government seems to think that we should simply focus on getting the second year of stimulus money out and then deal with everything else later. It may be very difficult to address the damage done as a consequence of focusing very narrowly on the deficit and not having that vision or understanding of the impact on the people of Canada. I wonder if the member would care to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Markham—Unionville has 30 seconds to respond.

The Budget

Hon. John McCallum: Madam Speaker, my colleague put it so clearly that I do not need more time than that. I fully agree with him. He has identified another kind of deficit. He has underlined why unemployment and jobs are our top priority at this time.

The costs are measured not only in dollars and in terms of wages lost but also in the lives of Canadians, the crime rate and other features that are extraordinarily important for Canada. That is why the government should not have a single-minded focus on only one kind of deficit—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Resuming debate. The hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with the hon. member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

I am very pleased to speak to the 2010 federal budget. As chair of the finance committee, I had the opportunity to hear from hundreds of stakeholders and witnesses on what they believe should be in the budget. I do want to thank all of those witnesses who appeared before the committee and presented their suggestions for the budget. I want to thank all members of Parliament from all parties who worked on the prebudget report which was tabled in Parliament in December last year.

The first recommendation of our committee was that the federal government continue the full implementation of current stimulus measures, pay close attention to debt management, engage in meaningful expenditure review and prepare long-term debt reduction plans to be implemented once the global economic recovery is fully entrenched.

I contend today that we have fulfilled that first recommendation, because budget 2010 takes action in three broad areas to achieve these goals. First, it delivers \$19 billion in new federal stimulus under year two of Canada's economic action plan. Second, it invests in a limited number of new targeted initiatives to build jobs and growth for the economy of tomorrow, harness Canadian innovation and make Canada a destination of choice for new business investment. Third, budget 2010 outlines a three-point plan for returning to budgetary balance once the economy has recovered.

In terms of the overall direction, it is the completion of the second year of Canada's economic action plan, our government's response to the global fiscal crisis and recession. It is part of a global coordinated plan of the G20 to respond with full monetary and fiscal policy actions: monetary policy in terms of lowering and keeping interest rates low and injecting liquidity into the financial system; fiscal policy by spending on all types of infrastructure, human resources to stimulate the economy, looking after people who are hard hit by the downturn in the economy and doing things such as work sharing. I am very pleased to see it has been extended in the budget, because it is very important in my area of Edmonton—Leduc, particularly in the area of Nisku. A lot of companies there approached me and said that they are using this in order to retain employees. Once the recovery takes place, they want to have those employees so that they do not face a skills shortage, which is what is expected in Alberta in the coming years.

In terms of the deficit, I heard loud and clear through consultations, both at the finance committee and my own personal

consultations in the riding. It was perhaps the number one issue raised. People understand that they have to budget as Canadians, as families and as businesses and they expect government to do the same. They are very pleased there is a five-year plan outlined in terms of reducing the deficit and addressing the debt issue.

Today I want to address one of the areas that was raised by the member for Markham—Unionville in his speech which addressed the area of innovation. My primary area of focus as a member of Parliament since being elected nine years ago has been in the area of science, research and development. Budget 2010 continues our focus in this area and builds upon actions in previous budgets and in the science and technology strategy of May 2007.

There are many investments in research and innovation in the budget, including a high Arctic research station, and the world-class TRIUMF facility, which I was very pleased to visit years ago as a member of the industry committee. It is a world-class facility and I am very pleased that it received funding. There is increased funding for the granting councils and for Genome Canada, the Rick Hansen Foundation, knowledge transfer and commercialization. There is additional funding for the college and community foundation program, and the National Research Council's regional innovation clusters. There is more funding for research and development of new technologies for the production of isotopes, and nearly \$400 million over five years for the Canadian Space Agency to develop the RADARSAT constellation mission, the next generation of advanced radar remote sensing satellite.

The budget recognizes that the investments of last year went toward building capacity especially with respect to the knowledge infrastructure program and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. The budget addresses the human resources issue that was certainly raised by universities and colleges across Canada.

I would like to thank Dr. Eliot Phillipson for all of his years of service with the Canada Foundation for Innovation. He has been the president and CEO since 2004. He is stepping down this year. He has done an outstanding service to his country in my view. I think all parliamentarians would want to thank him for his work.

It is often we get into partisan debate and people back home watching us debate wonder whom they should believe. Should they believe the government which is promoting the budget or the opposition which is criticizing it?

The Budget

•(1230)

What I would therefore like to do today is to quote a couple of national organizations on this budget, particularly on innovation. I would first like to quote the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, which issued a press release on March 4. Part of the release states:

The \$32 million annual investment in the three major granting councils will help universities to pursue the kinds of research that will drive innovation and produce the highly skilled workers that all sectors of the economy need. The budget also provided \$8 million for the Indirect Costs Program.

Economic stimulus efforts such as the Knowledge Infrastructure Program are helping Canada to emerge from this recession and to accelerate economic growth.

In fact, when the finance committee visited the University of Alberta, it had the opportunity of paying firsthand visits to some of the investments made under the knowledge infrastructure program.

The AUCC press release continued:

This program is making a difference on campuses across Canada and paying dividends. As the program enters its second year, Canadian universities and research partners will leverage these new and renovated facilities to generate cutting-edge discoveries.

The new investments in post-doctoral fellows will build on the stimulus infrastructure Program and the research funding announced today provided by the Knowledge Inf. The fellowship program, funded at \$45 million over five years, will be internationally competitive and will help attract and keep talented recent PhD graduates in Canada.

That is something the president of the University of Alberta, Indira Samarasekera, has hammered home many times to me, both as chair of the committee and as an MP for Edmonton.

Finally, in regard to these fellowship recipients, the AUCC stated:

Their skills and knowledge will help drive innovative research and discoveries in universities, industry and other knowledge sectors.

The universities and colleges are one side of the equation, and generally receive the bulk of research funding, particularly basic research funding.

I also have a release from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, entitled, "Budget Increases Support for Applied and Industry-Driven Research at Colleges, Institutes and Polytechnics".

I would like to quote James Knight, president and CEO of this organization:

The budget demonstrates an understanding that colleges, institutes and polytechnics are integrated with the industrial and technological drivers of the economy. They help businesses start, develop and grow. They support the private sector's need for applied research, product and process innovation, technology access and commercialization. They are the prime providers of graduates with the advanced skills required by Canadian employers.

Mr. Knight continued:

The government has listened to colleges and their business partners. Today's budget strengthens the College and Community Innovation Program, a partnership of ACCC with the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), in concert with the other federal granting councils.

As an Edmontonian, I would like to applaud the work of the president of NAIT, Sam Shaw, who has presented many times on these issues.

This government has in fact had an innovation agenda since 2006. We have implemented the science and technology strategy of May

2007 and made investments in innovation, not only in terms of basic research but also further down the line in terms of commercialization.

I would also point out that the government has taken action with respect to section 116 of the Income Tax Act. This was done as a result of a request made by the venture capital community in Canada. The action taken improves the ability of Canadian businesses, including innovative high growth companies that have contributed to job creation and economic growth, to attract foreign venture capital. It does so by narrowing the definition of taxable Canadian property, thereby eliminating the need for tax reporting under section 116 of the Income Tax Act of many investments.

The Canadian Venture Capital Association, in making representations for changes, stated:

The benefit of a broader exemption is that it would make Canada a more attractive destination for equity investments by non-residents and, in particular, venture capital and private equity funds.

Even before the recession hit, the venture capital community in Canada was facing some very tough times for raising capital and bringing great ideas started and built here in Canada to the marketplace. This change was welcomed by folks like Terry Matthews here in Ottawa, who have actually brought ideas to the marketplace. This is not a budgetary item in the sense of requiring a lot of expenditure, but an essential change. I want to thank the venture capital community for raising it and I applaud the government for putting it into effect.

I would like to wrap up with some comments on the work-sharing program.

The hon. member who spoke previously talked about jobs as an issue. In fact, this is just one example. I recommend that the hon. member read page 71 of the budget, which outlines the work-sharing issue and how we as a government are focused on our investments and ensuring that companies can get through this tough time and keep their employees, their most valuable resource going forward in the future.

I recommend that members actually read and support the budget, recognizing that it is the right budget at this time.

•(1235)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, one of the major disappointments in this budget has been the lack of mention of, or any activity in or money for, environmental issues. This is the Conservatives' fifth year in government. The government has had three environment ministers and three plans, and we just have not seen anything at all.

The only two things that the government did do was to eliminate any reference to climate change on its websites and eliminated \$6 billion in existing funding.

I know there are Canadians who do not believe in the concept of climate change. In fact, the Prime Minister thinks it is a socialist plot. However, there are another 75% of Canadians who believe it is a serious issue that ought to be dealt with by the government.

The Budget

Does the hon. member have anything to say to those 75% of Canadians who do think this is a serious issue?

• (1240)

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, the question allows me the opportunity to outline what budget 2010 does in fact do for the environment.

The budget provides \$100 million over four years to support clean energy generation in Canada's forestry sector, and expands the accelerated capital cost allowance for clean energy generation equipment. It allocates \$16 million over two years to continue to implement the action plan of the government to protect the Great Lakes by cleaning up the areas identified as being the most degraded, and provides \$38 million over two years for the invasive alien species strategy of Canada. Both issues are dealt with at the Canada-U.S. meetings, which I know the member participates in.

Budget 2010 also provides up to \$11.4 million over two years to deliver meteorological and navigational service in the north, and \$8 million over two years to support community based environmental monitoring, reporting and baseline data collection there.

It also provides \$18.4 million over two years to support the annual reporting of the government on key environmental indicators, such as clean air, clean water and greenhouse gas emissions.

This environment minister has more than doubled the size of the Nahanni National Park in Canada, something that all Canadians should certainly be proud of.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I heard the hon. member emphasize investments in science and technology and post-secondary education.

However, we in the NDP feel that even in the area of post-secondary education, this is a budget that fails to help Canada move forward. One way it fails is by not really helping post-secondary students across the board.

When we talk about investments in research councils and investments in research, these are important factors, but we cannot forget that it is students who are going into these programs and it is students whom we need to be supporting.

Unfortunately, the government has not shown leadership in this area. Across the country tuition fees are rising at historic rates and student loans are beyond the \$13 billion mark. Students are facing financial challenges at a time when there are no jobs.

While it is important to invest in research, would the member not agree that the really important part is to help students at the bottom level to ensure they will have a better future?

Mr. James Rajotte: Madam Speaker, it is an important question. As someone not too long out of university, I certainly agree that it is absolutely essential to support all students.

The biggest way we can support students is by ensuring the continuation of transfers to the provinces to pay for essential services such as health care, education and social assistance.

We are not doing what the previous government did, which was to cut 25% out of the Canada health and social transfer. Our

government has committed to maintain those transfers to the provinces and, in fact, to increase them year over year until 2014.

In terms of support for students, it is absolutely fair to question what we are doing. One only has to look at any one of the budgets we have tabled. In budget 2007 there was an \$800 million increase for post-secondary education to ensure that students from all economic backgrounds could access these types of facilities. Education and health care are the ladders of mobility in our society and will continue to remain so because of the investments we have made in them.

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today with a great amount of pride and pleasure to speak on the budget and what it means for the province of Ontario. In particular, on this day we recognize the tremendous contribution that women have made and continue to make to our country, and the improvements we have seen throughout the years.

Because of our new budget, Ontario will continue to receive support through major federal transfers in 2010-11. Federal support for provinces is at an all-time high and will continue to grow. For Ontario, this will total \$18.8 billion in 2010-11, an increase of over \$800 million from last year and a \$6.9 billion increase from 2005-06.

This type of long-term support will help ensure that Ontario has the resources required to provide essential public services. Some examples include the \$972 million provided through the equalization program, and the \$9.1 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$243 million from last year.

In my riding, we have seen hospital upon hospital facing challenges in managing their budgets and really having to look at how they care for patients. People have asked me what the federal government is doing to help hospitals meet their budgets. Of course, the \$243 million will go a long way to doing just that.

Moreover, \$4.3 billion will be provided through the Canada social transfer, representing an increase of \$1.2 billion since 2005-06.

There is \$151 million for Ontario in the community development trust and the police officers recruitment fund, and \$196 million for labour market training.

Budget 2010 also benefits businesses and communities in Ontario by providing \$11 million per year in ongoing funding for the 61 community futures organizations. Innovative small and medium size businesses in Ontario will benefit from the new small and medium size enterprise innovation commercialization program.

Budget 2010 provides \$8 million per year to clean up the Great Lakes, a key objective of the action plan on clean water by the government.

Businesses in Ontario will benefit from the \$497 million to be invested in the Canadian Space Agency over the next five years.

The Budget

Ontario will continue to benefit from the economic action plan, which will continue to provide support to create and protect jobs, as well as assist those who are in need. Over \$4 billion will go to help unemployed Canadians to find new and better jobs, including five extra weeks of regular employment insurance benefits and greater access to regular EI benefits for long tenured workers. The temporary extension of our work-sharing agreements for a maximum 78 weeks will go a long way toward helping those looking for work, as well as struggling businesses.

We have frozen employment insurance premiums at \$1.73 per \$100 of insured earnings,

We have dedicated \$1 billion to enhancing employment insurance training programs and \$500 million to the strategic training and transfer fund.

There is \$6.6 million dedicated to enhance the federal victims of crime strategy, including access to EI sick benefits for those who have lost a family member due to a crime.

Also, \$95 million will be provided over the next two years as additional support for the registered disability savings plan to allow it more flexibility when making contributions.

Ontario will benefit further from the new resources provided to encourage innovation and commercialization. These include \$32 million per year for the federal research granting councils to support advanced research and improved commercialization; \$8 million per year to support the indirect costs of federally sponsored research at post-secondary institutions; and \$15 million per year for the college and community innovation program, doubling support from last year.

A new Canadian post-doctoral fellowship program will also be created, aimed at attracting the best young researchers to Canada.

Ontario will benefit from \$135 million over two years to sustain the regional innovation clusters of the National Research Council.

●(1245)

Farmers and the agricultural industry will continue to be able to rely on this government. Our government continues to receive and evaluate proposals to the agricultural flexibility fund. To date, \$219 million has been committed to multi-year initiatives. A total of \$10 million is expected to be spent in 2009-10 and \$52 million has been committed to 2010-11.

Since 2009, over 1,600 loans totaling \$84 million have been granted under the new Canadian Agricultural Loans Act.

Canada-wide, budget 2010 will invest \$19 billion of new stimulus funding to create jobs and secure our economic recovery. This will happen because of cuts to personal income tax totaling \$32 billion. This includes adjustments to the federal tax brackets, enhancing the working income tax benefit, higher child benefits for parents and lower taxes for low and middle income seniors. Retraining and work support totalling \$4 billion will enhance EI benefits and training opportunities to transition workers toward future employment.

Research and development funds totaling \$1.9 billion will help attract talent, strengthen research capacity, improve commercializa-

tion, accelerate private sector investment and expand market access and competitiveness to build a strong economy for tomorrow.

Infrastructure investments totalling \$7.7 billion will help create jobs, modernize infrastructure, support home ownership, stimulate the housing sector and improve housing right across this great country.

Targeted support to industries and communities totalling \$2.2 billion will create and maintain jobs in agriculture, forestry, small business, tourism and culture.

I am proud of budget 2010, our jobs and growth budget. I believe it takes the right steps for Ontario and the rest of Canada to ensure a steady economic recovery, job growth and support for those in need.

●(1250)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, on pages 84 and 85, the budget refers to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. On page 85, it refers to Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions and Western Economic Diversification Canada. On pages 120 and 121, it lists \$38 million for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, \$29 million for the Quebec regions and \$29 million for western Canada.

Given the fact that those regions were all given money and that FedNor has always been part of the budget, would the hon. member tell us what his government's plans are for FedNor?

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, FedNor continues to be a regional economic development agency that will be fully funded by this government. We now have the creation of the southern Ontario development program that was allocated in the last budget somewhere in the vicinity of \$200 million per year.

As the member knows, this government is committed to maintaining funding in those job creating federal development areas. In my riding, we have seen many small and medium-sized businesses helped by the Community Futures Development Corporations, which are, in fact, part and parcel of FedDev and FedNor. The hon. member is correct in pointing those things out.

The Budget

I can tell him what else the government will not do. It will not cut back on social transfer payments to the provinces and, in particular, to health care. I know in the member's part of the province, northern Ontario, hospitals have come under tremendous pressure in meeting their budgets. Hospitals in many of those northern Ontario communities, at least those in which I worked, such as in Hearst, South Porcupine, Timmins and various areas, such as Cochrane, are under tremendous pressure due to some great disadvantages in the forest industry.

However, I can tell the member that we continue to work on that. There is much good news in this budget with regard to retraining and other environmental assistance.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a very narrow budget that simply seeks to continue a program that is failing to get stimulus money out. We notice there is a reference in the throne speech that some 90% of the projects for the current year have been committed. Those are weasel words. The cheques are not out.

The other part of this is that this budget does not address the realities. During these difficult times there are problems with an aging society, problems with social programs and problems dealing with the basic needs.

This is my concern and the basis of my question. If we simply focus on reducing the expenditures of government departments that deliver services that Canadians need at this difficult time, will it not result in lower service levels to Canadians at a time of most need?

• (1255)

Mr. Rick Norlock: Madam Speaker, I do not live in his riding but I live in mine and I can tell him that almost 70% of the projects announced under the stimulus action plan have either been completed or have just been completed, and a few are just getting started. Shovels are in the ground and the blueprints are up and ready to go.

I just listened to the member's compatriot speak, the member for Markham—Unionville. We hear words from him such as "weasel" but that gets this country nowhere. What is disingenuous is for him to talk about having to know what department to cut back and then suggesting that we were picking and choosing which departments to cut back. There is a lot of credibility lacking in those statements.

We just had a 25% cutback in social transfer payments to the province. What does that mean? When the Liberals were in government, mothers had to find food for their children because the provinces had to raid their budgets because they cut back 25%. Hospitals were closed because provinces could no longer afford the health care because they cut back 25%.

When he talks about weasel words, he should have a—

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

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Madam Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

Today, March 8, is International Women's Day. For once, we are discussing the budget on this date. That certainly comes as somewhat of a surprise. More surprising and astonishing yet, but much less edifying, is the fact that, once again, this government has failed to pay attention to women, who represent 51% of the population in Quebec and Canada. Once again, there is nothing for women in the budget. There is so little for them in here that, as usual, they are barely mentioned. Reference is made to Canadians and Canadian workers, but with hardly any specific references to women, one can only assume that they are part of the population.

Does the government believe that women have no reason to complain because they are working and hardly manage to earn as much as their male counterparts? To this day, women are continuing to earn 21% less than men, even for the same number of hours and weeks of work. It is true, however, that most women do not work as many hours as men. Because they do not have access to adequate child care, most of them are forced to work part time. These women who are not working 35 hours a week do not qualify for employment insurance.

In this budget, the government overlooked EI; it did not make any change to EI to allow more workers to be eligible to benefits. I find that very distressing, especially since women are contributing to the EI fund and making it grow.

I also find very distressing the gall displayed by the Prime Minister in stating in this budget that he will get rid of the gun registry. Down with the mask and the secrecy. He has asked one of his members of Parliament, a woman, to introduce a bill to eliminate the part of the legislation dealing with long guns. We can see now that, all this time, his true intention was to get rid of the gun registry. This registry was established at the request of women, women whose children had fallen victim to a crazed gunman in 1989.

The fact that they had the nerve to do this, and include it in a budget, I believe, is an insult to women. I find it very insulting and I would even say I find it very distressing, because it means that this government just does not get it. Ever since it came to power, so for four years now, unfortunately, this government has failed to understand that women have something to say, that women have rights and that they have the right to exercise them. The Conservatives are trying every way they can—every subtle, twisted way—to divest women of their rights. They are trying to take away everything that we have fought so hard for over the years.

Today we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the declaration of International Women's Day. Yet here we are discussing a budget that contains nothing for women. It is so serious that Kathleen Lahey, an analyst and economist at a university in Toronto, has studied the budget and the economic stimulus plan that was supposed to be just as good for women as it is for men. She found some serious problems with this economic plan, especially in terms of investments.

Consider the following example. Only 0.00006% of approximately \$9 billion, that is, about \$572,000, was spent on improving women's shelters in Inuit and first nations communities. Only \$572,000 is being spent to improve all women's shelters, while triple that amount is being spent on improving three animal shelters in Canada.

The Budget

•(1300)

Does this mean that animals are more important to the government than women? This is not such an unfair comparison, because it is clear that the government has done absolutely nothing.

For years now, it has been making cuts to Status of Women Canada and to programs that would have given women the opportunity to conduct fundamental research. Women no longer have that opportunity because funds have been cut. Cuts have also been made or will be soon to organizations that offer family planning services and ensure that women and men who choose to have children have all the tools they need to make informed choices. Although this is happening here, the government is also pushing its agenda on developing countries. Claiming that it wants to help women and children, it is cutting funding for a number of organizations that were providing very important services to women and children in developing countries.

By cutting this funding, the government is showing yet again that it does not care at all about the health of women and children. It is wrong to claim that it cares about the health of women and children when it does not give them the chance to have all the tools they need to determine whether they want to bring a child into this world, whether they have the necessary resources to raise the children, or whether they have the right to terminate their pregnancy if necessary.

When a government like this slashes funding to women's organizations, to family planning organizations, to a firearms registry that was very functional—because police officers told us so, the RCMP told us so and women's groups told us so—and the registry is used many times every day by the police forces across Canada and Quebec, that same government has the audacity to send our Minister of State for Status of Women to the United Nations to have her say that Canada has made great strides in helping women and that women in Canada are moving forward. That is not true.

Over the past four years, Canadian women have taken several big steps back. We have taken so many hits that it will probably take us 20 years to get back to where we were four years ago. Once things start going south, it is very difficult to turn them around, to get those rights and that funding back. Once things are cut, they are cut for good. After that, it is very hard to find new money to support organizations that are critical to protecting women's rights and to fund important research and vital programs like the court challenges program. I understand why the government cut the program: it does not want anyone to say that the government is not doing its job. It does not want anyone to challenge it. It does not want any of us, as human beings, as citizens, to speak out against its decisions. That much is clear. A program that cost Canadians just 18 cents apiece was cut. Not because it was expensive, but because it made the government uncomfortable. It allowed people to stand up for their rights, allowed victims to stand up for their rights, allowed victims of crime to stand up for their rights, and allowed victims of discrimination to stand up for their rights.

Such actions make it perfectly clear that this government does not really care about women and children. Some people lie and make up all kinds of stories about how they care for the safety of children and others do not, but the Bloc Québécois really does care about children's safety. Keeping children safe means making sure that

parents have enough money to shelter and feed their children and send them to daycare. It means knowing that families will not end up with less money because they send their children to daycare. Unlike other Canadians, Quebecers get less money because they have adequate daycare services.

Unfortunately, my time has run out, but that is fine, because my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville has more to say.

•(1305)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened with great attentiveness to what the member had to say and I know she cares very much about women's issues. The facts she brings out from her perspective do not actually reflect the true facts. The true facts are that over the last five years to the last decade women have begun to increase their earning potential in this country and continue to do so exponentially. I was reading very recently how there are certain job sectors where women are not only at the same level but are actually increasing. In order words, in certain professions women are earning more than men and that is a good thing because certain professions are predominantly male and some are predominantly female.

I look at my own riding and ask where have we lacked in funding for women? I look at almost \$500,000 to the Northumberland services for women so that we can expand, actually double the size of assistance to people and their children who are being abused by their partners, and provide them with social links throughout the community.

I look at the Status of Women and the increase in funding for that. The member reflects on one area but the truth is people who actually provide the services for women, teaching literacy and so on, their funding has increased in order to deliver those services.

One million Canadians no longer pay federal income tax, many of whom are single mothers and single senior women like my mother. So we have taken them off the tax rolls. We have done a lot for women.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Speaker, it is not true that the government is looking out for women's economic security when it takes away their right to pay equity, when it refuses to increase the guaranteed income supplement for seniors and when it refuses to pay the guaranteed income supplement to the people who are entitled to it.

The government is refusing to give women what they are entitled to. It is not one office per province that Status of Women Canada should have. It used to have 16 offices, and 12 of them were closed, leaving only four.

This government is governing by manipulating and scaring people. People are afraid to say how government cuts are affecting them. It is not true that organizations are receiving money. They are sometimes waiting one, two or three years to get an answer from Status of Women Canada. The answers are not forthcoming.

The Budget

It is wrong to say that Status of Women Canada is doing its job. It is not doing its job, any more than the minister is doing hers, because she cannot even convince the cabinet that her job is to defend women, not the cabinet.

• (1310)

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I must begin by recognizing and applauding my hon. colleague for her determination and her continued fighting capacity when it comes to all issues that matter to her community and ours, but specifically as we celebrate International Women's Day, how important are her comments. Yes, they are very accurate.

We know that very little help is coming to women when it comes to the Status of Women. The cutbacks in the court challenges program was an extremely important one and I was quite disappointed. I was hoping that the government would have recognized how important the court challenges program was, not only to women but to people all across Canada. I suspect the hon. member was hoping that was going to be in budget as well. Does she have any further comments on that?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for that question.

We might have hoped that the government would restore the court challenges program in the interest of reinstating some rights, some fairness and some equality among people. Poor people cannot fight and do not have access to the courts, but a similar program could give them financial assistance to do so.

Recently, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Sharon McIvor case. Without the help of the court challenges program, this woman never would have been able to plead her case before the Supreme Court. This sort of program is crucial to defending this type of case.

In the previous budget, the government told us that it would make an exception and set up a program so that people who suffered discrimination because of their language could defend themselves. But all the government has done is set up a very small program that does not meet people's needs.

We need a comprehensive program that gives people the right to defend themselves against this government.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget today for two or three small reasons. First, this is International Women's Day and I believe women have something to say about this budget presented by the federal government. Yesterday was a rather special day because I was in my riding where many activities were organized in women's centres. Women told me that they are not fools and they realize the extent to which they have been ignored by this government over the past few years, since the Conservatives came to power, and especially so in this budget.

I would like to acknowledge the women in my riding of Terrebonne—Blainville, who asked me to give this government some messages. Of course, I did not really have to explain the budget in order for them to tell me that it is a hollow budget and that

it contains nothing for women and does nothing to improve living conditions for them or their families. Nor is there anything in this budget for Quebec.

Furthermore, it meddles in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. Today, we must debate the NDP subamendment. I will start by saying that the Bloc Québécois will vote against this subamendment because it sanctions interference in areas that fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec.

With this budget, the Conservatives have once again missed an opportunity to properly meet the economic, social, environmental and financial needs of Quebec.

For this government, and for certain members of the other opposition parties, it is as though Quebec does not exist. The Bloc Québécois does not systematically oppose every budget; however, it does oppose a budget that does not acknowledge the existence and the predominance of the needs of the Quebec nation.

The policies in this budget are geared towards Ontario and Alberta to the detriment of the pressing needs of Quebec. We have just come through a recession. In fact, we are only emerging slowly from it. All economists agree that the next year will be a very difficult one for Quebec. Quebec will experience the most difficulties pulling out of this recession. The economic recovery will be weak in Quebec compared to Canada.

There is nothing in the budget for the forestry sector, aerospace, the environment or culture. The Bloc Québécois did a prebudget consultation tour in order to ask Quebecers about their needs, what they wanted to see in the budget and whether they felt the government truly recognized the nation of Quebec. What budgetary items could the federal Conservative government include for Quebec?

A number of Bloc MPs, our finance critic in particular, did a tour of Quebec. They proposed things, compiled information and even delivered that information to the Minister of Finance. Unfortunately, none of those items are found in the budget.

Some items were extremely important to the ordinary Quebecer. None of those items are found in this budget. I will list them.

• (1315)

There is nothing for seniors, the unemployed, social housing, the homeless, older workers or informal caregivers. And these needs are found not just in Quebec, but throughout Canada. There is nothing for women, transportation, harmonized sales taxes or equalization. What is in this budget?

The Budget

There is still no answer for the agencies that, throughout the recession, which is still not over, have made recommendations to the federal government. Canadian food banks requested items that Quebecers were looking for as well. Women from Quebec and elsewhere also asked on behalf of their children, their families and themselves. There were recommendations calling for maintaining the levels of federal transfers. Of those, the Canada social transfer is being maintained, but we have not heard anything about maintaining the other transfers. There is not a word about this. Worse yet, even if some transfers are maintained, more will be lost because they are not indexed or increased.

Canadian food banks had called on the government to keep working to make the employment insurance system fairer and more comprehensive. There is nothing in the budget about this. It is not the Bloc that asked for it, but Canadian food banks. The manufacturing sector is continuing to decline as a source of jobs, whereas low-paying service jobs are growing.

Conservative members of this House often said that it was not the end of the world if people did not necessarily have extensive employment insurance programs, because they would find jobs elsewhere. Jobs have been proposed, created and made available to people, but these are low-paying jobs with no security—what we call short-term jobs. How are people supposed to live off such jobs without help from employment insurance?

What the food banks were calling for was for the government to continue increasing participation in the guaranteed income supplement. The food banks asked for that, just as the Bloc did. They also called for an increase in guaranteed income supplement and old age security benefits. They said that people can barely survive on \$14,000 a year. They also called on the government to invest in social housing and to continue investing in affordable housing. There is nothing about that in this famous budget.

What we do find, as I said earlier, are intrusions, such as the creation of a single securities commission. Not only will Quebec experience a weaker economic recovery than Canada, but I imagine that Quebec will also see businesses leave for Ontario, for Toronto, where the securities commission will be set up. It seems clear that what the government wants is to make people poorer, make the system poorer, make Quebec poorer, give Quebec nothing. The government wants Quebec to toe the line and keep coming on bended knee, as many are doing at present, to beg the federal government for a few pennies.

I do not have much time left, so I will say that my message was this. First, to the Conservative members who say that we do not understand the budget, that we are not reading it correctly, I say that we understand it quite well. Clearly, the budget has nothing for Quebec. It is also very unfair to Quebec.

• (1320)

If the members opposite are consistent and honest, they will do their research. They will stop looking at the budget with blinders on, as they are doing now, and they will open their minds—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member will no doubt provide additional information in response to the questions.

The hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

[English]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member's comments. I am dumbfounded why she and her party have decided not to vote in favour of the budget.

A member of the government operations and estimates committee, I know she pays a lot of attention to small and medium-sized businesses. This budget addresses that. It provides new funding and resources for small and medium sized enterprises.

I know Quebec is an extraordinary jurisdiction for manufacturers. The budget outlines the elimination of tariffs on our manufacturers. In fact, I think we are the only jurisdiction in the world to do that. I am not sure how that cannot impact positively on the manufacturers of Quebec.

On page 236 of the English version of the budget, it outlines another \$1 billion for social housing in the country on top of another \$1 billion that was already committed last year as part of our economic action plan.

I know the member was in the House for year one of our economic action plan. That plan has seen over 7,000 projects across Canada, including in Quebec, for roads, bridges, sewers and other infrastructure that will allow our businesses to compete with anybody and that will allow our communities to grow. I am not sure why she is voting against that.

As a newly appointed member of the status of women committee later today, I look forward to meeting with women, and continue to do that in my riding. Those women tell me they are energized, excited and confident that they can compete with anybody in Canada and anywhere in the world. I have a lot more faith than they do—

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Speaker, I would like to wish good luck to my colleague, who will be sitting on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, where there is a lot of work to be done. Women will have to clearly explain to him what it means to be a woman with no career who is trying to find housing, and raise and feed her children.

We used to sit on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates and will perhaps again. It is true that I defended small- and medium-sized businesses. The government is not even giving loans or loan guarantees to SMEs in the manufacturing and forestry sector. These companies have no money; it is time to wake up.

The Budget

I understand why my colleague would ask a question like that, but I would be ashamed to ask it myself.

• (1325)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, but first, I would like to congratulate all women and wish them a happy International Women's Day.

Our colleague said that she would not support the NDP's subamendment. The tax breaks given to major banks and big businesses represent a lot of money. If the amendment to eliminate these tax breaks passed, we could use that money to help women, children and seniors.

Why will the Bloc vote against a subamendment that would help the women, children and seniors of Quebec?

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: Madam Speaker, one must not compare cabbages, apples and oranges. There is a lot of material in the NDP's amendment to the amendment. We agree with taxing large banks and big corporations, but not with the NDP putting the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan in the same basket.

The member must realize that these are two different things. The Canada pension plan is a Canadian, and therefore federal, plan, whereas the Quebec pension plan belongs to Quebec, and we do not want anyone to mess with it. That is clear.

The member is asking for British Columbia and Ontario to receive compensation for harmonizing their sales taxes. That is what Quebec has been asking for since 1991.

An hon. member: We agree.

Ms. Diane Bourgeois: If they are in agreement, they should mention Quebec along with British Columbia and Ontario. Let the sales tax be harmonized as soon as possible for Quebec.

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of budget 2010, which continues year two of Canada's historic economic action plan. I will be splitting my time with member for Essex.

As the House knows, last year, as we debated budget 2009, Canada's economy was in the grips of the deepest economic recession since the 1930s. Due to the prudent and early actions of this government, our economy entered the global recession later and less deeply than most other nations. However, we were not immune and we were swept along with the current.

To address this global crisis, our government reacted swiftly by introducing Canada's economic action plan, which included timely and targeted investments in transportation, water treatment and delivery, colleges and universities, libraries, police and fire stations, affordable housing and recreational facilities among other infrastructure projects.

I would like to point out that the city of Mississauga received the largest contribution to important and necessary infrastructure projects from any Canadian government in history. In fact, the former Liberal member of Parliament from my riding said, "The

recent infusion of infrastructure stimulus dollars from several different programs is the largest pot of money ever bestowed on the city of Mississauga and the region of Peel by our two senior levels of government".

I am also advised by the mayor of Mississauga that virtually all of these approximately 138 projects are well under construction and that many have already been completed.

If people visited our fair city today, they would be hard-pressed to travel down any major artery without witnessing the sights and sounds of many ongoing, fast paced construction projects.

In addition, the Government of Canada has invested more than \$35 million in Go Transit Mississauga, which will ease the daily commute for thousands of people. This calculated investment is taking cars off the road, reducing gridlock, decreasing smog and greenhouse gas emissions and improving delivery times for the goods and services produced in our region.

I am most proud of our government's historic investment in education, research and innovation through the construction of a new Mississauga campus of Sheridan College and the investment of \$35 million in a new instructional centre at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus. I would like to inform the House that both of these educational buildings are well under construction as we speak.

I am very pleased to see that these historic and vitally important investments in our people and in our knowledge infrastructure will be continued and completed through budget 2010.

Budget 2010 introduces a number of new initiatives to enhance innovation, which I believe are important to help equip our young people to continue to build the economy of tomorrow. Some of these measures include investing \$45 million to establish a post-doctoral fellowship program to help attract the research leaders of tomorrow to Canada, increasing the combined annual budgets of Canada's research granting councils by an additional \$32 million per year and doubling the budget of the college and community innovation program.

The budget also provides Genome Canada with an additional \$75 million for genomics research. I understand that with the matching private sector funds this will provide \$150 million for this important research.

For those who were unfortunately laid off from their jobs in the depths of the global recession, our government has provided and continues to provide significantly enhanced employment insurance benefits and skills training benefits for long-tenured workers. These measures have helped ease the pain experienced by our manufacturing sector.

Indeed, the enhancements of budget 2009 to the work-sharing program saved many thousands of jobs across Canada. In fact, 160,000 Canadians have benefited from work-sharing agreements. By extending work-sharing agreements by an additional 26 weeks and allowing greater flexibility in the qualifying criteria, budget 2010 will continue to save jobs until our economy fully recovers.

The Budget

Through all of these measures, our government has primed the economic pump. As the Minister of Finance reported last week, these measures have worked and our economic is once again pumping growth and new jobs.

As part of my duties with the Standing Committee on Finance, I had the privilege to travel across Canada and consult with many Canadians and various interest groups. It was made clear to me and to our committee that Canadians wanted our government to focus on jobs and on the economy. To highlight this commitment, since July 2009, the Canadian economy has generated 135,000 net new jobs and encouraging statistics on growth and job creation are emerging each month.

• (1330)

To be sure, there is more road yet to travel to return to the vibrant rate of growth that we enjoyed prior to the onset of the global recession. That is why budget 2010 is continuing to implement planned infrastructure stimulus measures, and continues to support and retrain laid-off workers and invest in innovation. However, at the same time as our economy rebounds our government is taking prudent steps to ease off on the accelerator to ensure that our debt and deficit remain manageable.

Following the implementation of the stimulus measures announced in 2009, our government is prudently proposing in 2010 to take measures to return to balanced budgets. We will do this by restraining growth in government spending and by undertaking a comprehensive review of spending on overhead and administration costs.

Our government is leading by example and tightening its own belt. We will do this by freezing the total amount spent on government salaries, administration and overhead. We will introduce legislation to freeze the salaries of the Prime Minister ministers, members of Parliament and senators.

As we know, it is easy to spend and there are always many good ideas for government spending programs, but governing responsibly means having to make tough but prudent choices. In my view, budget 2010 makes these prudent choices.

We will not do what many members of the opposition would propose. We will not balance the budget on the backs of the sick and our students by cutting provincial health and education transfer payments, as was done by the previous Liberal government in the 1990s, nor will we balance the budget at the expense of pensioners.

I am glad to see that this month we will be launching public consultations on how to improve Canada's retirement income system. Finally, we will not balance the budget by raising the tax burden on hard-working Canadians and introducing job-killing increases in business taxes.

As a former business lawyer with over 20 years of experience in advising entrepreneurs, I can say that applicable business taxes are a major factor in every decision to invest and create jobs in Canada. In the high tax era of previous governments, I unfortunately saw thousands of good job creation opportunities slip away from Canada's economy.

Today, one of the great hallmarks of our economy is our comparatively low deficit to GDP ratio and reasonable corporate and small business income tax rates. Canada's overall tax rate on new business investment is the lowest in the G7 and below the OECD average. By 2012, Canada will have the lowest statutory corporate income tax in the G7. In my view, Canada's comparative advantages in debt and tax levels among the G7 nations will continue to make Canada one of the most favourable places in the developed world to invest and create good, high value competitive jobs.

As the Minister of Finance has pointed out, before the recession Canada had the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7 and after the recession Canada will still have the lowest debt to GDP ratio in the G7 by an even wider margin.

Budget 2010 introduces a number of other key strategic new measures to enhance competition and reduce barriers for business. This includes making Canada a tariff-free zone for manufacturers by eliminating all remaining tariffs on productivity-improving machinery and equipment, and goods imported for further manufacturing in Canada.

This important initiative will be a significant incentive for our manufacturing sector. It is estimated that this commitment will create 12,000 jobs, diversify trade and boost Canada's manufacturing sector, as well as its overall productivity. I believe, by establishing the first tariff-free zone for manufacturing among G7 and G20 partners, this budget will have a great impact on the protection and creation of manufacturing jobs in my region of Ontario.

Budget 2010 introduces a number of important changes to the taxation of foreign investment in Canadian business which will greatly enhance the ability of Canadian businesses to attract foreign venture capital through revisions to section 116 of the Income Tax Act. In my business career, I saw too many innovative high technology entrepreneurs who were forced to relocate their companies and the high-value jobs associated with them to the United States in order to access needed venture capital.

Terence Matthews, one of Canada's most successful high technology entrepreneurs, has said, "This amendment will have an immediate positive and direct impact on Canada's ability to grow a robust Canadian technology industry".

Recently, the Leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Mississauga—Brampton South met with business leaders in my city of Mississauga. According to press reports, they were told that "Mississauga and Brampton business owners want Ottawa to simplify regulations so they can concentrate on running their companies instead of tackling mountains of paperwork".

• (1335)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. Perhaps the hon. member can complete his comments during questions and comments.

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Mississauga—Erindale for his comments.

He talked a great deal about innovation and the importance of research. As the Liberal Party critic for science and technology, I often consult universities. Furthermore, I am privileged to have three universities in my riding.

The message I am hearing from researchers at our universities is this: the two main priorities in terms of research funding are increasing the budgets of Canada's three research councils and increasing funding for the indirect costs of research at our universities.

Can my colleague from Mississauga—Erindale explain to me why the government allocated only \$8 million for indirect research costs in this year's budget? He said they have increased funding for research councils by \$32 million, while last year, they cut \$148 million over three years. How does he reconcile those two actions?

• (1340)

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Madam Speaker, as a member of the Standing Committee on Finance, I travelled across the country on prebudget consultations last year. Every university in Canada came to us and made a presentation on how important post-doctoral students are to the future of Canada and the future of research in Canada. That is why I am so thrilled that budget 2010 is providing \$45 million to establish a post-doctoral fellowship program to help attract the research leaders of tomorrow to Canada.

It is also delivering \$220 million in funding over five years to strengthen the world-leading research taking place at the TRIUMF centre in Vancouver, Canada's premier national laboratory for nuclear and particle physics research.

It is also increasing the combined annual budgets, as the member rightly pointed out, of Canada's research granting councils by an additional \$32 million.

As I pointed out in my speech, Genome Canada will receive an additional \$75 million which, coupled with private sector matching grants, would give it an additional \$150 million for continued genomics research.

We have doubled the budget of the college and community innovation program with an additional \$50 million per year.

We have provided \$135 million to the National Research Council of Canada's regional innovation clusters program.

I could go on but I am probably running out of time. I commend to the hon. member the budget documents where he will see several more major additions to research funding in Canada.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, I found it interesting to hear the member's commitments, on behalf of his party, to research and innovation in the budget.

Over this past year, I have been very involved in working with a number of organizations, certainly students and researchers, regarding the attacks specifically on the social sciences and humanities. While in this budget we do not see an ideological earmarking the way we did pertaining to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council grant, we see another trend that is extremely disconcerting, and that would be the emphasis on commercialization.

Time and time again throughout this budget, we see that commercialization is the way the government sees the future of research; however, that of course precludes many areas of research that do not focus on commercial or profitable endeavours, and one would certainly say that discourages people who are committing their—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I will have to give the hon. member time to respond to that question. He has 40 seconds to provide comments.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Madam Speaker, pure scientific research is very important to Canada's future and in that regard, the government is providing, as I mentioned earlier, over \$222 million to TRIUMF for nuclear and particle physics research.

In addition, we are providing an additional \$75 million to Genome Canada for its ongoing genomic research which, coupled with matching private sector grants, would give it an extra \$150 million.

However, commercialization, as the member well knows, is the way to create immediate jobs and that is what we need.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, let me begin by commending the appointment of the hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice. His constituents already know he is an exceptional member of Parliament. It is a well deserved step up for him and I commend him on it.

Members are debating Canada's economic action plan, part two. Before I get to that, to provide context, one should talk about what the government has achieved with respect to Canada's economic action plan, part one.

As a bit of background, the Windsor-Essex region has an economy that is primarily dependent on the automotive industry, and within that the economy is largely dependent on the traditional Detroit three manufacturers. The parts sector and machine tool, die and mould sector have created a cluster of manufacturing around those businesses.

The region has struggled with high unemployment even before the downturn. It was higher than provincial and Canadian averages, in large measure because of the restructuring that was beginning during the earlier part of the decade. Sadly, during the recession, of course, the region reached the highest unemployment in urban centres in all of Canada, which was about 3.5 percentage points higher than the next highest unemployment rate for an urban centre. During the great recession the region was an area of great historic need.

The Budget

What was the government's reaction to that? It was historic investment. The government was able to stabilize the base of the economy for the region, and beyond that for southern Ontario, by participating in a significant restructuring of Chrysler Canada and General Motors Canada. It allowed the government, of course after stabilizing the base of the economy, to do a few things beyond that.

The government was able to support working families by extending employment insurance benefits, investing literally billions of dollars back into the employment insurance system, and supporting workers while they were looking for alternative employment. The government also provided billions of dollars in retraining for those families that wanted to pursue different careers and move into different sectors.

The government invested heavily in the work share program, which I can say saved literally thousands of jobs in the Windsor-Essex region. It was a very significant program that is still supporting some of those jobs as I speak. The government has made some enhancements in the economic action plan, part two, to ensure that it continues to be a good program.

The government was also able to stimulate the economy beyond the auto industry. It was the highest per capita infrastructure stimulus funding in all of Canada. There were significant investments through the government's knowledge infrastructure program, which included funding of \$40 million toward a new Centre for Engineering Innovation at the University of Windsor, and \$16 million toward a Centre for Applied Health Sciences at St. Clair College. There were significant strategic investments for the medium-term to long-term economy in the region, which included training for health care professionals and engineers for the knowledge jobs of the future.

The government invested millions to improve the region's airport and to build a retention treatment basin to capture combination sewer overflows into the Detroit River. That was a very significant step forward in terms of addressing the Detroit River area and the environment, which are of concern.

The government was also able to focus on how to diversify the economy. People in our region have talked about it for a long time, but now the government is actually doing it under the economic action plan through a new economic development agency for southern Ontario, FedDev Ontario, and companion programs like the community adjustment fund to help single industry communities make that transition. The southern Ontario development program is helping small-sized and medium-sized enterprises along with the Community Futures Development Corporation for rural economic development in the region.

Those are some tools that are helping the government retool the machine tool, die and mould sector in the region, and to do things beyond just production for the automotive industry, like aerospace, nuclear and the green energy revolution that is coming to the province. The region is preparing for green energy manufacturing and is moving to have a maintenance and repair operations centre for the aerospace industry.

With improvements to the airport the region is seeing regional tourism strategies come together, which are linking the finest aspects of the region's cultural assets like its Underground Railroad heritage,

its environmental assets, and the budding Lake Erie-North Shore wine region with the cosmopolitan flair of a newly emerging city of Windsor for a very strong tourism approach.

● (1345)

Those are all significant investments coming under part one of Canada's economic action plan that are building a sense of hope and optimism in our region for the first time. We feel like we have turned the corner. Unemployment is coming down. There are approaches to the future. Our economy looks a lot better. We can honestly tell the people that in a time of historic need for this region, our government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, has made historic investments.

It was not that long ago when we had three Liberal cabinet ministers in three ridings who did not deliver a fraction of that kind of investment to the region. They used to say that Canada and Ontario stopped at London. That is no longer the case because of the attention of this federal government, the Prime Minister and this cabinet.

What have the two Windsor NDP MPs been doing during this entire time? They have spent their time voting against every single dollar of investment, voting against the restructuring of the auto industry and voting against stimulating and diversifying our economy.

What can we expect as we approach part two of Canada's economic action plan? I do not know but I suspect more of the same over there. What are we doing with part two of the economic action plan? Obviously we are ensuring that our economic recovery takes hold by providing further public stimulus until such time as private stimulus leads the way in our economy.

We have developed a credible plan for tackling the temporary deficits. We have established the foundation of strong pro-growth economic policies including, among many things, one that is very significant and literally makes Canada a tariff-free zone when it comes to manufacturing inputs. That is critical as we reach a point where we have a dollar that is at par with the United States which gives us tremendous purchasing power. We also need to solve the productivity gap and make our businesses more competitive so those investments in technology and equipment will be made tariff-free now. That is a significant step forward.

Increasing investment in research and development, particularly closing the loop in our R and D web at \$10 billion science and technology strategy, but the area where we need to make the last bit of progress is in the commercialization of research and development. We do a lot of great research in this country and now we need to commercialize it, which would also solve part of the job creation. Spawning new industries can come from that. Therefore, our colleges and universities are getting an additional leg up and our granting councils are getting additional investment.

The Budget

What is being said about our budget? We have many endorsements from national agencies but locally who is supporting this budget? The mayor of Windsor is saying very positive things about our budget. Our regional chamber of commerce has come out strongly endorsing this budget as being good for our region. I was just speaking with the University of Windsor president, Dr. Alan Wildeman, last night who said that they were very much in favour of this, particularly in a budget where we are seeing the need to generate multi-billion dollars worth of savings over time, that they get a boost in funding. So there is lots of good news there.

The other major winner in this budget are Canadian seniors who collect a U.S. social security benefit. A horrible tax fight was foisted on them by a previous Liberal government after they retired, eating into their retirement savings and throwing many of them out of their home. Our Prime Minister committed to it in the last election as a government initiative and, before that, it was my personal crusade to right that wrong, and now it is in the budget. Those folks who retired prior to January 1, 1996 are now grandfathered the way they should have been in the first step. I challenge the Liberal members across the way to stand and vote for them and correct the mistake that was made if they have the decency to do it. I call on the two NDP members for Windsor who said that they were in on this issue, to stand up for those same seniors today and vote for the budget later on. I will be watching them and I know seniors will be.

• (1350)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the member talked about seniors. One of my soft spots is our respect and our support for seniors for they are the reason that this country is here today.

I want to remind the member of the devastation as a result of the income trust fiasco where his own Prime Minister committed in writing that he would not touch it and promised seniors that he would leave it alone. That is why Danny Williams said that there was no greater fraud than a lie. In essence, he called the Prime Minister a liar and, indeed, he lied.

The member talked about jobs, research and innovation. From the *National Post*, not from a Liberal paper—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I must interrupt the hon. member and ask him to refrain from using words like “liar”. It is unparliamentary language and I would ask him to withdraw that comment.

Mr. John Cannis: I will say “misled”, Madam Speaker. I apologize.

“Researchers disappointed by funding for innovation”. Peter MacLeod, a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy at Queen's University, says “much of the funding promised to various agencies will do little more than ‘keep the lights on’”.

The government has put in some money but that is just crumbs. If we are to invest and if the government is putting us in the whole to the tune of \$56 billion or \$60 billion, let us do it right.

• (1355)

Mr. Jeff Watson: I was almost optimistic, Madam Speaker, that I would get an apology from the member to those seniors. He has been around long enough to know that Canadian seniors collecting the U.

S. social security benefit were done wrong by that Liberal government when it was in power in the nineties. The Liberals tried to balance their budget on the backs of seniors. We are not doing that. We are grandfathering them.

The Liberals violated a very basic principle of justice. We do not increase taxes on those who have already retired. They have mapped out their retirement savings, how much they have saved, how many years they expect to live and now we whack them with a major tax hike. We just do not do that. The hon. member can still redeem himself. He could stand in his place when the budget vote comes up and say that the Liberals made a mistake and that he will support the budget and restore them.

On the issue of research and development, maybe the member missed the Association of Universities and Colleges Canada. I will quote very briefly. It was pleased that the government was continuing, not starting, to invest in university research and innovation which creates jobs today and builds the economy of tomorrow. It said that the budget sends an important signal and shows the government recognizes the vital role universities play in creating opportunities for Canadians in the new economy.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member across referenced some of my colleagues in the House, colleagues who have stood and fought for their constituents, along with all New Democrats, whether it is in terms of employment insurance or pension.

However, if we are talking about seniors, we would like to see a real commitment from Canada's government when it comes to seniors, whether it is looking at support for the guaranteed income supplement, pension plans or standing up for a stronger pension plan in both the private and the public sector. We would like to see a commitment to issues like housing and ensuring there is a national housing strategy and affordable housing when it comes to seniors. Those are the things that matter to seniors all across Canada and this is the area where we do not see the government taking leadership.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Madam Speaker, talking about rolling over when it comes to seniors and voting against them, let us look at what the NDP has voted against. How about pension income splitting? It was a very significant step forward. We increased the age limit for RRSP to RRIF conversions to 71 from 69, increased the age credits and doubled pension income credits. I remember that budget after budget, as measures came forward for seniors, members of the NDP voted against measure after measure.

Thankfully, in spite of them, we have been able to deliver those types of benefit to seniors. However, time and again the NDP have rolled over and voted against those measures. I suspect the same will happen when it comes to our beloved seniors collecting a U.S. social security benefit the moment that they get tax justice, after over a decade of bitterness, finally getting that measure.

I call on the members for Windsor—Tecumseh and Windsor West to stand in their place today and actually vote for the budget and vote for what they have said all these years that they have supported. Now is the time to put actual action to the words they have been speaking for a decade. Otherwise, we can only conclude that they did not really mean it.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

2010 WINTER OLYMPIANS

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today to congratulate my constituent, Lyndon Rush of Sylvan Lake, for his medal winning bobsled run at the 2010 winter Olympics. Lyndon was the pilot of Canada 1 that earned a bronze medal. What an accomplishment.

This was his first Olympic Games but Lyndon is no stranger to being a world contender. He has also earned two World Cup victories in both the four-man and two-man events in the past year.

I also recognize central Alberta's other 2010 Olympians: Regan Lauscher, Drew Goldsack, Jan Hudec, Zina Kocher, Jeremy Wotherspoon and Mellisa Hollingsworth.

Jeremy Wotherspoon, one of the greatest speed skaters of all time, has competed in four winter Olympics and has always shown great sportsmanship. Red Deer is very proud of Jeremy and we wish him well in his future endeavours.

Once again, I congratulate Lyndon Rush on his remarkable achievement.

I thank the entire Canadian Olympic team for being an inspiration to all Canadians.

* * *

●(1400)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 99th anniversary of International Women's Day, which commemorates the social, political and economic accomplishments of women past and present.

[Translation]

This year, as host of the G8 and G20 meetings, Canada has a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to women by honouring its obligations in relation to the millennium development goals in the area of maternal and child health.

[English]

We know that the lack of access to contraception or reproductive health services is the cause of tens of thousands of unnecessary maternal deaths each year.

[Translation]

On this International Women's Day, we are asking the government to honour its obligations in relation to the millennium development

Statements by Members

goals by implementing the excellent recommendations made by Dr. Dorothy Shaw and the partnership for newborn and maternal health.

Unfortunately, the government has not allocated any funds for this in its budget.

[English]

Together we can save the lives of over 10 million women by 2015 but we can only do that by respecting women's reproductive rights and keeping—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

* * *

[Translation]

KIM SAINT-PIERRE

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Madam Speaker, on this International Women's Day, I would like to pay tribute to an exceptional athlete, Kim Saint-Pierre, for her dazzling performance at the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games and for her entire outstanding career.

Kim Saint-Pierre is from Châteauguay and has been playing hockey as a goaltender since she was 11 years old. Her university hockey days at McGill University are what led her to the Canadian women's ice hockey team, with which she has won three Olympic gold medals and five world championship gold medals.

This international level athlete also finds time to act as ambassador for the Hockeyville Châteauguay 2010 campaign.

On behalf of my constituents from Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, I want to thank Kim for her community involvement and for making us proud by showing the world the level of excellence of Quebec athletes.

We thank and congratulate, Kim Saint-Pierre.

* * *

[English]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, happy International Women's Day. This day is a celebration of women's achievements and it is also a day to reflect on what still needs to be achieved.

In Canada and around the world, women are still told that their career or their personal safety depends on what they wear or how they act. Men who break traditional gender roles are told that they are less worthy. Girls do not receive adequate education respecting their bodies or their right to self-agency.

Statements by Members

Unsafe abortions are still a leading cause of maternal death worldwide, and here at home girls are growing up in a country where their federal legislature ranks 49th in the world for female representation.

The status of women depends on female leadership in government and on both men and government who take the time to promote equality in their own lives and in the public domain.

Together we can make the future for all girls, as bright and as hopeful as possible.

* * *

FORESTRY

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all throughout the Cariboo regional district in my riding there will be celebrating going on this year and next because the Canadian Forestry Association has designated this region as the forest capital of Canada. This, of course, was no surprise to us because we have some of the most unique, diverse and beautiful forests in all of Canada.

As members know, the forest dependent communities in this area have faced great challenges since 1993 from the mountain pine beetle infestation. However, these communities are tough and these two years will provide an opportunity to celebrate the economic, cultural, environmental and historical contributions forests have made on life in the Cariboo. I have no doubt that this area will prosper well under the title's theme: Canada's Forests: Strong Roots, Green Shoots!

I congratulate the Cariboo regional district.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day is a global celebration of the economic, political and social achievements of our mothers, daughters and sisters. Since women's day was initiated, there have been many success stories. Canada has had a female prime minister; young women comprise almost 50% of classes in universities; and women have gone on to become heads of corporations. There is much to celebrate. However, the glass ceiling has yet to truly be broken.

To ensure that we have a society in which there is true equality for all women regardless of race, religion or creed, all of us have a responsibility to do so much more. Political parties and political leadership need to inspire more women to play an active role in the political process, to participate in the advancement of the policy agenda and to become elected to political office. Their conduct, their aptitude to opening up the process, and their actions are vital to moving beyond the perception that politics is just an old boys' club.

Identifying, recruiting and training women and actually acting on their advice once they are in Parliament will ensure that the voices of all women are truly heard. Empowering women will empower the young generation, our future. It will give them strength, hope and inspiration.

● (1405)

VANCOUVER 2010 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, go Canada go was the rallying cry for our entire nation at the Vancouver Olympic Games, which were a phenomenal success not only on the podium but also in the overwhelming outpouring of national pride.

The residents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex have an even bigger reason to be proud. Our very own Scott Moir from Ilderton and Tessa Virtue of London skated to the gold medal in ice dance. Their performances at Canada's Olympic Games were marked in history as they won the very first Olympic gold medal in ice dancing ever won by a North American team. Through their flawless performance they showed the entire world they were deserving of Olympic gold.

Scott and Tessa have skated together since 1997 and have won many other world champion medals prior to this historic and incredible gold medal win.

I invite all members to join me in saluting Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, gold medallists and the world's best.

* * *

[Translation]

NATHALIE MORIN

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the occasion of International Women's Day, the Nathalie Morin support committee put on a show on her behalf last Saturday evening, with more than 200 people and 30 artists in attendance.

Five of the most important women's groups in Quebec confirmed their support for our fight to bring home Nathalie and her children. Their representatives told the Minister of Foreign Affairs that Nathalie's situation is not a private matter, as he has stated, but that all of Quebec society is concerned about violence against women and children.

People signed cards of encouragement and attached a key as a sign to Nathalie that she is supported not just by her family, but by Quebec and Canada's politicians, feminist groups, artists and, above all, the public. Together, we are telling the Minister of Foreign Affairs that Nathalie may very well receive 1,000 keys, but that he holds the only real key to her freedom and he must use it to free her.

* * *

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. Each year, Canadians celebrate progress toward equality for women, reflect on current challenges and consider future steps for achieving equality for all women in all aspects of their lives.

Statements by Members

The Government of Canada's theme for today is "Strong Women. Strong Canada. Strong World." This reflects our government's view that by actively encouraging women and girls to participate in leadership roles, we are helping them to thrive, to reach their full potential, to fulfill their dreams, and in the process, to build a more prosperous Canada.

Our government continues to take concrete action. Last week's Speech from the Throne introduced several new measures important to women, including reaching out to families, children and aboriginal women. With strong women and men leading the way, we can look forward to a stronger, more prosperous Canada and a stronger, healthier and more peaceful world.

* * *

[Translation]

CLAUDETTE POIRIER

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in honour of International Women's Day, the Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole and I have the pleasure of welcoming Claudette Poirier, an artist from the Montreal south shore and retired employee of École Polytechnique. She will present her mural, which commemorates the tragic events of December 6, 1989. On this special day, I invite all members and senators to admire this unique work of art, immediately after oral question period.

The mural is entitled "Jamais je n'oublierai le 6 décembre 1989" and was inspired by the tragic events that took place at École Polytechnique. This unique work of art, which commemorates the 13 young women who died in such a horrible way, is a symbol of the fight to eliminate violence against women, children and all human beings.

This day pays tribute to the battle that so many women have had to fight and to the lives lost in this battle. We especially celebrate the achievements women have made and the essence of what it means to be a woman today.

* * *

●(1410)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. We remember the battles that our mothers, sisters and daughters have fought to have their rights recognized.

Today is the perfect day to remember that, in Canada, gender equality is a basic right.

Violence against women is still a major cause for concern. Our government is taking action to end violence against women and girls. In last week's throne speech, we promised to better protect women by cracking down on crime and addressing unresolved cases of murdered and missing aboriginal women. Our government will continue to launch initiatives to improve the lives of women in Canada and abroad.

Today, people around the world are celebrating women's progress. I wish all women of Quebec and Canada a happy International Women's Day.

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, women and men around the world recognize International Women's Day as a time to celebrate women's social, political and economic achievements.

Sadly, women across the world still suffer extreme poverty, violence and violation of their basic human rights. Likewise in Canada, the government has left equality rights in tatters. The Conservatives have eliminated the court challenges program, removed pay equity protection from the Human Rights Act, failed to recognize lost Canadians, failed to invest in affordable housing and regulated child care, failed to make employment insurance accessible to more women, failed to improve the lives of aboriginal women, and failed despicably in addressing violence against women.

New Democrats will continue to fight for equality and oppose the government's agenda to turn back the clock on women's rights. We invite all Canadians to join us in celebrating International Women's Day and to speak out on the issues that matter to all women.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from coast to coast the reviews are in, and budget 2010 and its focus on jobs and economic growth is a big winner with all Canadians. Just listen to a small sampling of the feedback.

The Greater Charlottetown Area Chamber of Commerce in P.E.I. stated, "The government's commitment to balance its books without raising taxes is good news for Canada's businesses and all Canadians".

The Sarnia Lambton Chamber of Commerce in Ontario applauded it for helping "create an environment of certainty, stability and strong leadership.... It's really a jobs and growth budget".

The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce in B.C. cheered it as "a sound pragmatic approach to dealing with economic recovery...a focus on fiscal responsibility and investing in transportation infrastructure and innovation".

It is time the opposition listened to Canadians too, and supported Canada's economic action plan and the new jobs and growth it is helping to create.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it seems the Minister of State for the Status of Women lacked some imagination in choosing this year's theme for International Women's Day. Only one word was changed from 2009's theme: "Strong Leadership. Strong Women. Strong World." has become "Strong Women. Strong Canada. Strong World." Is this not proof of the fact that the minister is not ready to make any major changes for women?

She probably dropped the word "leadership" because she realizes that her government no longer shows any leadership when it comes to women's issues. In 2004, Canada ranked seventh on the world economic forum gender gap index. In 2009, it ranked 25th on the same index and 73rd on the UN gender disparity index.

So, my sisters in combat, on this International Women's Day, let us take back the leadership that the minister felt was not needed and use our strength as women to continue the fight against this backward-thinking government. Happy International Women's Day.

* * *

● (1415)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in honour of International Women's Day.

Forty years ago, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada made important recommendations in a number of areas, such as daycare and preschool education; increasing the number of female MPs and judges; and equal pay for work of equal value.

The hopes and dreams of 1970 remain the challenges of 2010.

[English]

On International Women's Day we renew our commitment to equal opportunity, now decades overdue. We salute our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, our friends, the women who built this country and keep it strong. We pledge to keep faith with their spirit and to achieve our shared ideals.

We have done some good things together, but we must do more, and we will.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week the award-winning Minister of Finance produced yet another jobs and growth budget that will continue to fuel our economic recovery and create the jobs of tomorrow.

We are fully implementing year two of Canada's economic action plan because we know that the economy is the most important issue for all Canadians. Yet just days after we presented the throne speech and budget, the Liberal member for Scarborough—Agincourt is calling for an election.

Last year, while we were fighting the recession, the Liberal Party voted time and time again against Canada's recovery by trying to force an unwanted and unnecessary election. When the member for

Scarborough—Agincourt ignores the benefits of Canada's economic action plan in favour of an unwanted election, he proves what we have been saying all along, that his leader is not in it for Canada, he is in it for himself.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every day there are new allegations about Afghan detainees. Recently we have seen reports about the role of CSIS in interrogation and detainee transfers. These are disturbing reports, but the government keeps holding back the truth.

It has now appointed Justice Iacobucci, for whom we have great respect. We share those sentiments entirely, but if he does not have the power, if he does not have the authority, if he only sees what the government wants him to see, how can he get at the truth?

Why will the Prime Minister not do the right thing and appoint a full public inquiry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the party opposite has suggested, I think unfairly and without really any evidence, that somehow public servants are withholding documents they are not supposed to withhold under the law. Public servants are charged with reviewing all documents. However, to provide further assurance, we have asked Justice Iacobucci to review all of these documents and he will give us his report.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's record on this lacks all credibility. It shut the House down to avoid questions on this subject. It has withheld uncensored evidence from Parliament. Now it has asked the justice to decide what evidence Parliament should and should not see, but how can he do his job properly? We have not even seen the mandate. We have not even seen his authority.

Why not give Canadians the truth? Why not appoint a full public inquiry to get to the bottom of this sorry affair?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject the categorization. The Canadian Forces and Canadian diplomats have performed admirably throughout the Afghan mission.

To be very clear, Justice Iacobucci will have access to all documents and he will give us a public report.

● (1420)

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first the government hid behind the Canadian Forces, and now it is hiding behind Justice Iacobucci.

Oral Questions

The judge does not have a clear mandate, nor does he have the authority he needs to carry out his task.

Canadians want the truth, they need the truth, and they have a right to know the truth. Every day brings more questions.

Why did the Prime Minister refuse to hold a public inquiry? What does he have to hide?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, public servants are responsible for access to information, but I asked former Supreme Court Justice Iacobucci to review their work and produce a public report.

[*English*]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CBC and the Canadian Press have both reported that the government ordered the transfer of detainees to the notorious Afghan NDS for the purposes of extracting additional information.

We are not questioning the actions of our troops, as the Prime Minister continues to say, we are questioning the actions of the government.

Did the government conduct a deliberate policy of rendition, the outsourcing of interrogation and torture of Afghan detainees for extracting additional information?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows all transfers up to 2007 took place under agreements signed during the period of the previous government. Since 2007, there has been a new transfer agreement in place, and Canada at all times respects its international obligations.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, did the government conduct the policy of rendition? Each week media are reporting more troubling information. None of this information so far has helped the government's claims.

Allegations as serious as rendition require more than just a vetting of the documents. They require a full and transparent public inquiry to look at all the facts.

Will the government do the right thing and call a public inquiry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, Justice Iacobucci will have access to all documents that have been looked at by public servants. He will review them and he will give a public report.

I hope if the hon. member does not trust the government, does not trust the Canadian Forces, does not trust the foreign service, does not trust anybody else, at least maybe he can trust Justice Iacobucci to review the matter.

* * *

[*Translation*]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the budget confirms that women are not the Conservative government's priority. There is no employment insurance reform to help women, when they have the most difficulty accessing that system. There is no tax credit improvement for informal caregivers, the majority of whom are women. Nothing for the guaranteed

income supplement, while poverty strikes more women than men, especially among seniors. And finally, with the pretext of balancing the budget, the government refuses to resolve the pay equity issue.

On this International Women's Day, will the Prime Minister admit that improving the socio-economic status of women is the least of his concerns?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the leader of the Bloc is talking about poverty among seniors, but the poverty rate for seniors in Canada is one of the lowest in the world because of the actions of this government.

He mentioned employment insurance. We are the ones who have provided access to employment insurance for self-employed workers, which is another improvement.

This government will continue to create benefits for the majority of women in Canada, who want a united Canada.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has as much credibility when he talks about the status of women as when he talks about the environment.

For example, women who lose their employment after their maternity leave are not entitled to employment insurance since they did not make any contributions during their maternity leave.

Will the Prime Minister correct this injustice so that women can receive employment insurance benefits? After all, they contributed before getting pregnant.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the employment insurance system already allows women and parents in general to take 50 weeks of parental and maternity leave. There are also the benefits I just mentioned, namely the benefits for self-employed workers that this government created.

The person who lacks credibility here is the leader of the Bloc because the vast majority of women in Canada, including Quebec, want a united Canada.

• (1425)

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is trying to export to the rest of the world its regressive attitude toward abortion and contraception, measures that are intended to help women and children in developing countries.

Why does the Conservative government refuse to recognize that these are essential tools for improving the living conditions of women here and elsewhere?

[*English*]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important, on International Women's Day, to recognize that Canada recognizes that women in developing countries need a great deal of help. This is why we are ensuring that we are protecting women around the world, particularly in those countries where they see abuse and violence.

Oral Questions

We are working in the Sudan. We are working in many countries. We are also supporting them as great contributors, as economic participants, as leaders, as educators, as health practitioners. We are doing everything we can for women around the world.

* * *

[Translation]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the majority of women and children killed with firearms are killed with long guns. Yet the government announced its intention to try again to dismantle the firearms registry.

Strange way to celebrate International Women's Day.

Will the Minister of Public Safety finally live up to his responsibilities and recognize that the registry is an important crime prevention tool and that dismantling it would pose a direct threat to public safety, particularly that of women and children?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are indeed moving to dismantle the long gun registry. It is a waste of Canadian taxpayer money. We are in fact working together with the police forces and other agencies.

I find it passing strange that the member would talk about a lack of protection for children when it was her party that voted against stiffer sentences for pedophiles.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, around the world people are marking International Women's Day today, but we would never know it looking at the budget which treats women as second-class citizens. For example, only one-third of women applying for the EI stimulus benefits are able to succeed in their applications. It is discrimination. As little as 7% of women are benefiting from the infrastructure programs according to expert studies. When it comes to maternal and child health, internationally, I thought we would have seen something, given the Prime Minister's statements.

Why would he not accept our proposition to put women first in this session of Parliament?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the leader of the NDP is talking about. This government has been very clear. We have brought in a whole range of benefits for Canadian women, including, as I just mentioned, the benefit for self-employed workers under the EI system, the vast majority of whom are women. We have taken measures to combat violence against women. Poverty rates among women are falling.

In fact, during this recession, the unemployment rate among women is two percentage points lower than the unemployment rate among men thanks to the actions of this government.

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister thought that prorogation would make the Afghan torture scandal go away, he was mistaken.

We have learned that CSIS played a role regarding detainees and their interrogation. We all know about the brutal methods of the Afghan NDS.

Is the role of CSIS to decide who should be roughed up by the Afghan secret service? Is that what happens?

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, CSIS, like all federal government agencies, respects its international obligations in this regard.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, his Minister of National Defence has not even been keeping up with the news on this and does not even bother to read about it. It has been 109 days since the NDP called for a full public inquiry into this mess. The order of the House still stands, calling for the production of documents and the government is playing for time. It is not going to work. CSIS is not and should not be the CIA.

Why will the Prime Minister not call a public inquiry to ensure Canadians can have access to the full truth about what has gone on with the transfer of detainees?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service is not the CIA, but it is Canada's premier intelligence service and of course it respects its international obligations at all times. As I said earlier, the opposition has questioned the work of public servants who are responsible for administering access to information. In order to further assure them, I have asked Justice Iacobucci to review their work and he will give a public report.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on this International Women's Day, we must point out that this government has a double standard. While the Prime Minister was recalibrating his public relations at the expense of African women and children in the context of the G8 summit, he was simultaneously planning to slash funding for Canadian international assistance.

How can he claim to care about the health of African women when he is cutting \$4 billion from CIDA's budget?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. This government did not cut aid. In fact, we are raising it next year to the highest level ever in Canadian history. Unlike the former government, we are making our aid more effective, more efficient and focused. We want to ensure that we are really making a difference for those people living in developing countries. We are maximizing the value of our aid dollars. For example, our food aid will now buy 30% more food than before.

Why did the former Liberal government not do it when it had the chance?

[Translation]

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with one hand they giveth and with the other hand they taketh away.

By cutting \$4 billion over five years from CIDA's budgets, the most vulnerable people, including African women and children, will have to pay for this government's financial incompetence.

Furthermore, how can this government transform the mission in Afghanistan to a humanitarian mission and protect women after 2011, as it has promised, when it is drastically slashing Canada's international assistance budgets?

[English]

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I suggest the member opposite check her math because next year, in fact, we will be adding \$364 million to international assistance.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year later, two months of recalibrating and what have women gained: an action plan that bypasses women, less than \$600,000 for women's shelters compared to \$1.5 million for animal shelters, few jobs for women, no funding for child care projects, no apparent gender-based analysis, a ludicrous tinker to the national anthem, and a sop to women.

When will the government stand up for the real needs of Canadian women?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing exactly that and we have been for the last four years.

What we have been doing is providing significant extra dollars to invest in social and affordable housing, particularly for seniors, the majority of those in need being female. As the Prime Minister just mentioned, we expanded employment insurance special benefits, maternity and parental, sickness and compassionate care to the self-employed, a large proportion of whom are women.

We are providing women with the supports they need even though the Liberals often vote against them.

● (1435)

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadian women are saying: "The minister of state speaks about violence against women but supports the rollback of the gun-

control laws". "Many women find it difficult to access quality child care and when they do, it is a serious financial burden—". "We get tinkering around the edges, not new benefits, not more benefits but administrivia". "On the issues that would lift women, this budget is shamefully silent".

Who in the government advocates for Canadian women?

Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will thank the member for her question but I would like to highlight that our government announced some very positive changes to Status of Women Canada, where there is a direct focus on ending violence against women and women in leadership. Of course, we just saw at the UN that, when I had the opportunity to explain to the world that Canada has made significant progress, Canada was recognized with an award from the global shelter network for our leadership on domestic violence.

We are also supporting the national shelter network through the newly created partnership fund at Status of Women Canada.

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[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though the effects of the crisis continue to be felt, the Conservative budget ignores the needs of the most disadvantaged. Forestry workers are being left to their own devices. Thousands of unemployed do not have access to employment insurance. The poorest seniors have to manage on a guaranteed income supplement that does not cover their most basic needs.

Why is the government refusing to help those most in need?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again it is interesting to see the Bloc Québécois members concerned about the benefits we are giving to those who have lost their jobs given that every time we propose a measure they rise and vote against it.

We have given an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits to help people get through this recession. In our budget, we have added 26 extra weeks for those who wish to take advantage of work sharing. Businesses asked for this measure and I believe people are quite happy with it.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while those most in need have been left to fend for themselves, the government is allowing the wealthiest to save more than \$1 billion per year on stock option plans. The Bloc Québécois suggested that a super tax be imposed on such bonuses.

Why has the government decided to not take more from those who have more?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last budget, we put in place a number of measures to support workers. Our program includes work sharing, which I just spoke about, as well as other measures.

The member forgot to mention the improvements we have made to the registered disability savings plan, which allow an RRSP to be transferred to an RDSP.

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RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues is adding its voice to the criticisms of Gérard Latulippe's appointment as president of Rights & Democracy. According to the federation, his positions on the death penalty and same-sex marriage show that he does not have the moral authority to head Rights & Democracy.

Not only has the government lost all credibility by appointing Mr. Latulippe, but it is demonstrating its interference and incompetence.

Does the government realize this?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government appointed Mr. Latulippe as president of Rights & Democracy following an open and transparent competition.

We believe that with his extensive experience, including with the National Democratic Institute, he is not only an appropriate candidate, but a very well qualified one.

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, René Provost, director of the Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism at McGill University, cautions the government against thinking it can “convince the international community by engaging in a superficial cover-up”. Those are his words.

There is a simple way the government can correctly identify the problem, and that is to have a parliamentary committee conduct an inquiry and have the board of Rights & Democracy come under a committee of wise persons.

Is the government prepared to explore these solutions?

● (1440)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have made the necessary decisions. We have asked Mr. Latulippe to take on this extremely important responsibility because of his ability and experience. We have asked him to take on the responsibility of running this organization. This is an extremely important organization that plays a key role on the international stage, and we intend to keep supporting it.

However, if the parliamentary committee wants to call anyone to appear, it is free to do so. As I have said, it is quite—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Gérard Latulippe, the new president of Rights & Democracy, has been at the centre of a number of controversies, the most recent involving the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues.

As my Bloc colleague mentioned, the federation stated that Mr. Latulippe does not have the moral authority to head this organization.

This Conservative appointment has tarnished Canada's reputation abroad.

Does the government agree with Mr. Latulippe's racist statements about Muslim immigration to Quebec?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me quote an interested party, who said:

He is just highly respected in the whole field. I just don't understand the questioning of his credentials.

This comes from Leslie Campbell, former chief of staff to Audrey McLaughlin and current senior associate and regional director for the Middle East and North African National Democratic Institute.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sima Samar is the president of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and was a member of the Rights & Democracy board until she resigned in January because she was concerned about the current chairman's political agenda. Ms. Samar also noted that the new president, Gérard Latulippe, had previously declared Muslim immigration a threat to Quebec.

Does the government agree with Mr. Latulippe's past racist statement concerning Muslim immigration to Quebec, yes or no?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me give the House another quotation, for the record. It says:

Ironically, the Bloc and Liberal opposition, while simultaneously decrying the government's continued partisanship, have rejected Mr. Latulippe's appointment on almost purely political grounds...While I don't share Mr. Latulippe's political orientation, I don't believe that stated political views and career path are reasons to question a person's capacity to act in a principled manner.

Who said that? Former NDP strategist Brian Topp in *The Globe and Mail*.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the Citizenship Act was unconstitutional because it discriminates against women.

Specifically, a child born outside Canada to a Canadian father is entitled to Canadian citizenship, but a child born outside Canada to a Canadian mother does not have that same right.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of State for the Status of Women explain what her government intends to do to correct this shameful situation?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we dealt with that during the last session of Parliament. We introduced Bill C-37, which received the support of all opposition parties and eliminated the discrimination previously found in the Citizenship Act.

This is what Don Chapman, spokesperson for Lost Canadians, had to say about it:

[*English*]

“This ends today”, the introduction of that bill, “140 years of discrimination against women and children on Canadian citizenship”.

[*Translation*]

I should add that, when the Liberals were in power, they did nothing to resolve the lost Canadians issue. They supported the solution set out in the bill during the last session of Parliament.

• (1445)

[*English*]

Mrs. Lise Zarac (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is International Women's Day. Yet today, children born abroad to Canadian women are denied the citizenship given automatically to children of Canadian men.

The minister's office noted last year that she would, “like to be of assistance on this issue”, and still there has been no action to correct this sexist policy.

Will the minister explain to Canadians why, on citizenship, the government continues to treat women as less equal than men?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does herself a disservice with that kind of demagoguery.

This government, Parliament and the Liberal Party adopted Bill C-37 in the last Parliament to correct the Citizenship Act to welcome back to Canadian citizenship hundreds of thousands of lost Canadians.

It eliminated discrimination in the 1947 act on grounds of gender, which is why Don Chapman said that it ends 140 years of discrimination against women and children.

If the hon. member is against the changes that were made, why did her party support them without amendment?

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic action plan is committed to improve inefficiencies across the government. This morning, the President of the Treasury Board fulfilled that commitment when he announced the reduction of 245 appointments across the federal government.

Could the President of the Treasury Board tell members of the House why this announcement is important for Canadians who are expecting the best possible service from their federal government?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is an important question because it was over a year ago that we said we would carry out a review of all of these government appointments. These are not public servants. These are government appointments to trades, to commissions, boards and agencies.

It was found that in looking at some 2,700 positions, about 245 of them, most of which were vacant at the time pending the review, could actually be dispensed with, and yet the agencies and boards could still operate efficiently.

It is what taxpayers want us to do. They want us to conduct the affairs of government and its services in an efficient way, and do it in a way that respects the taxpayers. That is what we are doing and we will keep doing it.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for the second time in the past few months, the Minister of Finance has spent several thousands of taxpayers' dollars to have himself photographed at Tim Hortons. In September alone, his coffee cost taxpayers \$2,331.95.

This time, he chartered a plane so he could be seen at a Tim Hortons where, believe it or not, he wanted to make a point about the importance of curbing government spending.

What was he thinking? Is there no limit to their hypocrisy?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has established strict rules for the use of these aircraft. They can only be used on official government business and only when cheaper commercial options are not available. I am pleased to inform the House that under this government, the use of government aircraft by cabinet ministers has declined by some two-thirds.

Frankly, I would like to ask the member what he has against Tim Hortons? That is just un-Canadian.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday on CTV's *Question Period*, the finance minister's parliamentary secretary tried that one. I will quote him verbatim: “Well, Jane, first of all, it's factually incorrect. It was a Transport Canada flight the finance minister took to London”.

Could the Minister of Transport tell us how many Transport Canada flights there are per week between Ottawa and London, Ontario, where the public can buy their tickets and how much they cost?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I sort of get the feeling that the member opposite is hitchhiking.

Oral Questions

As we said, there are strict rules with respect to the use of government aircraft. They have to be used when no commercial operations exist. They have to be used only for official government business. All the rules were followed in this case.

Again, I am very pleased to inform the member opposite that the use of government aircraft in these types of circumstances is down by almost two-thirds since this government was elected. That is a record to be proud of.

* * *

• (1450)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the economic recovery may be underway, the employment crisis is continuing. Now, more than ever, the employment insurance system has to be reformed to be made more accessible. According to the human resources department's website, barely 45% of unemployed people manage to qualify for employment insurance. Women are even worse off, with two out of three unemployed women not having access to employment insurance.

What is the government waiting for to ensure that the EI program is a true insurance program against job loss?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past year, while our country was facing a recession, we introduced a series of measures to support those who lose their jobs.

These measures included, first, an additional five weeks of benefits for the unemployed and, second, between five and twenty additional weeks for older workers. Then, we introduced measures to support self-employed workers, who now have access to sickness and compassionate care benefits.

In addition, we froze EI premium rates for employees and employers.

Why is it that, whenever we introduce such fine measures, the Bloc Québécois votes against them?

Mrs. Josée Beaudin (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is preparing to help itself to another \$19 billion or so over five years from the employment insurance fund. To defend this pillaging, it argues that it is shouldering the \$10 billion deficit in the EI fund. Talk about bad faith.

While refusing to tax the wealthiest people and the oil companies, the government is essentially proposing to deprive workers of \$9 billion that could be used to enhance the EI program.

When will the government stop misappropriating contributions to the EI fund?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member forgot to take this fact into account: the package of measures we introduced last year with respect to employment insurance is still in effect and represents additional costs of approximately \$6 billion.

We have taken reality into account. We have frozen the EI premium rate at \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings. Those two measures are intended strictly to help those who are struggling through difficult economic times. What do they have against us doing that?

I repeat, we have put an additional \$6 billion toward employment insurance.

* * *

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the immigration department repeatedly tried to include equality rights in the Conservatives' citizenship guide, so we know that the department did not cut equality from the guide. The minister claims that neither he nor his office made the edits.

Does the minister realize that his denial of responsibility leaves us with only one possible conclusion: that the Prime Minister's Office directed these socially regressive edits?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no denial of responsibility. I happily take full responsibility for "Discover Canada" which has been endorsed and celebrated across the political spectrum as a great reflection of this country's history, geography and values.

Unlike the guide published under the Liberal government, it recognizes gay and lesbian Canadians, it recognizes gender equality, and it recognizes historic tragedies like the Chinese head tax and wartime internment. It even recognizes, unlike the Liberal guide, that 110,000 Canadians gave their lives in the two world wars. It even talks about Remembrance Day, something that was censored out of the Liberal guide.

[Translation]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, clearly it was not the public servants, and according to the minister, it was not his office.

We know that this government's power is completely centralized in the Prime Minister's Office.

Is the Prime Minister's Office responsible for this reactionary edit?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility for the new citizenship guide, which has been well received in Canada. For example, in *La Presse*, André Pratte said, "...the writing of this new guide for immigrants was a delicate task, and the government and the historians consulted did a good job."

In this new guide, we acknowledge gay and lesbian Canadians, who were not acknowledged in the former Liberal government's guide. The former guide also did not mention equality between men and women, tragedies like internment during the two wars, or the contribution of Canadian soldiers in defence of our country.

We are proud of this new guide.

• (1455)
[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on International Women's Day the Prime Minister has some tough questions to answer on women's issues here at home. Canada is one of the world's wealthiest countries, yet the number of women and children living in poverty is staggering. There are enough children living in poverty in Canada to populate a city the size of Winnipeg.

The Prime Minister has said that the solutions are “not intrinsically expensive”. Why then will the Prime Minister not deliver on affordable housing, national child care, pay equity and real job support for Canadian women?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had not voted against every one of the government's initiatives to help on all of those issues, she might be aware of them.

The hon. member might be aware that we enhanced the child tax credit. We have brought in the universal child care benefit of \$100 a month for every child under the age of six. We have lowered the taxes for families, especially for low-income families, so that they have more money to spend on their families instead of the alternative, which is welfare. We have brought in the working income tax benefit. However, the hon. member voted against every single one of those.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government has consistently left women and children off its priority list. The 2009 budget was an affront to women and children living in poverty, and last week's budget again failed to deliver. The government did not create a single child care space and there was nothing to make EI more accessible for women.

The women of Canada deserve fairness, affordability, opportunity, equal pay for work of equal value, and a decent standard of living. When will the Prime Minister make women and children a priority in Canada?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done just that.

As I pointed out, we have brought in the working income tax benefit so that people are better off by working than by not working. That helps them get over the welfare wall. We have brought in the universal child care benefit. We have lowered taxes. We have provided tremendous support for parents with children who are disabled, through the RDSP, the registered disability savings plan. This is a world leader in its class.

Again, everything that we have done, which is considerable, to help women, children and those less advantaged, the hon. member has voted against, sadly.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the safety and security of Canadians. In recent years the government has strengthened its protection of Canadians and improved national security.

Oral Questions

Could the Minister of Public Safety tell the House of another important step in the global fight against terrorism?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for all his support and hard work on these files.

Yesterday the government listed al-Shabab as a terrorist group under the Criminal Code of Canada. This is a strong commitment that this government will not tolerate terrorism and is determined that terrorist groups do not receive support from Canadian sources. Listing this group is another example of how we will not dither on taking decisive action to protect Canadians and make our communities safe. Again, our government is showing leadership.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the Minister of Agriculture said that the federal government supports the concept of First Nations University and will work with the University of Regina on ways to save the institution. However, on Friday the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development suggested there would be no federal support for First Nations University, period.

Could the minister correct any misimpression here and confirm that some \$7 million will be available to and through the University of Regina once the U of R and other partners finalize a remedial plan with First Nations University?

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, of course we have announced that the funding for First Nations University will not be renewed. The hon. member would know why.

Back in February 2005 when it all started and even before then, senior administrators were suspended from the university. The then Liberal government launched investigations. Forensic audits were done. Those results were handed over to the commercial crime unit of the RCMP. Subsequent to that, we have tried every conceivable way to try to get First Nations University to change the way it does its administration on the board of governance always without success.

For the sake of transparency and accountability, we have had to remove the funding for First Nations University. There will be funding; that money will be put into the university programming generally—

• (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant is using the Forest Products Association of Canada to tout the merits of the Conservative budget.

Yet all stakeholders in Quebec are criticizing the absence of any cash for the industry. For instance, Guy Chevette, Gaétan Ménard of CEP and Luc Bouthillier of Université Laval have all said that the budget does not meet the immediate needs of Quebec's forestry industry.

Why does the Conservative Quebec lieutenant refuse to listen to the demands of Quebec's forestry industry?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), CPC): Mr. Speaker, this should come as no surprise. Since I was first elected to this House, whenever something is said by any of the Bloc's partners, they find ways to spin it for two weeks.

The Forest Products Association of Canada said that our budget was a step in the right direction, towards building tomorrow's forestry economy through biotechnology. We will not resort to the same smoke-and-mirrors tricks used by the Bloc.

EDC invested \$20 billion worth of goods over two years to support the Quebec forestry industry. We will learn what those products consist of at a later date. The member does not seem to understand this.

* * *

[English]

HEALTH

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week's throne speech indicated that we will improve the conditions of aboriginal women in Canada.

When it comes to HIV-AIDS, the infection rate for aboriginal women is running ahead of Canadian averages and is increasing. Aboriginal women are overrepresented in the Canadian epidemic. To bring this number down requires money and political will.

Will the government commit necessary funding to bring the HIV-AIDS infection rate down among aboriginal women?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we continue to increase the transfers of funding to provinces and territories. Again this year we are increasing the transfers by six per cent. We will continue to work with the provinces and the territories to deal with health issues.

* * *

SEALING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill-Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are being subjected to mounting hypocrisy in the Liberals' positions.

While some Liberal members profess to support Canada's seal hunt, a Liberal senator has vowed to reintroduce his insulting private member's bill to ban the hunt entirely.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, what is the government doing to protect Canada's seal hunt?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very unfortunate that the Liberal leader is allowing a member of his caucus to attack the seal hunt at a time when all Canadians should be united behind our sealers and behind our northern and coastal communities.

I can assure this House that our Conservative government will defend the legitimate economic activities of Canadians. We will fight to improve market access. We will work with the industry to develop new markets for Canadian seal products.

I would also encourage the Liberals to take a clear stand on this issue. If they support Canadian coastal communities, then please stand up for them.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[Translation]

PETITIONS

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition. I have gathered in my riding the names of more than 1,500 people who are calling on all parliamentarians to maintain the firearms registry in its entirety as it currently exists.

The petitioners are calling specifically on the Conservatives, who claim to be the party of law and order, to maintain the registry, and they are also calling on the leaders of the opposition and the NDP to show some political courage and stop the Conservatives in their tracks in order to maintain this tool that is so important for public safety, and in particular that of women, who we are celebrating today on March 8.

[English]

ASSISTED SUICIDE

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin to table a few of the many petitions I have received in regard to Bill C-384 concerning assisted suicide and euthanasia.

The petitioners are clearly asking the House of Commons to vote against Bill C-384.

EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by several hundred people at a fundraiser in Winnipeg this past weekend for the earthquake in Chile. The petition calls upon the Canadian government to match funds personally donated by Canadian citizens for the victims of the earthquake in Chile.

As people know, on February 27, 2010, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile, causing tsunami coastal flooding and affecting two million people, with about 800 people dying.

Chileans in Winnipeg collected over \$10,000 this past Saturday. The government acted very quickly to match personally donated funds for earthquake relief in Haiti. When will the government provide the same treatment for victims of the earthquake in Chile?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I was already standing to move a motion before you called the items. I would like to move my motion now.

This is a very short motion and I suspect all hon. members will agree with it since I do not know any MP in this Parliament who would disagree with abolishing as quickly as possible the chance for an inmate to get parole after serving one-sixth of his sentence in some cases. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-434, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (day parole — six months or one sixth of the sentence rule) be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

This would abolish the chance of parole at one-sixth of the sentence.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin have the unanimous consent of the House to move this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will present a petition on income trusts shortly, but today, pursuant to Standing Order 36 and as certified by the clerk, I am pleased to present what I believe to be the 50th petition I have put forward in support of a universal declaration on animal welfare.

The petitioners point out to Parliament that whereas there is a scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain and can suffer, all efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

The petitioners also point out that over one billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihoods and many others rely on animals for the companionship they give.

Whereas animals are often significantly affected by natural disasters and are seldom considered during relief efforts and emergency planning despite their recognized importance to humans, these petitioners call upon Parliament to support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

Routine Proceedings

● (1510)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition for exactly the same reasons as my colleague just stated.

This is a petition calling on Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare. The reasons listed are the very same as those in the petition presented just before mine.

[*English*]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today, as certified by the clerk of petitions, regarding the key role that post offices play in the social and economic life of Canadians and Canada by providing the infrastructure that healthy communities need to thrive and businesses need to grow.

The petition calls upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain and improve its network of public post offices, and to consult with the public, their elected representatives, postal unions and other stakeholders in any reform or change to the post office system.

[*Translation*]

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, like my colleague from Jeanne-Le Ber, I am pleased to table a petition signed by 1,287 people who are asking the government to review its position on the firearms registry.

As we know, a number of Quebeckers are opposed to this bill. We will continue to oppose it and we hope that the government will reconsider its position in order to ensure that women will truly be safe here, in Quebec, and elsewhere.

[*English*]

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition from the good people of Oak Ridges—Markham, specifically from the King area of my riding, the equestrian capital of Canada. They, too, have a petition with respect to a universal declaration on animal cruelty, which I will not repeat. The member for Mississauga South read the petition quite ably.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following up on my colleague from the Don Valley area, I have a petition regarding Canada Post.

Some of the points the petitioners mention include the need for adequate time for a whole community to be involved in the closure and amalgamation of post offices in rural communities, and the need to uphold the moratorium on the closure of these key federal institutions within our smallest communities.

The Budget

The petition in particular calls on Canada Post and the Government of Canada to improve and maintain the network of public post offices and to consult with the public, their elected representatives and postal unions.

Finally, this petition comes from Bonavista, which is going through a severe power outage right now. I wish the people there all the best. Hopefully, power will be restored within the next 24 hours.

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, happy International Women's Day.

I am also tabling in this chamber a petition calling for the passage of my bill, Bill C-343, which helps the victims of crime and their families by reducing the qualifying period for employment insurance—a real plan this time—and allowing the families of victims to take time off work and keep their job for an indeterminate period of time.

This petition was signed by more than 15 organizations and a number of municipalities in my riding and throughout Quebec. These signatures show that citizens are concerned about the plight of victims' families and that they want the government to act as quickly as possible.

* * *

[*English*]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1515)

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

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

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on behalf, not just of my constituents of Scarborough Centre, but also on behalf of the many concerned Canadians across the country. I will be splitting my time with the hard-working member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

One of my constituents visited me not too long ago and I would like to read what he said as I make my comments on the throne speech as well as the budget statement. When he uttered his words in my office, I could see the concern on his face and hear the fear in his voice. In response, I said to him that he was a constituent, a taxpayer, and a Canadian and that as such, he was entitled to his views. I asked

if I could use his words in the House of Commons so I could convey, not just to the government but also to Canadians, exactly what constituents like him were thinking. He said okay, so today I am authorized to use the name of Mr. James Frandsen, a constituent who lives at 223 Ellendale Drive in Scarborough. He said, "If the Prime Minister can behave and do what he is doing while having a minority government, can you imagine what he will do if he had a majority government?" That is a direct quote from James Frandsen.

Imagine the concern that people have.

The other day we heard the budget and the throne speech the day before. The budget was based on nothing but assumptions about this and that. It was based on assumptions. If someone told me I would grow a lot of hair if I drank a lot of water, that is an assumption. I have been drinking a lot of water for many years, but instead of growing hair I have been losing hair.

The Conservatives also assume that by trying to tamper with our national anthem, they could divert the attention of Canadians. That backfired also.

The budget could be called the misleading budget. Throughout the short 10 minutes that I have, I will point out specific examples of what I mean not just by a budget that misleads Canadians, but also about it being inaccurate. I use the word "inaccurate" and not others because, often, when we ask questions from this side of the House, the government members stand up and tell us that we did nothing during our 13 years in government. I will refer to that in a couple of minutes.

When we ask questions about the budget, the Conservative members do not answer. They simply say, "read the budget". I know all Liberal members have been reading the budget. Some of them will read it twice again, and the more they look into it, the more loopholes they discover, as I have. I am going to point out the discrepancies that I referred to.

The finance minister said:

deficits are a cancer; the accumulating total national debt progressively limits the government's freedom to act.

So true. We agree with that, and that is why in 1993, when we inherited the largest deficit ever of just over \$42 billion dollars, a growing debt, high unemployment, and a nation that was down and out from the then Conservative government of Prime Minister Mulroney, we addressed the cancer that the Minister of Finance referred to. We did so in a responsible way, and we did it by consulting with Canadians from coast to coast.

What was the result? The result in a short three and a half years was that the deficit was eliminated. We provided eight consecutive balanced budgets and surpluses never seen before in the history of our country. We had the longest uninterrupted economic growth in the history of our country. Those are facts that nobody can dispute.

At the end of the day, when we stand up, the Conservatives tell us that we did nothing. For us to appreciate where we are today, we have to take a step back. The first throne speech of the Conservative government was basically six pages, and maybe about 13 or 14 minutes, long.

The Budget

• (1520)

I will quote the throne speech because it is very important. It states:

Through hard work, foresight and good fortune, we have come together to make our vast country one of the most successful the world has ever seen.

The Conservatives had just become government and they admitted in their throne speech that we were one of the most successful countries in the world. How did they do that in less than 10 days in government? They obviously inherited it from the hard work that the Martin Liberal government brought forth.

Then the Conservatives went on to say that the government was proud of what Canadians had accomplished so far. That was in their own words. This was right after they won the election on 2006. When they stand and say that the Liberals did nothing in those years, then what were they so proud of?

I now will go to the second throne speech, which was seven and a half minutes, a very nice looking pamphlet. I think it took a couple of minutes to read it. The throne speech, page 2, says:

Our Government approached the dialogue in a spirit of open and non-partisan cooperation...Acting on the constructive thoughts and suggestions that have been received, our Government will tomorrow present Canada's economic stimulus plan.

That was the poison pill of the century. They ask us why we are upset as members of Parliament and as a party. We all know very well what happened with that presentation. It was a premeditated and deliberate attempt to shut down the opposition and democracy, to take away the tools that are necessary to run a democratic country.

We come to the throne speech of the other day. It was almost an hour, three times longer in time and words than the two previous ones. What it adds up to is a lot of rehashing of everything that has taken place in the last three and a half years since the Conservatives have been in government.

For example, it talks about expanding our trade associations, the Colombia trade agreement, Panama, trade with Europe. This is old news. The Conservatives are not telling us anything new. They talk about the \$100 child benefit. This is old news. The \$100, if I may elaborate for a moment, works out to about \$65 a month for only children under six. Try to address a child's needs with less than \$2 a day.

Then the Conservatives talk about food safety. We all know what happened with listeriosis, and they did nothing. How did they address it? They state that the government "will hold those who produce, import and sell goods in Canada accountable for the safety of Canadians". How will they do that when all they did was cut those programs, staff and resources? I do not know how they will do it.

It is odd because the current Minister of Finance was also minister in the Harris government. I am sure he remembers what happened in Walkerton. I do not know how they will protect Canadians.

Since I have only one minute, I will summarize. I found this old article. It states that the Prime Minister's tactics mislead voters. Today this throne speech is misleading Canadians once again because of false data, because of false information. The Conservatives talk about our debt to GDP going down. In essence, it is going up. They talk about our debt going down. It is not. It is going

up. They talk about other nations, saying we are going to move forward. They also talk about how the debt to GDP ratio of all our major trading partners, the United Kingdom, the U.S., Japan, et cetera, is going up. If theirs is going up, where is the economic stimulus that is going to generate revenue for us to eliminate the deficit? I know how the government is going to eliminate the deficit. It promised 50-some-odd billion dollars in stimulus and it used coded words such as allocated, assigned, et cetera. The money is never getting out.

• (1525)

It is a very misleading presentation. I hope I have another round to talk about this. There is a lot of data that I wish to put out.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must admit to being a little confused by the member's speech. Perhaps I missed it. The Liberals like to talk about Brian Mulroney and the Conservative government a lot, but I must have missed it when the 1993 elected Liberal government cancelled the GST. Perhaps I missed the free trade agreement with the United States that it cancelled, or the North American free trade agreement that it cancelled. I must have missed all of those things, or was it just that it took over every single economic thing the previous Conservative government did to recover from years of Liberal mismanagement and ran with it?

He talks about cuts. We all know it is very easy to cut the budget on the backs of the provinces like the Liberal government did. We all know that it cut \$25 billion in transfers. Thank goodness we have people like the member for Dufferin—Caledon and our Minister of Finance, who dealt with that situation when the Liberal government simply transferred their debt onto all the provinces.

The Liberals did not cut their own spending. They did not look at their own health. They just transferred the responsibility onto a different level of government because they never had the courage to deal with the problems themselves.

That is why Canadians threw them out of office. That is why Canada, under the leadership of the current Prime Minister, now leads the world. That is why we are creating jobs. That is why our economy is starting to turn around. That is why, in the second year of the economic action plan, more countries all over the world would change places with Canada in a second. They are excited by what Canada is doing. They are studying what Canada is doing because we are a successful country. Unlike the members opposite, we know that Canada's best days are ahead of us.

I must have missed where the Liberals voted against all the budgets and throne speeches that we have presented since coming to office. As far as I know, they voted for every one of those budgets and the economic action plan. Good for them. That is what Canadians want: a focus on jobs. That is what we are doing and that is what we are giving them.

The Budget

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, the member would not have missed anything if he were running for the Liberals at that time. I would be glad to give him a red book. I would be glad to show him where it says that we would replace the GST with an equally revenue-generating country.

This country does not run on thin air. It takes money. There is a price for civility and that is contribution to the treasury. We need to have revenue. If that member thinks otherwise, he is living in la-la land. This is a challenge. I would be more than happy to debate the member publicly in his riding and deal with the facts. I would be prepared to do that at any time, putting his seat on the line against my seat.

In his legacy of broken promises, the Prime Minister said that there was no greater fraud than a promise not kept. This was in the Prime Minister's proclamations literature. It goes on to talk about all the broken promises: fixed election dates, the Senate, the refusal to transfer the \$6.9 billion to Ontario, hospital wait times, an elected Senate, Kelowna and the income trust.

The list goes on and on. According to his own brochure, this Prime Minister is a fraud. In conclusion, he cannot be trusted. Those are the facts.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Liberal counterpart has mentioned many things that are wrong with the budget. We in the NDP agree with him. We think this is a bad budget. It does not do very much for individual Canadians. It does a lot for those companies that are making record profits right now. They will make even more down the road, yet average Canadians are going to have it quite difficult.

We either say yes to something or we say no to something in the House. That is called our vote. When it comes time to vote for the budget, will he and every member of the Liberal Party be in their seats voting yes or voting no against the budget?

• (1530)

Mr. John Cannis: Mr. Speaker, I believe this Liberal team will act responsibly for the country in these trying and difficult times. The last thing we want to do is plunge this nation into an unnecessary election.

We will stand here to fight. We will stand here to point out the discrepancies and misinformation that the government puts out. We will not go to an election just for the sake of having an election. We will go to an election when it is the right time to go to one.

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to respond to the budget, particularly today on International Women's Day.

Without a doubt this budget was a resounding disappointment. The Prime Minister indicated he needed an opportunity to refocus his government and suspended Parliament for six weeks to do so. Canadians had high expectations. Canadian families are still reeling from the recession and were looking to the government for initiatives that would help stabilize the economy, create jobs and increase productivity.

The Conservative government has failed to do anything about the jobless recovery the country is currently experiencing. Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page tell us there are 400,000 more

unemployed today than in 2008 and people are staying unemployed longer. Youth unemployment is double the average national unemployment rate.

For many communities around Canada sustainable full-time jobs have been replaced by lower paying, unsustainable part-time jobs. With the loss of 300,000 jobs and the rise in unemployment forecasted in the federal budget, Canadians are wondering what exactly it was the Prime Minister meant when he said he needed to recalibrate.

This budget contains \$13 billion in payroll tax on small business. We all know that small business is the engine of growth in small communities in particular. Naturally those small businesses will think twice about hiring. There is a very real possibility of a further loss of 200,000 jobs because this short-sighted measure.

Jobs are hard to come by in small rural communities at best, especially when those communities bear the brunt of the recession.

The health of any economy is measured by the degree of employment. I have only to look at the province of Newfoundland and Labrador where the unemployment rate is approximately 15% and even higher in my own riding of Random—Burin—St. George's where it is approximately 24% to know that we are indeed in a jobless recovery. Extra measures need to be taken to help create employment opportunities for Canadians.

Many families in the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, for instance, know only too well about having to leave home and go to work elsewhere in the country. This should not be about that. This should be about creating employment opportunities in the place where Canadians live.

I fail to understand how a government cannot see the benefits of having people employed. Employment means paying taxes to the treasury. Unemployment means receiving benefits from the unemployment program administered by the government or, if an individual is not eligible for unemployment benefits, relying on the provincial government for benefits from the social programs it administers.

Not only is the health of the economy measured by the degree of employment, but the health of Canadians is affected by employment. It is well known that people who have a job are healthier and in a better frame of mind overall than someone who is unemployed and clearly stressed because of it.

This budget is very evasive about where the cuts will fall. On this side of the House, we suggested the government start with the \$1.2 billion in wasteful spending that has gone into partisan public relations, advertising and self-promotion. The government has spent well over \$100 million for economic action plan ads alone, funds that could be far more effectively distributed to assist vulnerable Canadians.

I would sincerely hope that instead of cutting valuable programs that help Canadians the government would cut their own waste first.

The Budget

One of the ports of call for Marine Atlantic is in my riding. Everyone associated with the service provided by Marine Atlantic has been asking for funding that will allow the organization to implement a long-term plan. Even the Auditor General is on record indicating the ferry service is at risk because of its aging fleet which leaves it unreliable. In fact, the Auditor General was very specific and said that \$1.6 billion would be required to meet the challenges confronting Marine Atlantic.

Marine Atlantic is a critical part of Atlantic Canada's transportation system and essential to Newfoundland and Labrador's economic well-being and the well-being of the people of the province who have no choice but to rely on the service for fresh produce and other necessities.

• (1535)

While I am pleased to see that marine Atlantic was mentioned in this year's budget after being ignored last year, I am concerned that the funding provided does little to address these long-term needs. The government has been told repeatedly of the need to replace the fleet that services marine Atlantic and the need for infrastructure improvement but it has not acknowledged the need for a long-term plan.

While \$175 million over two years is welcome news, there is no indication in the budget of the \$1.6 billion stated by the Auditor General as the investment required to address the shortcomings in marine Atlantic in its current form. Clearly, if \$1.6 billion are required to fix the service so it will not be at risk, as stated by the Auditor General, without it the risk will continue to exist and the fear is this essential service will continue to deteriorate.

The shipbuilding industry is an important component of the economy of the Atlantic provinces. Budget 2009 did little for the industry with \$175 million, and the 2010 budget does little more. Because of the timing of contracts, the federal government will spend \$82 million this year on shipbuilding and another \$93 million next year.

However, there is the outstanding question that remains in the minds of the people of the Burin Peninsula in particular in my riding about the contract that the government was ready to award just hours before the last federal election. It was a \$2.9 billion contract for the construction of three joint supply ships for the Canadian navy. The contract would have meant 700 jobs over eight or nine years in a rural area of the country where jobs are scarce and it would have been at the shipyard in Marystown in my riding that has a reputation for doing excellent work, on time and on budget. The contract itself is for \$2.1 billion and, associated with it, was an \$800 million 20-year service contract. To quote the mayor of Marystown, "Getting the contract would make Marystown's economy rock like a continuous AC/DC concert".

What happened to the contract to build those joint supply ships for the Canadian navy? At the time the contract was cancelled, the federal Minister of Public Works and Government Services said that the price shipbuilders wanted to build new vessels was more than anticipated. However, according to one of the shipbuilders involved in the bidding, the decision to cancel the bidding process shows that the government is not keeping up with industry price increases. This

is problematic when the involvement of the federal government is crucial to the health of the shipbuilding industry in the country.

The government continues to ignore the industries that play a vital role in the economy of Atlantic Canada. Once again we see the fisheries being shortchanged by the Conservative government. The only mention of the fisheries is the funding to ensure the seafood industry maintains access to the key markets around the world through the new catch certification office. This is included because the European Union introduced a new regulation which requires exporting countries to provide catch certificates attesting that marine fish and seafood products are legally harvested. If it were not for the European Union regulations, there would be no mention of the fisheries, an industry that has been looking to the federal government to work with it to restructure the industry.

I have enormous pride for the many residents of Random—Burin—St. George's who are currently serving our nation and the world through the Canadian military. From my riding alone there are 820 men and women serving in all sectors of the Canadian Forces. Our veterans are the heroes of our nation. We owe it to them to listen to their concerns and ensure they receive the help and support that they and their families deserve and need when they return from active duty. One in five veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome will attempt suicide.

Tremendous challenges face modern-day veterans and their families. These are the men and women who put their lives on the line for the safety of Canadians and the future of democracy around the world. They need our help.

How could the government not respond to some of the issues that previous speakers have raised and are in keeping with the same issues that I have raised here today but can continue to spend money on promoting Canada's economic action plan, spend money on travel around the country by the Minister of Finance to promote the budget, and the list goes on.

With Canada's aging population in the midst of a pension crisis, Canadians look to the government for action. Instead, we get a seniors day.

• (1540)

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I share my colleague's pride in our Canadian military.

As I was listening to my colleague's comments about the job factor in this budget, I wondered if she had gotten hold of one of Paul Martin's old budgets because she seems to have missed the fact that our finance minister has pumped another \$19 billion of new stimulus into our economy to create and protect jobs.

I want to just bring her attention to the fact that we are putting \$2.2 billion into targeted support to industries and communities to help create and maintain jobs in sectors such as forestry, agriculture, small business, tourism and culture. How can she not support us in that? We are putting \$1.9 billion in R and D to develop and attract—

The Budget

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would like to give the hon. member a chance to respond. The hon. member for Random—Burin—St. George's.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, the reality is that even the Minister of Finance is predicting an increase in unemployment rates. We will go from 8.2% to 8.5% under the Conservatives' watch.

In the riding of Random—Burin—St. George's, a mill closed in Stephenville that put 300 people out of work. I can tell the House of examples throughout my riding and throughout the country where, under the watch of the present government, people have gone on the unemployment line. They are hurting and the government is doing absolutely nothing about it.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, Liberal after Liberal has spoken today against the budget.

Will the hon. member and her colleagues show up and vote against the budget or will they sit on their hands and vote against Canadian women, Canadian children and our Canadian seniors?

I want to assure the Conservatives on the other side that the Liberals are supporting the budget.

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, let me assure my hon. colleague that this is one member who will be voting against the budget. I can assure him as well that we will do what is in the best interests of the Canadian people and Canadians from coast to coast to coast are telling us that the last thing they want is a federal election.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague talked a bit about Marine Atlantic, an essential transportation link for Newfoundland and Labrador and for the rest of Canada in ensuring goods and services and the free flow of trade. Over the last number of years, we have known serious problems with Marine Atlantic and there is a small stipend in this budget to address the problems.

Does my colleague think it is enough and, if it is not enough, how much more is required to ensure we have proper service in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Ms. Judy Foote: Madam Speaker, my colleague understands totally the situation that Marine Atlantic finds itself in.

Where have we ever heard an Auditor General come out and say that an organization needs a certain amount of money? The Auditor General is saying that Marine Atlantic needs \$1.6 billion just to maintain the service or else the service is at serious risk of not being able to provide the service for which it was intended.

• (1545)

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry and the hon. member for Burlington.

I am very proud to stand here today as the hon. member for Cambridge, North Dumfries and as Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario) to outline new investments in the science and technology sector that underscore the government's solid continued commitment

to developing Canada's economy of tomorrow. Even as we continue to face challenging economic times, our government recognizes that Canada's future prosperity depends on our collective capacity to innovate and compete.

Science and technology creates jobs, improves the quality of life of Canadians and people around the world and it strengthens our economy for future generations. There can be no doubt that the government has a long-standing, unparalleled, extremely strong commitment to science and technology.

We realized and released our science and technology strategy mobilizing science and technology to Canada's advantage in 2007. In every federal budget since that time, including this year, the Conservative government has increased science and technology investment.

Science and technology investments included in the budget 2010 economic action plan, phase two, build upon the more than new \$7 billion in science and technology funding that the government pledged in budgets in 2006, 2007, 2008 and, of course, as part of Canada's 2009 economic action plan.

This year, 2009-10, our government's annual budget will reach a record \$10.7 billion for science and technology.

As members can see, we have increased funding for Canada's research granting councils since 2005 budgets by more than 20%. No country in the G7, including the United States, is better at supporting higher education research and development as a percentage of GDP than Canada.

I want to take a few moments to think through and read how budget 2010 builds on our science and technology strategy. With the current budget, we continue to demonstrate our commitment to build a talent advantage in science and technology through support for the best educated and most skilled workforce on the planet. This budget will increase the federal granting councils' combined annual budgets by \$32 million per year. We will also add \$8 million per year, as we have been requested to do by the universities, to the indirect costs of research programs to help Canadian universities, colleges and research hospitals absorb the additional activity resulting from the increases to our granting councils' budgets.

Budget 2010 will also provide another \$45 million to the granting councils to establish a flagship Canada post-doctoral fellowship program that will retain and attract global research talent and leaders to Canada. When fully implemented, this new program will annually fund about 140 new two-year post-doctoral fellowships valued at \$70,000 each per year, which is, by all accounts, the most attractive post-doctoral program in the world. This program builds on our support for Canada graduate scholarships, for the Canadian apprenticeship program and for the Vanier graduate scholarships to cover the full spectrum of support for the development of high quality research talent.

The Budget

Budget 2010 also offers increased support to strengthen our knowledge advantage in specific areas of advanced science and technology, including: \$222 million in funding over five years to support research and commercialization activities at TRIUMF, Canada's premier laboratory for nuclear and particle physics; \$75 million to Genome Canada to allow it to launch a new research competition and sustain funding for the regional genomics innovation centres; and 45 million new dollars over two years for research and development relating to medical isotopes.

• (1550)

Budget 2010 also takes steps to strengthen Canada's entrepreneurial advantage, to encourage greater private sector performance in research, development and innovation. This is crucial to build Canada's economy of tomorrow. Our private sector must now adopt these initiatives and drive innovation, and we will compete. We will win in the new global economy.

We are the first federal government to recognize the value so significantly in colleges. Given the important role that colleges play in enhancing innovation in Canada, we have doubled the annual budget of the college and community innovation program by providing an additional \$15 million per year to support additional research collaborations between businesses and colleges. This follows last year's incredibly successful investment in the CIP and the massive boost to the CFI's budget.

Further, our government provides \$40 million over two years for small-sized and medium-sized enterprises through the innovation commercialization program, a pilot initiative through which federal departments and agencies will adopt and demonstrate the use of innovative prototype products and technologies developed by our small-sized and medium-sized businesses.

The budget goes on to support innovation in many other ways, by renewing and making ongoing \$48 million in annual funding for the regional development agencies to support local innovation all across Canada.

Budget 2010 further provides \$397 million over five years to the Canadian Space Agency to develop the RADARSAT constellation mission, the next generation, the leading generation of technology in the world of advanced radar remote sat sensing devices.

This type of critical investment builds on our ability to protect Canada and remain at the forefront of advanced technology in space and support our government's policies in the Arctic.

Finally, budget 2010 provides \$135 million over two years to the National Research Council's regional innovation clusters, plus \$8 million over two years to extend the international science and technology partnerships program, again to promote collaborative research and development activities with our international partners.

Our government continues to demonstrate an unparalleled and unprecedented strong commitment to our science and tech community to make Canada a world leader in science, technology and innovation. To suggest otherwise is to not have done the research.

I look forward to working with my parliamentary colleagues and all Canadians to create the economy of tomorrow in which Canada

can realize its vast potential as a world leader in science, technology and innovation.

In closing, over the last few months I have had the opportunity to conduct many roundtables all across southern Ontario, consulting with business leaders, municipal leaders, community leaders, scientists and researchers, and on, on how best to conduct phase two of our economic action plan.

In my own riding of Cambridge and North Dumfries, I have received dozens of emails, letters and phone calls, and through my website even more information. I want to thank everyone who took the time to submit and share their thoughts with me. This has been very helpful in the development of the throne speech and the budget. It is very heartwarming to see so many ideas show up in this budget.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague talk about investments in research, innovation and clean energy.

I have a concern that I would like to discuss with this House about the investments that are not taking place in innovation. I noted with interest in last year's budget that there was actually a cut of \$148 million in actual bench work that is going on. This is not investment in infrastructure for science. This is actually bench work. This is people actually doing the science. I am quite concerned.

I know the Conservatives have added back \$32 million of that \$148 million cut. This is a serious concern. Canada is slipping in its innovation agenda. I would like to ask the hon. member for his reassurance and a commitment.

The other thing is the cancellation of ecoEnergy program for renewable power production. How does he see this as being a benefit to Canada when we are looking at an innovation agenda and the jobs of tomorrow?

• (1555)

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for allowing me the opportunity to clarify her figures. The fact is \$148 million is absolutely false. What members opposite have done is added up year one with year two and year one, then with year three, year two and year one. The number is absolutely incorrect.

We have increased funding to the granting councils on average by 20%. All of the money that was in fact correctly taken back under a strategic review was put back into the granting councils. All that money went back to the granting councils. The member's figures are wrong.

The final point I would like to make is that when the concept of a strategic review was brought up in the House, not one member on the Liberal side stood to object to it.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to read the last line of page 96 in this budget:

Increasing foreign investment is an important way of strengthening market competition and attracting new capital and innovative ideas from abroad.

The Budget

I would like to speak about just three companies: one is U.S. Steel, that the government is taking to court; the other one is Vale Inco, that is refusing to negotiate with employees in Sudbury and wants to implement its third world ideologies on these workers; and the third one is Xstrata, that is raping the natural resources by high-grading the ore under our feet.

With the conditions that these foreign companies bring to Canada and our workers, why would we want more foreign companies to invest in Canada?

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Obviously, Madam Speaker, the member and I differ on this idea of free trade and freer trade with other companies around the world. It is the goal of this government to invest strongly in science and technology as we have done. We have provided \$2.2 billion in our first three budgets and \$5 billion last year.

In fact, the whole idea of creating jobs for Canadians is to invite companies to come to Canada, to set up shop here, to create jobs here, to take the discoveries that our scientists make, and get those discoveries out to the factory floor where workers can earn a good wage in a highly paid job, and best of all, get those technologies built and sold to the marketplace so that Canadians can benefit from those discoveries, so that people around the world can benefit from those discoveries.

I think of a company in the Waterloo region, Bend All, that received an investment from this government, repayable. As a result of that investment, it has brought its workers back from the United Kingdom. Manufacturing jobs are coming back to Canada.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, in 2000 the Liberal government of the day announced the Atlantic innovation fund, \$300 million over five years. It was renewed in 2005, \$300 million over five years, \$60 million a year. The budget announced that it is now down below \$19 million from \$60 million. In fact, we do not even know how much it is because it is combined with the innovative communities fund, a different fund for different kind of work, not for research. So—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I will have to give the hon. minister of state 20 seconds to respond.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Madam Speaker, I wish I could respond in more detail, but I can tell the member that just prior to that the Liberal government at the time cut funding to science and technology in the last recession. This government has taken an entirely opposite approach on stimulating the economy by putting more funding into science and technology to redevelop those programs that will create jobs and strengthen our economy for the future.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister for sharing his time with me.

I want to make one clarification. The minister indicated that the member for Burlington was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry and that is not accurate. I can understand the confusion.

The member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont is that parliamentary secretary and does an absolutely fabulous job with the

Minister of Industry. I am actually on that committee and he does a great job.

I am also very excited to stand up today on the day we recognize as International Women's Day. As a father of two daughters I hope and pray that the future for them is as bright as we are trying to make it here in Canada but around the world for women everywhere. That is why our men and women are working very hard on the ground in Afghanistan to ensure men and women and particularly women and girls have an opportunity in Afghanistan which they do not have in other parts of the world.

Today I am here to speak about budget 2010. It is year two of our Canada economic action plan. The budget title is "Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth".

As we all know the recovery is fragile. We have seen some positive news on the GDP in the last quarter of last year of 5% which is a positive sign that our economic action plan is working on the ground, creating jobs and bringing Canada back to a growth mode that we have been so used to over the last number of years.

This budget has three major overriding ideas, concepts, goals that we would like to deliver on. The first goal confirms the \$19 billion that was part of the second year of the economic action plan. Why is that important? People were planning on that money. Communities and provinces were planning on the delivery of the action plan funds. We have committed in the 2010 budget to follow through on our decision last year to have a two year plan to help us get back on our feet in this economy.

The second part of the budget invests in targeted programs to create jobs, and I will speak a little bit about that later. That is what the budget is really all about. It is about creating jobs for those who are young, people coming out of school, and those who find themselves in the difficult situation where they may have lost their jobs during the recession and it is time to get back to work. We are doing what we can from a budget perspective to make sure that it happens.

Finally, the budget also sets out our plan to get us back to balanced budgets. That is important to all of us in the House. We cannot continue as a government, as an individual or as a business to spend more than we have.

We had a unique situation last year with the recession, not just in Canada but worldwide. The decision of governments around the world was to spend money to kickstart the economy. Fortunately for us, it has worked in Canada as we can see from the GDP numbers and how things are progressing.

We need a plan though and the budget sets out a plan to get us back to a balanced position by 2015.

I want to highlight a few things that are important to me as the member of Parliament for Burlington that are in the budget.

First, there is the Great Lakes action plan of \$8 million a year that will be given to Environment Canada to handle water quality issues that we are facing in the Great Lakes.

The Budget

Burlington is a Great Lakes community. It is on Lake Ontario. I grew up in a small town called Port Elgin which is on Lake Huron. Therefore, I have spent my whole life living on one of the Great Lakes.

A number of years ago, after we took over government, I was able to convince the then minister of the Environment to come to the harbour in Hamilton and look at one of the hot spots in those Great Lakes. We have allocated \$30 million for the clean up of what is called Randle Reef. The province has also come to the table with \$30 million and now we are waiting for the municipality to come with its share.

• (1600)

With the Great Lakes action plan we have identified the importance of the quality of our drinking water for today and for future generations. It is the security of having clean freshwater, which this country has and which the Great Lakes provide for much of the eastern part of Canada, including the St. Lawrence Seaway, that makes our nation strong.

It is also a recreational and commercial waterway. The seaway and the Great Lakes play a vital role in the economic development along the Great Lakes. When this country first started, it was the transportation system that led to the development of the population along the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. The waterway also provides great recreational facilities. Quality of life is important to us on this side of the House. Having a clean Great Lakes system is important for that to continue.

I wish to speak to and highlight the things we are doing for youth and youth employment in the budget.

We are providing \$30 million for an internship program. This internship program will help young people who are coming out of university or college get their first jobs. We are still in tough economic times. The economy is fragile. We are trying to encourage businesses to employ young people in the field of their studies as they come out of the post-secondary education system. The \$30 million will help create those jobs through the career focus program. This will give a leg-up to those who are trying to get started for the very first time. It is an excellent program and I appreciate its being in the budget.

We also have allocated \$10 million to another program to help young entrepreneurs. In the fall I was at an event in Toronto which celebrated some of the winners, although everyone in the program is a winner, and the businesses that are created by young people. There is unbelievable talent. They are the job creators of the future, not just jobs for themselves but jobs in the companies that they start. With a bit of help from us through our entrepreneur program for young people, they will create jobs for future generations. It is a great opportunity for them to get the funding that is needed to get started.

There is \$30 million in the budget for youth at risk. Youth at risk include ones with disabilities, single parents, and aboriginals. This \$30 million will assist them in finding work that will add value to their lives and value to their communities, and I appreciate its being in the budget. That is a group that needs our government's support. This budget goes a long way in helping them find their way to be contributing members of our society.

There is \$20 million for pathways to education. That is a program that works with partners, other governments, private sectors and NGOs for disadvantaged youth to pursue post-secondary education. These are young people who may be on the edge, who are unsure of what they want to do, and are not sure how they can access a university or college education. The pathways to education program will help those young folks find their way. The more education that young people have, the better off everyone will be in the long run.

There is \$30 million over two years for a kindergarten to grade 12 education program for first nations. Obviously poverty is an issue for our first nations; no one is denying that. The best way out of poverty is through education and finding employment, and this money is to provide those employment opportunities, to help those first nations young people.

Business credit availability has been increased. Credit was an issue for businesses in the recession. It was a crisis for many. We continue to fund that. By the end of last year we had put \$5 billion into that program, which helped over 9,000 businesses. We are going to continue to fund that program. We are adding half a million dollars for financing vehicles and other equipment purchases to enable businesses to move forward.

• (1605)

My time is running out as is my voice, so in closing, there are a number of good things in this budget that affect my riding and people in my hometown. I am very supportive of the budget and I would be happy to answer any questions.

• (1610)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a few concerns. There were a lot of bromides in there, a lot of generalizations with which we could hardly disagree, certainly when it comes to education. I do believe the lifelong learning process is one that will bring many benefits back to the economy.

There is one issue I want to bring up with the hon. member because it is a concern in my riding. Many of the infrastructure programs he talked about in the budget and some of the ones that he wanted to announce or re-announce, whatever they may be, require the co-sharing of funding. With that in mind, there are many small communities out there that are unable to access the money that is available through the federal government simply because the share of the cost-shared program is hard to attain, especially in some of the communities that have suffered greatly through this downturn.

Could he provide answers to the House and, more important, to my communities about why it is that so many of these small communities are unable to access this money due to the fact that the regulations on cost sharing are so stringent?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, I want to give the hon. member an answer from those who actually represent the small municipal communities, the FCM. This is what the FCM said in its press release on our budget. I would like to read it into the record:

The Budget

FCM applauds the federal government for protecting core investments in cities and communities as it reduces the federal budget deficit. These investments will help local governments—and Canadian property tax payers—build the infrastructure that is the backbone of our economy and quality of life.

Those who represent our municipal partners are supportive of the budget. I ask the Liberals also to support this budget.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, I always enjoy hearing my hon. colleague speak. He is always full of enthusiasm and is always very positive and very friendly.

He said a very important thing about first nations. He said that the key to eliminating poverty is education. Let me give an example of how he and his party can help. There are 10 first nations in my riding. All of them have students who are waiting for the money so they can go to the positions at which they have been accepted at post-secondary institutions. Couchiching First Nation, for example, has 22 students who have been accepted at post-secondary institutions, but there is no money for them.

Since 1985 there has been no real increase in any funding for post-secondary education for first nations at all. That spans a number of governments.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he supports raising the amount of money that is available for first nations to make sure that all the students have an opportunity to get to post-secondary institutions if they are accepted.

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, there is new funding, targeted funding for first nations in this budget. I would encourage my colleague from the NDP to read that section of the budget. It talks about \$30 million over two years for K to 12 education. We also have the students at risk funding, the skills link program, at \$30 million.

In addition, the budget talks about working with our first nations partners to find ways to better allocate the cash that is available to make sure that it gets into the hands of those students to use it for post-secondary education and improve their communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am addressing the Conservative member opposite. Why has his government again discriminated against seasonal workers by excluding them from 20 additional weeks of employment insurance benefits because it does not recognize them as long-tenured workers?

Why is the government discriminating against seasonal workers and their families?

[English]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Madam Speaker, we have done a tremendous amount to improve the EI system in this recession and in the future with respect to the additional work share activity. I will be frank. We are not looking at reducing the length of time people have to work in order to collect EI. EI is an insurance program. They have to work a certain amount of time in order to collect the insurance. At present that is not going to change.

●(1615)

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the budget. I will be splitting my time with the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I want to spend my brief 10 minutes talking about two different aspects of the budget. I want to talk about how it affects people who live in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, but in my role as the aboriginal affairs critic for the NDP, I also want to talk about how it affects first nations, Métis and Inuit throughout the country.

What we know about the recession which the country has been suffering is it hits the most vulnerable. The recession has certainly impacted on seniors, on pensioners, on middle class families who are struggling to make ends meet. The budget provided an opportunity to tackle head-on some of the challenges that are facing these struggling families and to create a Canada where we are creating those jobs and providing that income security so that people can go to bed at night and not worry about whether they are going to lose their homes or whether or not they can feed their children.

What we have seen are failed policies that are simply not addressing the fundamental needs of many Canadians throughout this country.

Let me start first with employment insurance. Employment insurance is one way to provide fiscal stimulus that directly impacts on people living in Nanaimo—Cowichan and the other 307 ridings across the country. According to a Canadian Labour Congress analysis, unemployment is on average 8.5%. It is projected to be 7.9% in 2011. The real rate of unemployment is much higher. It is probably already at 12% and climbing. Oftentimes we count people who have part time, low wage jobs and there are people who have simply dropped out of the labour force. The unemployment rate is going to stay too high and we are actually not counting many people.

For people who think we in the NDP are only in opposition, we actually have proposals that would address some of these matters. The NDP has a number of bills before the House that talk about reducing the number of hours required to qualify for EI, waiving the two-week waiting period and raising benefits so that people have some security.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan there are many forestry workers who have either run out of employment insurance or are in the process of exhausting it. The work-sharing measures proposed in the budget simply will not impact a lot of those workers.

The Budget

The second issue I want to address is pensions. At the beginning of January we were getting many calls from seniors on fixed incomes relying on their CPP, GIS or old age security who said that they simply do not have enough money to make ends meet. Once again, this budget failed to address some of the very serious problems facing seniors, not only the seniors who are on our public pension system, the CPP, OAS and GIS, but also the pensioners with pensions from private sector companies which have gone bankrupt. Once again, New Democrats have proposed solutions. We have a piece of legislation called the Nortel bill that talks about fixing some of those very serious problems in our pension system.

Regarding job creation, one of the easiest and safest ways to lift people out of poverty is to provide good paying jobs. The New Democrats and some of our partners across the country, including the Canadian Labour Congress, have talked about the need for sector renewal strategies to save jobs and promote successful restructuring in many of our troubled sectors such as forestry. We would propose to look at building the green sector or the green job economy.

In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan many people are concerned about the impacts of climate change. They are concerned about some of the job losses in our resource sector, such as in forestry and fishing. They would like to see initiatives to actually create stable jobs in our economy so that they do not have to worry. Many workers are having to leave the area. They are having to leave Nanaimo—Cowichan and go elsewhere to find employment, leaving their families behind. There is certainly room for improvement in job creation.

I would like to briefly touch on food security which falls in the line of climate change as well.

• (1620)

I want to quote the Cowichan Food Charter. These are the kinds of supports we would have liked to have seen in the budget. The Cowichan Food Charter's vision is the following:

We have a collective obligation to ensure that everyone has access to sufficient high quality food;

For Cowichan to thrive, local farmers and food producers must earn a good and fair living;

Food security requires co-operation and communication between the community, farmers and all levels of local government.

Although there were some supports to the agricultural sector for many of the small farms on Vancouver Island, there simply was no help at all. What I hear consistently from farmers is that we need ways to, for example, protect our watershed and ensure that resource is available. We need ways to ensure that local slaughterhouse capacity is available, which currently is not. We need ways to ensure we have ongoing protection for farmland and the farmers who produce the food on the island.

I want to shift gears. In my role as the aboriginal affairs critic for New Democrats, I want to touch on a couple of aspects of this budget.

I want to acknowledge that hearing the government talk about taking next steps to endorse the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was a positive step. New Democrats have been calling for this for a number of years and see the government making a positive move.

However, there is a caveat. It talks about taking next steps. I would encourage the government to move forward quickly on this. As the Assembly of First Nations national chief says, it can use the declaration's principles of partnership, respect and inclusion. Those would be good underpinnings in all legislative proposals that will come before the House if those elements of partnership, respect and inclusion are included in all aspects of developing legislation. That is a positive step in the budget.

I want to turn to the issue of children in foster care. Although there was a mention in the budget about money being available for provinces that would be willing to enter into these enhanced protection agreements, we also know there is currently a human rights case before the tribunal about underfunding in the system.

Currently, the government is continuing at all turns to try to quash that case. A press release that came out from the Quebec Native Women's Association states:

While federal government uses legal loopholes to keep flawed policies for First Nations children in place, documents obtained under access to information say that inequitable child welfare funding contributes to the fact that there are more First Nations children in child welfare care today than at the height of residential schools.

The article goes on to talk about some of the actions the government is taking in trying to prevent that case from being heard.

In light of the move on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it would seem that this would be a good time for the government to drop its opposition at the tribunal, allow that case to proceed and ensure equitable funding is in place from coast to coast to coast so we do not have this legacy of children receiving different levels of service if they are on reserve than if they are off reserve.

I want to briefly touch on the pledge for \$10 million to address missing and murdered aboriginal women. We know this is a national tragedy. There are well over 500 murdered and missing aboriginal women in the country. There were \$10 million announced. What is not clear in the budget is how that money will unfold. We do not know how that money will contribute toward what the Native Women's Association of Canada, Amnesty International and other women's organizations have called for, which is implementation of a national action plan. That is what we need to address this very serious crisis for murdered and missing aboriginal women.

In first nations, Métis and Inuit communities there are many serious issues, including housing, education and infrastructure. Although there was some move on infrastructure in the budget regarding water, we need a national action plan with the input of first nations communities across the country.

The Budget

•(1625)

The New Democrats have proposed a number of solutions to the problems that the country is facing. In that light, the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain proposed a subamendment to the budget, which addressed some of those aspects. It included that members would see some increases for CPP and QPP, look at the cases of corporate insolvency, examine the harmonized sales tax, which I know impacts on B.C. and Ontario, and we would take a look at the proposed tax cuts for corporations, which could actually fund some of the programs the NDP spoke about for seniors, pensioners, middle-class families and first nations.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, is it true that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is no longer being funded and has basically been cancelled because of the budget? The reason I ask is that obviously one is dreaming in Technicolor if one thinks a few years of help will heal a lifetime of having one's language and parents taken away, which can lead to substance abuse. A lot of healing still needs to go on in the country and the program is very important.

In Yukon, LAWS, the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, has done some great work over the years. It sent in another application, but it has not heard back. If this program is suspended, it will be a tragedy. Just because there is money in the budget for the money that is owed to survivors, that is a statutory requirement, that is not generosity.

Is the healing fund cancelled? Would the hon. member agree with me that it should be continued?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation funding was part of a negotiated agreement that will sunset this year. It does not prevent the government from assigning additional funds to carry out the good work that is happening from coast to coast to coast.

The government itself recognizes that the residential school legacy is continuing because it put some additional money in the budget around residential school payouts. People are still applying for that money, whether it is common experience payments or some of the awards for other abuses outside of the common experience payments.

I would argue that because the government recognizes the ongoing need to pay out for residential schools, there should also be a recognition that there needs to be ongoing funding to support the healing process happening in communities.

We know the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is getting its work under way, but there needs to be funding for local organizations that are working within their communities to provide an intergenerational legacy of healing.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's comments in light of the pension situation. Without a doubt, I have said before in the House and will say it again that it will be an emerging issue. It is an overarching issue that will take up a lot of our conversations within the House in the next 10 to 20 years.

That being said, she mentioned the private sector and pension issues. AbitibiBowater and Nortel are two situations that involve

what the NDP feels need some regulatory changes. There are two bills on the order paper from the NDP.

Could the hon. member perhaps provide more comment to the House on those bills? They do require changes, one in the bankruptcy act and also around the status of an unsecured creditor at time of bankruptcy. I hope my colleague can provide her thoughts on that issue and on those two particular—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, I agree we have an emerging crisis in pensions across the country. There are two aspects. One is the publicly funded pension, CPP, old age security, GIS. We know that many Canadians do not have access to private sector pensions and have not worked at jobs that have allowed them to invest money in RRSPs. We need improvements to those, and the bills and the motion the NDP presented earlier address what we are proposing as increases to public pensions, CPP, GIS, and OAS.

On the other side of the coin are private sector pensions. The member mentioned AbitibiBowater and Nortel. There are many other companies in the country that, although they have not gone bankrupt, their financial futures are uncertain.

The NDP has proposed that in those cases those workers would move to the top of the list when we speak about payouts. The NDP has also proposed that there be a fund put in place, a pension insurance protection scheme that would protect those workers' pensions when, through no fault of their own, their company goes under and their pensions, all the money they paid in all their working lives, are lost.

•(1630)

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Madam Speaker, in light of the fact that Liberal after Liberal have stood up today and spoken against the budget, yet they will sit on their hands when it comes time to vote or they will not show up, will the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan vote for a budget that does nothing for Canadian women, children, seniors, and first nations?

Ms. Jean Crowder: Madam Speaker, New Democrats have been very clear that we cannot support the budget as it is written. We simply feel there are far too many Canadians who have been left behind, whether they are seniors, women, first nations, Métis, Inuit, or middle-class families that are looking at their jobs and savings go down the drain.

It is very difficult to support a budget, as written, that leaves so many Canadians out of the picture.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan for sharing her time with me this afternoon.

As we know, today is International Women's Day, so I thought I would take a moment to tell the House about some of the incredible women in my riding. I am proud to say in New Westminster, Coquitlam and Port Moody there are many women making significant contributions to our communities in the areas of education, health care, local businesses and social and community services.

The Budget

Both the president of the New Westminster Chamber of Commerce and the chair of the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce are women. The CEO of the major hospital in my riding, the Royal Columbian Hospital and the president of the Crossroads Hospice Society are women.

The Austin Heights Business Improvement Association and the two largest non-profit community service providers in my riding all have women as their executive directors.

I have the honour to share this riding with two provincial NDP MLAs, Diane Thorne and Dawn Black. Both are forces to be reckoned with.

Notwithstanding the pride I feel about my riding and the high-profile women who are helping to shape it, I know we can and must do better over the decades to come to address women's issues.

Last week the government tabled its budget I was very disappointed. First, on the west coast we just witnessed a major collapse of Fraser River salmon run. Yet in this budget there was not a single reference to salmon. This is incredulous. West coast salmon are a significant component of British Columbia's and Canada's economic activity.

In an article that appeared in the *Vancouver Sun* this past weekend entitled, "Forecast not looking good for B.C.'s salmon stocks this year", writer Stephen Hume makes a case for the importance of salmon to British Columbians, and I will add "Canadian", economy.

For the benefit of the House, I thought I would share with the hon. members some of what he says. He says:

Another disastrous season for B.C.'s iconic wild salmon appears to be unfolding even as yet another inquiry gets underway, this time into the collapse of last year's Fraser River sockeye runs.

Meanwhile, some scientists in the department of fisheries and oceans are warning that the outlook for 2010 is already worse than it was in 2009, when only about 10 per cent of expected Fraser River sockeye returns materialized.

Conservation concerns during the 2009 collapse of sockeye runs returning to the Fraser forced federal fisheries authorities to close commercial sockeye fisheries and first nations' food fisheries, which are important both to subsistence and cultural practices in many communities. The inquiry, struck last November and led by B.C. Supreme Court Justice Bruce Cohen, isn't expected to make an interim report before August, with a final report not expected until 2011.

The 2010 forecasts could have serious implications for aboriginal, commercial and recreational fisheries, the fish-processing sector and nature-based tourism. These industries represent a combined economic value in excess of \$2 billion a year for the B.C. economy.

Earlier this week, letters from the department of fisheries and oceans were circulated to chiefs, councillors and aboriginal fisheries managers notifying them of the preliminary stock estimates and possible conservation measures. Ottawa has also confirmed it is deferring treaty negotiations involving salmon until after the inquiry into salmon declines makes its findings.

Forecasting salmon returns is a notoriously inexact process. Runs can be influenced by many variables, including weather that affects water temperatures and can influence in-river survival and disease outbreaks, mistimed harvesting during migrations and poorly understood conditions affecting ocean survival.

However, based on estimates from previous spawning escapements and recent ocean survival rates, early assessments for salmon abundance in 2010 predict that only 29 of the 88 stocks evaluated on the West Coast will be at or above the target abundance for sustaining or rebuilding depleted or declining runs.

He goes on to say how difficult and important it is to manage the fishery. He further states:

Although 2009 was a catastrophe for commercially valuable Fraser River sockeye and triggered the judicial inquiry—harvest of these stocks is jointly managed under

treaty arrangements between Canada and the United States—a dismal outlook for chinook salmon in 2010 will be of equal concern.

• (1635)

On many spawning grounds, 2009 marked the third successive year in which the number of fish failed to replace even the parental spawning abundance.

On the Cowichan River, once so famous a stream that anglers' catches merited reports in *The New York Times*, the return of natural-spawning chinooks in 2009 was the lowest ever recorded.

The abundance of wild spawning stock on Vancouver Island's outer coast was the lowest it's been since 1995.

Coho stocks returning to the upper Fraser and its tributaries, the lower Fraser and streams flowing into Georgia Strait, all continue to be of concern due to declines and depressed abundance.

Chinook and coho are the linchpins of B.C.'s vigorous recreational fishery. Although sports anglers harvest only about three per cent of the total catch, research shows they take more than 30 per cent of the chinook and coho salmon caught in coastal waters.

Although counts vary, some recent studies show the recreational fishery sustains almost 7,500 jobs, paying \$125 million a year in wages and benefits and more than \$75 million a year in taxes to provincial and federal governments.

It generates almost \$650 million a year in retail sales and distribution.

As members can hear, salmon are an important economic resource for all British Columbians. They provide both jobs and taxation revenue at the federal and provincial levels, yet the government has committed no funds to dealing with the depletion of the stocks that Mr. Hume talks about.

How can the government sit idly by while this very important resource is devastated? Many of us on the west coast have been asking ourselves how this tragedy came about. While there may not be one specific culprit, a definite trend has emerged over the past few years.

Are members of this House aware that there have been four previous investigations into the decline of Fraser River salmon stocks since 1992? For the benefit of other hon. members, I will briefly outline these:

In 1992 about a half-million sockeye disappeared en route to Fraser spawning grounds. Then fisheries minister John Crosbie named two eminent scientists to investigate.

In 1994, 1.3 million sockeye went missing. Then minister Brian Tobin appointed a panel to investigate and make recommendations.

In 2002, sockeye conservation was challenged by a threefold increase in estimates of abundance, uncertainty over mortality rates and a huge fight over allocation. Then minister Robert Thibault named a panel to investigate and make recommendations.

In 2004, 1.3 million sockeye went missing again, so then minister Gerald Regan named former judge Bryan Williams to head an investigatory panel.

Over the past 18 years, we have born witness to a disturbing trend. It even provoked four separate investigations and now the Cohen Commission is the fifth.

The Budget

I submit to the House that this constitutes a problem that requires immediate intervention and serious attention in addition to the important findings the Cohen inquiry may determine. This forces the question: Where is the government's commitment to action on salmon and the environment?

Just as action on the environment is missing, so too is a concerted plan to address housing issues that affect many Canadians.

Many may have seen recently the B.C. government's advertisements proclaiming B.C. as the best place on earth. As someone not prone to exaggeration, let me just say that it is.

Residents of B.C. live in a province with one of the most stunning coastlines on the planet. Surrounded by breathtaking mountains and gorgeous ocean views, our province is beautiful. In fact, my riding is nestled between the Fraser River and the Burrard Inlet with the coast mountains as a stunning backdrop.

All this beauty attracts many people from around the world, which also affects the cost of living. The average cost of a home in my riding is over \$600,000. This may get a small, three-bedroom home that may have been built half a century ago.

For many in my community, home ownership is—

• (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I will have to interrupt the hon. member. He may be able to continue during questions and comments.

As a new member, he may not be aware but it is not a practice to mention the name of a sitting member, as there was a reference to the member for Halifax West.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have two questions for the member. I asked one question a couple of months ago so, hopefully, as the fisheries critic he has more information on this, which he was not familiar with at the time.

As the member knows, it is not only the lower part of British Columbia where the salmon are threatened. There are different stocks in the north, in particular, chinook salmon.

What is the Department of Fisheries doing to cut back on the pollock bycatch, the biggest fishery in the world taking our salmon by accident? What about the Japanese fish farms? Are they having an effect? What about the warming of the Pacific Ocean? What type of research is the Department of Fisheries doing to find out the real determinates of these problems?

My second question relates to a point he raised about land claims and putting them on hold until this study is finished. I do not think the people involved are very happy that their lives are being put on hold for months on end while these studies are being done. Why can we not, as they often do in land claims, set that aside to be determined at a later date and get on with these negotiations?

The Province of B.C. and the first nations people are ready. We know how upset Canadians were when their lives were put on hold for a couple of months by the government when it prorogued. We can just imagine how these people must feel when their lives are put on hold endlessly because they cannot continue the negotiations of

these land claims that are almost finished except for the fisheries element.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Madam Speaker, the member mentions a number of very good issues: the pollock bycatch, the Japanese aquaculture and ocean warming. There are many issues that affect the west coast fishery. Unfortunately, Parliament was prorogued at the end of December and we have not, as a fisheries committee, been able to meet until today to address these issues. I want to ask these and many other questions. I believe on Wednesday we will get to that point where we can start to discuss the work plan. I will be happy to bring these and many other issues forward at that time.

In terms of the comment on land claims, I quite agree that these land claims are important and they must be dealt with. I do not believe this is something that can be put on hold. They must continue to be addressed as they are very important for many people, and not just the people in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam but many people in British Columbia and across the country. I agree that this issue must be addressed.

• (1645)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to my colleague's speech with great interest. I certainly appreciate his comments about International Women's Day and his knowledge regarding the fisheries.

I would like to focus on some of the budget elements of his speech. There are many things that we hear regularly in the House in terms of some of the things that the NDP value. I would like to ask the member how he can vote against \$19 billion in economic stimulus that will be putting people to work.

There is significant investment of over \$4.1 billion in social housing for low income seniors and people with disabilities.

I would like to ask him how, in good conscience, he can actually vote against these very important measures for all Canadians.

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Madam Speaker, not only is there not a mention of salmon or action to be taken on salmon in the budget, there is no money in the budget to assist leaky condo owners with their huge repair bills and no money for extending the home renovation tax which was a popular program in my riding.

The government promised a lot with the budget but for the people in my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam, this budget leaves them out in the cold.

The Budget

This budget leaves much to be desired. I feel every day Canadians are being left behind when issues, such as those that I have pointed out, are not addressed and the government has substituted corporate tax cuts for responsible actions on concerns facing those in my community.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

The government's decision to prorogue the House on New Year's eve did more than simply shut down the business of Parliament. It once again deprived this chamber of the opportunity to continue important work for those who have sent us here. My colleagues and I were here working but we all should have been here doing the people's business.

This institution of Parliament is important to the people of Canada. So much has been achieved here, ranging from Canada's pension plan to national health care for all Canadians. It is here that we make the decisions that chart the course of our country. It is these missed opportunities that I reflect upon today as we begin the budget debate.

What I find most disappointing in the budget introduced last week is the lack of vision and dynamic thinking that has been so much a part of Canada's history. Canadians anticipated that after the break the government might take action to deal with the 8.5% unemployment rate or the highest youth unemployment rate in a generation, along with a host of other issues. The opportunity was there and should have been taken.

We might all welcome the announcement in the throne speech that stated that the government would be proclaiming a seniors day in Canada. As my colleague, the member for Winnipeg South Centre, noted, without real substance the only seemingly beneficiary of the government's announcements may be the Hallmark cards.

In reality, elderly Canadians are finding it increasingly more difficult to manage. Indeed, statistics show that low income seniors are spending over 55% of their income on food and shelter alone. For Canadian seniors, retirement should be more about enjoying life rather than just surviving. Consider additional expenses such as health care costs, clothing and transportation. Times are indeed tough for many of Canada's senior citizens.

Prior to the budget's release, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons polled its members and they overwhelmingly responded with two conclusions: first, the most pressing issue for seniors was pension stability; and second, they expected little from the budget to address this concern.

Right now in this country, 44% of working people have no retirement plans or RRSPs for their senior years. Only 20% of Canadians working in the private sector have a retirement plan. In other words, Canadians are looking not by choice but by necessity to the Canada pension plan and old age security to support them when they reach 65. We must keep in mind that the percentage of Canadians over 65 years is expected to double in the coming 30 years.

What we needed from the budget was real and meaningful action on this issue. We in the Liberal caucus suggested the creation of a supplementary Canada pension plan to allow Canadians to invest

more for their retirement. Constituents in my riding of Davenport have told me that they support such a program. The government could have chosen to act on this simple plan but it did not.

Our seniors helped to build this country. When Canada needed them, they were there. Now that they need us, we too need to be there for them. Cities are the lifeblood of any country. Many in the media characterize this budget as a stay-the-course document. For Canada's cities, such as my city of Toronto, that is just not good enough. We need to do better.

It is generally agreed that the municipal infrastructure deficit in Canada ranges from \$100 billion to \$120 billion. Our bridges are aging, our roads are in need of repair and our sewer treatment systems need renewal, to name but a few of the areas that will have to be addressed. Budget 2010 missed a multitude of opportunities to address these challenges, not the least of which is green infrastructure which would create sustainability, long-term savings and jobs.

My city of Toronto would be well placed to host such job development. Green jobs are the jobs of the future. They represent the single largest opportunity to invest in good and sustainable jobs for future generations. It is the role of government to ensure that Canada is at the forefront of creating such jobs in a way other countries across the world are doing right now. Environmentally friendly public policies extend to energy as well, which is a main driver of prosperity and growth.

● (1650)

Forward-thinking countries such as Brazil have emerged largely unscathed from the worldwide economic recession. Brazil is a nation that has emphasized development of hydroelectricity, which we in Canada are also well-placed to do if we have the political will.

Similarly, we need to undertake a more focused and productive policy toward development of wind power. I congratulate the Liberal government of Ontario for its efforts in this regard, but the federal government must also provide leadership on a national level.

Where is the government's public transit strategy?

Governments across the world recognize the need to invest heavily in public transit across their countries. There are many opportunities for action in this area, including the much needed electrification of Canada's train system, especially in communities such as my riding of Davenport, where rail routes are expanding. Train electrification is the path taken by much of the world. It is an opportunity for job creation and it is important for the health of those living along the railway lines.

The Budget

I am proud to be part of the previous Liberal government that committed billions of dollars to municipalities under its new deal for cities policy. I am also honoured to have been part of our party's recent round table discussion on infrastructure, where experts joined my colleagues and me to work to create realistic alternatives that will address the infrastructure deficit in this country.

Child care remains one of the most formidable challenges facing Canadian working families. From the beginning of its term in office, the government has refused to work toward what everyone knows is needed, a national system of child care. I am proud to stand with the leader of my party and my colleagues in committing our party to the implementation of a national child care program should we form the next government.

With 8.5% of Canadians unemployed in this country, we need a budget that delivers real job creation programs. The government's budget continues to speak of hiring freezes and job cuts. That is hardly a way to assist jobless Canadians.

My leader and party recognize the need for real action. This is why we proposed a cash advance on the accelerated capital cost allowance to allow manufacturers to access the funds they need to get new equipment. We also proposed incentives, which the federal government should have implemented, to encourage employers to hire younger Canadians.

What about climate change and environmental sustainability? As it demonstrated in Copenhagen, the government spends more energy and effort avoiding discussions on issues of climate change and environmental sustainability than actually addressing the problems. The time for leadership on this issue by the government is long overdue. Once again it is my leader, my party and my caucus that will provide real and achievable goals in this area.

The arts community is not only an essential and integral part of our national life, but it is also an important part of our economy. My community of Davenport is home to one of the most vibrant arts and cultural communities in Canada, and I know how difficult times have been for most of its artists. We need to nurture and support artists in every field and community, not discourage and disparage them.

Finally, there is the question of fiscal responsibility. The world has endured a tough and difficult period of recession, but we must also keep in mind that the government inherited from my party's time in office a \$33 billion surplus, which it squandered on misguided tax policies and poorly considered spending initiatives.

Budgets are about people and not just about numbers. My party, while in government, balanced our national budget, reduced our national debt, increased social program spending, assisted municipalities, provided a national child care strategy and worked with Canadians to build upon our dreams of a prosperous, responsible and compassionate country. Budget 2010 needs to continue along this path, but unfortunately, it did not.

There is so much that we can and should do as a country, but the government needs vision. Unfortunately, the government lacks the vision to reach our full potential.

• (1655)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, first of all, I congratulate my colleague on an excellent speech. I have known him for quite some time and he certainly has a passion for the city of Toronto, which he represents, or at least a portion of it and the communities there, including the arts community.

Recently I have seen reports in the media that the current mayor has taken some great exceptions to this particular budget. Would my colleague like to comment on this as it pertains to the city of Toronto?

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, when I was on city council for a number of years, one of the things the cities were asking for and received was respect. The cities were asking to be at the table. At that time when Paul Martin was prime minister, there was a minister responsible for dealing with cities and communities. This allowed someone from the cabinet table to be involved actively with mayors, reeves and councillors throughout the country, who could bring up their issues and look at ways of resolving some of the concerns.

Something we did that I was very proud of in the new deal for cities was to add \$5 billion over five years from the gas tax and \$800 million to improve public transit. We also did something much more important in response to their request for respect, and that was to bring them to the table.

The mayor of Toronto is raising some concerns about this budget because there has been no consultation with the cities. It is that lack of engagement and respect being shown that needs to be restored, so that cities and communities can feel they are in fact part of the process we are going through. If there is pain to be endured, all of us have to share it, but all of us also have to work together. However, pushing cities aside, unfortunately, has not helped to address these issues.

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was a little perplexed to hear the member for Davenport's comments about Conservative municipalities. I was on city council, too, for five years, and what I have been hearing across the country is an incredible amount of support for these 12,000 or 13,000 projects. People are ecstatic about the unparalleled investment in infrastructure, something that we did not see under the previous Liberal government.

The biggest contrast between how this government has managed the budget during a recession compared with the previous Liberal government was the latter decided to cut health care during a recession, by cutting transfer payments to the provinces by 40%. That affected infrastructure, health care and education.

If he were in power today, would he have adopted the same approach of cutting hospitals, medical recruitment and critical social services like the government that he supported did when it was in office?

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, the member talked about his experience when he was on council. I talked about my experience on council and how frustrating it has been for us to engage.

The Budget

When I was here in 2004, here are some things the Liberals did when we were in government: a \$41.3 billion agreement with the provinces and territories for health care; \$5.5 billion for a wait-time reduction fund; \$5 billion for national child care development and lifelong learning; equalization payments of \$33 billion over 10 years; \$5 billion for environmental investment; \$3 billion for research and regional development; \$5 billion in the Kelowna accord for aboriginal people; the new deal for the cities; and increases for seniors. Those are the things Liberals were doing when we were in power.

• (1700)

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I was pleased to hear some of the member's remarks.

I first want to thank the member for his contributions to the international trade committee, where he does a great job. Through that experience, he has a great knowledge and understanding of how other countries and economies are doing.

I just wonder how he might compare Canada's economy with those of other countries in the world, such as the United States, Britain, Japan, for example, or Greece, for that matter.

Mr. Mario Silva: Madam Speaker, I will support the hon. member again being chair of the trade committee.

I mentioned Brazil as a key example. It was one of the countries that did not go unscathed through this recession. What is it doing? Let us look at those countries and the emerging markets and see how they are carrying forward. We have a lot of lessons to learn from them.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to the government's budget.

After months of recalibration, the government has come forward with what I would call a replay of budgets past. Not much is new since I stood in the House to speak to last year's budget. Like last year, a new session of Parliament has just begun after the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament to avoid a difficult time; but, apparently, this budget was the most difficult for him to bring forward, and I wonder why.

There is nothing new here. There is no real investment in job creation, no action on pensions, nothing on youth employment, nothing on culture, very little for post-secondary education, little on social programs and the list goes on.

I have chosen today, International Women's Day, to focus on the matters of concern to women in this country and, indeed, to their families.

Canada started the period 2006-10 with a \$12 billion operating surplus and a new \$5 billion child care plan that supported both children and their families, allowing mothers and fathers to go to work, to go to school and contribute to the economy.

At budget time 2010, Canada has an estimated \$40 billion net operating deficit for the period 2006-10 and no national child care plan. That \$1.4 billion a year was spent on the universal child care benefit, which many tried to pass off as a child care program, which is far from the truth.

Before even asking what to watch for in budget 2010, we deserve an answer to the question, what did women get from the budget? Where did the \$52 billion from the former surplus and the new deficit go? The budget certainly has not done much for women.

The only major announcement for women in the throne speech was to change the words of *O Canada*, but that needed recalibration because, two days later, the Prime Minister rescinded it.

I continue to wonder, where are the new ideas, where is the vision? Indeed, is there a vision for this country?

Only a few days ago, we celebrated the remarkable success of Canada's female athletes. We saw real national pride in Vancouver as our athletes gave their all for us. Medal after medal, gold after gold, they showed the true Olympic spirit. These women, and it was a disproportionate number of women, showed strength and courage in Vancouver and they truly represented this country with honour.

I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank Cindy Klassen and Clara Hughes, both of whom are Manitobans and are retiring, for their extraordinary ability to inspire young people. I particularly note Clara Hughes' ability to give back by giving forward through her financial contributions to the community around her.

The government boasts about its achievements for Canadian women, but it unfortunately comes up very sadly short. The statements of the government are selective. As Carol Goar pointed out in today's *Toronto Star*, in reflecting on the minister's speech to the UN in New York, "...it was selective to the point of misrepresentation". As an aside, I commend to members here the real and substantive speech that inspires pride, delivered by the American representative at the UN, a remarkable document and remarkable commitment to American women.

As a group, women are poorer, have fewer savings, hold less secure jobs and own less property. Some 40% of working women in Canada do not even make enough money to pay income tax.

This is a government that talks about having more women in cabinet, but under its watch the proportion of women on the government benches has fallen to 11% from 25% under the government of Paul Martin, and 23% under that of Jean Chrétien.

Women's equality has suffered from the regressive policies of the government. It has bargained away women's rights to equal pay for work of equal value. There is little evidence of gender-based analysis in the budget and in the action plan, let alone in most pieces of legislation. The government has cut the operating budget of Status of Women Canada by 43%, while removing the word "equality" from the mandate of its women's program.

The Budget

● (1705)

There are no dollars available for women to advocate on behalf of their concerns and issues. There is certainly nobody over there advocating for women.

They have removed the gender equality unit in the human rights division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. They have eliminated the funding, as we all know, for the court challenges program. They axed the \$1 billion annual early learning and child care program, as I referred to earlier.

They axed the Kelowna accord which would have provided much-needed health and education funding for aboriginal men and women. If the Kelowna accord had been implemented, funding in the area of \$1 billion would have been spent on education for aboriginal children and their parents. It is a major travesty that that was not done. Housing would have been in place, infrastructure would have been in place, a capacity of organizations would have been in place.

The government has failed to produce the action plan announced in budget 2008 to advance the equality for women by improving their economic and social conditions, and their participation in democratic life.

The government has ignored a November 25, 2008, motion passed unanimously in the House of Commons to develop a violence against women prevention strategy. Violence against women is of epidemic proportions both in this country and beyond. It undermines gender equality, it negatively impacts women's health, and it negatively impacts their educational opportunities, their political and economic opportunities.

The minister speaks of building a network of shelters, and this work is not unimportant but it is not the symptoms that we should be dealing with, we should be dealing with the issues at their root problem and working hard on them.

Last week's budget offered little if anything to rectify all the cuts the government has made to women's rights. As the Canadian Federation of University Women pointed out, "The budget really left women behind on the issues that would lift women out of economic recession and poverty, this budget is shamefully silent". And as stated in a seminal study, and I recommend it to all, by Kathleen Lahey of Queen's University, "—women have only received about 7 to 22 per cent of federal infrastructure spending—".

Why were there no gender equity requirements in the dispersal and the planning for these infrastructure spending programs? Was there a real gender-based analysis done? I think not. Did the government look at setting up funding for social infrastructure? As the House may have heard me say earlier, the government managed to allocate \$0.5 million or thereabouts to women's shelters while three times that amount went to animal shelters. That is a shame, an absolute shame.

We know that small numbers of women will benefit from the GST cuts. We know that for 40% of women, their incomes are so low that they receive no benefit from personal income taxes. They do not pay them. And the 36% who receive EI enhancements, that is certainly not enough.

We all know that access to child care is a growing concern for young parents. We know that in whatever forum we meet with individuals, whether it is talking about women in non-traditional trades, farm unions or businesswomen, the overriding issue is access for early learning and child care. It is more than a social program. It is an economic program that would very much help stimulate the economy of this country and provide opportunities for individuals to be the best that they can be.

It is 40 years since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Since then women have made some advancement while hoping for much more. I would say that in the last four years women in this country have gone backwards.

● (1710)

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her comments and also relate to her some of the infrastructure investments that would be specific to women and also be specific to many people. I represent the largest first nations community at Six Nations of the Grand River.

When I arrived here in Ottawa a year and a half ago, I found that there was a file that was resting with the previous government to give this community clean water. I would suggest that clean water is a necessity across all genders.

We invested in providing a \$23 million water treatment plant for clean water for all people of Six Nations, one that had been stalled, one that had been previously talked about by the hon. member's government and previously promised by her government, but never delivered.

I would like you to respond to that and ask, why did it take a specialized infrastructure program under these economic circumstances, which our government made happen, and why did you not provide that to the women of Six Nations?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): I would ask all members to address themselves through the Chair in their questions. The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to answer this question. I would ask the member opposite if he is aware that under the Kelowna accord, \$400 million was indeed allocated to water infrastructure, and had the Kelowna accord been honoured, as it was passed, that would have been well on its way to happening?

I have met with the members of the Six Nations in the hon. member's area several times. In fact, I have visited it. I am well aware of the deficiencies at Six Nations. I am well aware of the lack of response to the educational requirements of Six Nations and the tepid response to some of the issues related to water.

The Budget

I would say to the member opposite, if Kelowna had been agreed to, we would be well launched for men, women, children, everyone in this country, on education, health issues, infrastructure matters for first nations people and aboriginals in an urban setting.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Madam Speaker, I cannot help but get up to ask a question. We hear a lot from the opposite side and from this member about how close the Liberals were, after 13 years, of getting things accomplished. They were close on child care. Of course, it was promised in 1993, but they did not actually get it done. They were close on Kelowna, but it was toward the end of the mandate. They did not get the job done.

An hon. member: They did cut health care.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Yes, that is true, they did cut health care. They did cut transfers to the provinces.

I am glad the hon. member actually talked about infrastructure because in my riding and in the riding I share with the hon. member for Markham—Unionville, the skating rinks, the community centres, the emergency preparedness centre, the new hockey arena, these are lasting things that everyone will enjoy. The women I speak to are so proud and very excited, and know the best days are ahead. In my riding, 51% of the people are women. They are heads of business, the heads of government—

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. I would like to give the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre the opportunity to respond.

Hon. Anita Neville: Madam Speaker, I listened to the member talk about all the wonderful things that have gone into his riding, and I can only say that it would have been very nice if all ridings in the country had been able to benefit from those same opportunities had they not been targeted to certain ridings.

When the hon. member speaks about Kelowna—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. The hon. member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I have to clarify that the investments I had been talking about were actually in the riding of the member for Markham—Unionville and not—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Order. That is not a point of order. The hon. member can continue her answer.

Hon. Anita Neville: If I can continue on, Madam Speaker, I want to remind the hon. member that the agreements for early learning and child care were signed with every province. The deal was done. His government cancelled it. The Kelowna accord was done. His government chose to cancel it. It was done and the Conservatives chose not to do it.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

It is a great honour and privilege for me to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of the budget. I would like to begin by noting the significant progress Canada's economy has made in terms of economic growth and job creation during these challenging times. Canada's economy has shown resilience in the face of a world

recession, a resilience that can be directly attributed to the leadership of the Prime Minister and the foresight of the finance minister.

In my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell I attend hundreds of events every year, hold countless meetings in my riding offices, and engage the communities through town hall gatherings. During these dialogues I listen carefully to the concerns and priorities of my constituents.

At this time the items that are viewed as most important for my constituents are jobs, agriculture, and reducing the deficit. I am proud to state that the 2010 budget addresses all three of these items.

[*Translation*]

Canada was hit by the worldwide recession, but a strong economic and financial foundation helped us deal with the crisis better than the other industrialized nations.

The government carefully regulated our financial system to make it the most solid system in the world. Since taking power in 2006, the government has also managed to cut taxes and lower the debt. Today, even with the effects of the recession, Canada is proud to have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio of all the G7 nations.

This sensible approach enabled us to take extraordinary short-term measures in the economic action plan. These measures were necessary to protect Canadians during the recession.

Our plan has produced results. More than 135,000 jobs have been created since July, and 16,000 infrastructure projects have stimulated long-term economic growth.

All around us, we see signs of recovery. Nevertheless, although the world's financial state has improved over the past year, it is not yet back to normal.

That is why our government gave Canadians a budget that protects and creates jobs, while still promoting strong, sustainable and balanced growth.

[*English*]

Budget 2010 focuses on three core goals. First, the government will follow-through on its commitments to Canadians and G7 and G20 partners to complete the implementation of Canada's economic action plan. Budget 2010 confirms \$19 billion in new federal stimulus, under year two of the economic action plan, to create and protect jobs.

Second, budget 2010 invests in a limited number of new targeted initiatives to build growth and jobs for the economy of tomorrow, to strengthen and harness Canadian innovation, and to make Canada the choice for new business investment.

Third, the budget charts a course for returning to budget balance once the economy has recovered. This includes ending the temporary stimulus measures as promised, restraining growth in spending through targeted measures, and additional restraint through an in-depth review of administrative functions and overhead costs.

The Budget

Let me compare the Conservative government's action to protect Canada's economy with what the Liberal Party has planned. The Liberal Party leader has described himself as a "tax and spend Liberal". If he were to become Prime Minister, he says he would have to "raise taxes". In addition, senior members of the Liberal Party have suggested that the government needs to raise taxes. That is not the way to strengthen Canada's economy.

It is clear that whenever the next election happens to be, if one votes Liberal, one is voting for higher taxes. The Liberal Party has been clear on this point, and it continues to be clear. If elected, the Liberal Party will raise taxes: one can count on it.

It is not what Canadians want. It is definitely not what the people of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell want.

The government's approach is different. The province of Ontario will continue to receive increased federal support through budget 2010. Total transfers will hit \$18.8 billion in 2010-11, an increase of \$801 million from last year and \$6.9 billion more than under the previous Liberal government. While the Liberals starved provinces and municipalities of much-needed support, the Conservative government increased key transfers such as \$972 million through equalization payments; \$9.9 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$243 million from last year; and \$4.3 billion in social transfers, an increase of over \$1.2 billion since 2005-06, or an increase of 36.6%.

• (1720)

[Translation]

I would like to take some time to talk about our deficit reduction plan because I know that is one of the most important concerns for my constituents.

Like all other industrialized countries, Canada went into deficit to implement its economic recovery plan. Once that recovery is entrenched, the government will implement a plan to reduce the deficit and return to a balanced budget.

The three key elements of our deficit reduction plan are as follows: spend the money planned for recovery according to our schedule, limit the growth of government spending in specific sectors, and undertake a comprehensive review of government spending on overhead and administrative costs.

It is important to explain some features of our deficit reduction plan. First of all, we will not balance the budget on the backs of retired Canadians, by reducing transfer payments for health and education or by raising taxes paid by hard-working Canadians. Our bold plan will allow us to reduce the deficit by half in two years and by two-thirds in three years. Shortly after that, our budget will be completely balanced.

[English]

With respect to initiatives that would directly benefit my constituents, I would like to first mention the tax relief that they would receive through budget 2010.

Year two of Canada's economic action plan would provide over \$1.3 billion in personal income tax relief in 2010-11 to help workers and families in Ontario manage through difficult economic

conditions. This would include allowing people to keep more of their hard-earned money, which they would in turn invest in our economy.

Budget 2010 would also assist Ontario by providing support to create and protect jobs, as well as assist those who are in need.

Some of these measures consist of providing over \$4 billion to help unemployed Canadians find new and better jobs, including up to five extra weeks of regular employment insurance benefits and greater access to regular EI benefits for long-tenured workers. We have implemented a temporary extension of work-sharing agreements to a maximum of 78 weeks. We have frozen employment insurance premium rates at \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings for 2010. We are providing \$1.15 billion to make an extra five weeks of employment insurance benefits available. We are committing \$1 billion to enhance employment insurance training programs.

• (1725)

[Translation]

The economic action plan helps businesses in Ontario to create jobs, to modernize and to become more competitive on world markets. It does so by eliminating tariffs on manufacturers' inputs and on their machinery and equipment.

Innovative small and medium-size businesses from Ontario will benefit from the new \$40 million pilot innovation and marketing program. With that program, federal departments and agencies will be able to use innovative products and prototypes developed by small and medium-size businesses.

Ontario's 61 community development organizations will benefit from the \$11 million per year commitment in resources provided for in the 2010 budget for the community futures program.

[English]

Finally, as parliamentary secretary for agriculture, I am very pleased to see in budget 2010 that our Conservative government plans on building on previous investments by announcing measures that extend support for the agricultural sector.

I know that cattle processing facilities in Canada would definitely benefit from the \$75 million in funding allocated by budget 2010 to support investments that help improve their operations. This would contribute to ensuring Canadian cattle producers in all regions of our

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and he raised a good issue that is also very popular in my part of the country, Newton—North Delta. He stated that the constituents of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell were concerned about the deficit. About 15 months ago the Prime Minister said that there would be no deficit, but the deficit came into effect and it has skyrocketed to \$53 billion.

The Budget

How can we trust the Prime Minister and the Conservative government to balance the budget in the next five years?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Madam Speaker, I really must encourage my colleague on the other side of the House to pay attention to the economy. Clearly, Canada is in difficult economic times. Extraordinary action is required and has been taken by our Conservative government through our Canadian economic action plan. We are spending and investing in communities all across this nation.

However, the strange thing is the Liberal who spoke just before me was lamenting all the things that were not in the budget. If the member is so concerned about deficit, where will the money come from for all the programs that the Liberals want to launch? They will drive us into further deficit.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Madam Speaker, I, too, listened to the parliamentary secretary with great interest, especially to the piece on jobs.

He is absolutely correct. I am sure there are residents of his constituency who talk about jobs, but let me just draw his attention to his government's budget, on page 34, in table 2.1, which talks about employment rates for 2010. It also talks about 2009. What it shows is the government's own forecast, by the finance minister's own words, is conservative by its estimates. It is telling us that unemployment this year will be higher than last year. Yet the parliamentary secretary was telling us that they concentrated on ensuring that we were going to have an abundance of jobs this year, ensuring Canadians were back working and we were going to be prosperous once again.

What the government is telling us in this budget, what the government is telling Canadians, is that it failed Canadians when it came to creating jobs. It is failing my constituents. It is failing his constituents when it does not generate enough jobs to ensure that folks are off employment insurance.

We know that at least 12% are unemployed, not 8.5%. If that is the number, then clearly the government's estimates are not only weak, they are wrong. What the member has not done is fulfill the promise he made to his constituents, which was the Conservatives would put jobs first and foremost. However, their finance minister says that unemployment is higher this year than last.

• (1730)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, once again, I really must encourage my colleague to step outside of his ivory tower and to look at the reality. Our Conservative government has helped to create over 135,000 jobs since July 2009 and we have saved 225,000 jobs through our expanded work-sharing program.

Budget 2010 talks about a retraining and workers' support program worth over \$4 billion. Within that \$4 billion, we are talking about investing \$100 million to extend the maximum length for work-sharing agreements and even more interesting, offering over \$100 million in support to young workers.

What could the member have against financial support for young workers to help them find jobs in these difficult economic times?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today to join the debate on year two of Canada's economic action plan and

support the budget tabled on March 4. We are at a key moment in history, as we emerge from the global recession, where we must maintain our commitment to the nation's economic recovery. We cannot stray from our course and risk the gains that we have made.

The focus of this year's budget on jobs and growth will help to address the needs in my riding of Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo. It is important to start by acknowledging the very difficult circumstances families and communities found themselves in over the last year. Through no fault of their own, the deepest global economic recession since the 1930s took its toll on cities both large and small.

One example that stands out in my mind is the community of Clearwater, which is located in the North Thompson Valley. With a population of 5,000, they enjoy living in a stunningly beautiful area in the interior of British Columbia. The residents rely on tourism, farming and the forestry industry for their livelihood and all these areas experienced significant challenges during the recession.

In July of last year, the community received the very difficult news that the mill was closing down indefinitely, affecting hundreds of employees. Long-tenured workers found themselves without employment. Families had to live with drastically reduced means and the impact resonated throughout the community, from the hockey rink to the local shops.

With fortitude of spirit, they have maintained optimism, searched for ways to diversify their economy and ensured that they leverage maximum support from the two years of our economic action plan. Funding from the community adjustment fund, the job opportunities program and RInC will create much needed jobs and build important infrastructure for the future. Job retraining, support for long-tenured workers and an extension of EI benefits have provided and will continue to provide necessary assistance for families.

This need for support will be transitional and the community remains confident that the forestry industry will turn around in the upcoming year. Therefore, maintaining the stimulus for a second year is of critical importance to help mitigate these difficult times.

We all recognize, however, that these measures are no replacement for a vibrant sector and economy. Clearwater is just one example of both the hardships faced in my communities and how our action plan has provided assistance. The story is similar in South Cariboo, Valemount and many of the small towns in the interior of British Columbia.

The Budget

During the month of January, I engaged in an extensive public consultation throughout the riding in order to provide input into the budget process. This included meeting with local governments, seniors groups, chambers of commerce, students, the agricultural community and individual constituents. The input received recognized the significant challenges that the economy was facing and their suggestions were modest, practical and focused. It was with great pleasure last Thursday to see some of these specific concerns addressed effectively in the budget.

An important issue that I heard from the business community was that access to credit remained a significant challenge. I am pleased to hear that year two of the economic action plan will extend access financing through the business credit availability program and also the creation of the vehicle and equipment financing partnership.

Another example of an outstanding program made possible by our action plan was the \$4.1 billion committed for social housing. I recently had the pleasure of announcing a contract for low-income housing for seniors. Using modular unit construction and pine beetle wood, a local Kamloops company will be building the units, which will be located in communities throughout the province. Not only will this support the forestry industry and much needed jobs, but it will provide an attractive and practical rural solution for low-income seniors who are experiencing housing challenges.

A less costly but no less important program is the increased funding for community futures. Representatives of small urban and rural communities in my riding said that they found great value in the program and were very happy to see this measure continue.

Agriculture is another important sector in my riding. With a proud history of ranching, our cattlemen have had to deal with many challenges over the last year, ranging from BSE to the recession. Our economic action plan last year provided \$5.5 million in British Columbia for repairing pine beetle-damaged fence lines on Crown land. Additional support for the slaughter improvement program in this year's budget represents another area of critical funding.

• (1735)

The ultimate solution to ensure our hard-working ranchers survive these tough economic times requires increased demand for our beef and expansion in foreign markets. The Prime Minister's December 2009 announcement that Canadian beef exporters now have full access to the key market of Hong Kong, with an estimated value of \$5 billion, is a great start. This represents some of the important overseas trade negotiations that our government remains committed to.

In terms of mining, our government sees an opportunity for increased economic diversification. The extension of the mining exploration tax credit will help companies raise capital, modernizing the regulatory review process will support projects moving forward in a timely fashion and extra resources provided to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to support consultations with aboriginal communities is also imperative for moving forward on upcoming mining projects.

Budget 2010 recognizes the importance of returning to a balanced budget. Unlike the Liberal government in the 1990s, our strategy does not include simply shifting the burden to provinces and

municipalities. We have committed to maintaining important social and health services and, in addition, we will not reverse the important gains and tax reductions that individuals and families have enjoyed.

We have established a three-point plan to return to a balanced budget and I would like to talk briefly about the strategy. Ending stimulus spending requires important timing and, although we are seeing important signs of recovery, we must remain focused on jobs and economic growth. In order to keep the momentum, we must fully implement the \$19 billion in temporary stimulus. My earlier example of Clearwater is a prime illustration of the importance of continuing the stimulus.

Restraining spending, reviewing government operations and a few additional measures, such as closing tax loopholes, is anticipated to save \$17.6 billion over five years. Many Canadians have had not only to live within their means over the past year, but in some cases they have had to significantly cut back. Private citizens expect the same of their government.

Freezing department budgets for 2010 and requiring the 1.5% negotiated wage increase to be found internally is a reasonable measure toward spending restraint. Measures such as a comprehensive review of all government administration and reduction in governor in council positions will ensure value for taxpayer dollars.

With the changing demographics, reductions through attrition will be less painful and the impact on our valued public service will be remarkably reduced. Who from British Columbia can forget black Friday when massive layoffs in the public sector resulted in the loss of many of our brightest and best? With creativity and ingenuity, departments will be able to adapt and continue to provide Canadians with the programs and services that we currently enjoy.

Of critical importance, our budget recognizes that we must create an environment where business will thrive. Lower taxes, free trade and the proposal to make Canada a tariff-free zone will all help businesses succeed.

I am very proud of our government's management of the global economic recession and I am relieved that although we are not comfortable with debt, it is at a manageable level and the envy of many around the world. Budget 2010 represents a strong plan that will lead the way on jobs and growth. I urge all of my colleagues to support this important budget and plan.

The Budget

• (1740)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, since the member is new I want to give her a brief explanation of how Conservatives managed the economy.

In 2006, they inherited a \$13.2 billion surplus, which carried over the following year to about \$9 billion. Today, we find ourselves with a \$56 billion deficit. When we add that up, it works out to over \$70 billion in three and a half years that we have lost. That is really good management.

She talked about Clearwater and tourism. Why has her government punished the tourism industry? I was the parliamentary secretary when the Canadian Tourism Commission was created. It eliminated the GST rebate for tourists. The rebate helped tourism flourish. That is the first question.

She talked about how pleased she was with tax reductions. I want her dig back into her math class and tell me what is higher, 15% or 15.5%. Why I ask the question is as follows. We had the lowest tax rate of 15% for the average Canadian. In their budget, the Conservatives raised it to 15.5% and called it a tax reduction.

On page 52 of their budget, they say that they froze EI premiums. They have never dropped them but it says here that from 2000 to 2005 the rates were coming down. That was the Liberal administration. Then they froze them. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that over the next couple of years \$30 billion in EI taxes will be slaughtered by the government.

I agree also with this statement, “It is one of those job killing taxes, a direct tax on employers and employees”, said by the Minister of Finance. Does she agree with that?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I hear the comments of the opposition but I do not think our Conservative government needs to take any lessons from the Liberals in terms of how to manage a budget. When we were in a difficult time before, we saw them cut health transfers and social services transfers. They devastated provinces and municipalities.

We are looking at deficit reduction with a modest, reasonable plan. A tax and spend self-described government that looks at increasing GST and an unaffordable child care program, I do not believe our government needs to take any lessons from the Liberals on this.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague for her excitement on the Conservative budget.

However, the fact is that the budget squanders billions of dollars on handouts for banks and oil companies. It does nothing for the real victims of the recession. It does nothing for seniors living in poverty and nothing for half a million hard-working Canadians whose EI benefits are about to come to an end.

I do not support the budget as it is written. We have actually moved an amendment to shelve these corporate tax cuts and use the savings for better priorities like supporting jobs and helping to keep seniors out of poverty. We are doing our best to make Parliament work for all Canadians.

Will the hon. member join me and support this amendment to help Parliament work for all Canadians?

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the NDP members at least read the budget this year. That is certainly a move in the right direction.

However, I cannot believe they would not vote for the spending of \$4.1 billion on housing for low income seniors and people with disabilities. We have many things that the NDP members often say is important. I cannot believe they will not support measures that will help people in their communities.

In order to pay for social programs it is always important to have a robust and strong business economy. That is something that the NDP members have never fixed in on. Business is what pays for the many social programs that we desire.

• (1745)

Mr. LaVar Payne (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to ask my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo a question concerning our government's economic action plan. We have invested billions of dollars in infrastructure right across the country, which is very helpful to get communities going and to get projects underway in various aspects from water, roads, bridges and buildings.

However, we recently watched the Olympics in Vancouver. I know our government is adding additional funding and I would like the member to comment on that please.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I think every Canadians was absolutely thrilled. We were all engaged in the Olympics in Vancouver. It was sunny and beautiful and it showed us all at our best. Our athletes performed exceptionally well and I think we are all very proud of them. To continue to support our athletes is very important.

I also want to touch briefly on the importance of the stimulus for our municipalities. The gas tax that has been doubled and came to them early was one of the things I heard in my consultations, and how important the sewer, water and highway programs are. Our municipalities are very pleased with many of the measures that the government has taken.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to advise you that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Trois-Rivières.

The Budget

On this symbolic day, today being the 100th celebration of International Women's Day, I would like to wish a good day to my spouse, my three daughters and my mother—the five women in my life—as well as to all other women.

I will now tell the House how the Conservative budget tabled last week was received in my riding, particularly by Quebec's many forestry workers.

In fact, with this budget, what the government has managed to prove once again is its inability to meet the needs of Quebecers, even though identifying those needs was not very complicated. My colleagues and I toured our ridings over the last two months to find out about what Quebec really needs and we reported our findings to the Minister of Finance recently. Therefore, it was easy for him to understand the needs of Quebecers. But once again, the Canadian federation is turning its back on the Quebec nation. This budget is undeniable proof that federalism is simply not profitable for Quebec.

The forestry industry has been suffering for far too long because of the Conservative government's narrow vision for the sector. Knowing how unimportant the members opposite think regional development is, it comes as no surprise to see them acting this way. As proof of that, the government still does not understand how important it is for people living in rural areas to have access to high-speed Internet even though the minister is well aware that the broadband Canada program lacks funding. There was no additional money in the budget to bring Quebec into the 3rd millennium. As far as they are concerned, if there is no political advantage to be gained, if it will not make their banking and oil company friends happy, there is no point investing time or money.

It is a real shame to see how subjugated the Conservative members from Quebec are to their leader and his conservative doctrine. Fortunately for Quebecers, Bloc Québécois members are standing up for Quebec, not letting someone else pull their strings like the members opposite.

True to its unfortunate conservative ideological underpinnings, the latest budget has nothing good to offer the forestry sector. By failing to help people affected by the forestry crisis, the Conservative government is holding thousands of workers hostage. Is it aware that this affects families too, not to mention whole communities, regions, and even Quebec's economy, all of which are suffering because of the government's lack of vision?

I am one of the private woodlot owners who have been hit hard by the forestry crisis. According to the Fédération des Producteurs de Bois du Québec, there are 130,000 private woodlot owners in Quebec, 35,000 of whom are legally recognized as forestry producers. Of those, 20,000 ship lumber to market, and lumber sales and forestry work are the primary source of income for some 3,000 producers.

In Canada, 450,000 families own private woodlots. Thousands of active private forestry producers make a significant contribution to sustainable economic activity in a number of rural communities in Quebec and Canada. Private woodlot owners have lost a lot of income since the beginning of the forestry industry crisis, mainly because mills have closed and lumber prices have dropped. Currently, the situation is anything but stable.

Last month we learned of the financial difficulties facing White Birch Paper, which owns the F.F. Soucy plant in Rivière-du-Loup, near my home. From 2006 to 2009, private wood producers suffered losses totaling over \$500 million. Despite this economic situation, the Conservative government has completely ignored the needs of forestry producers for a third consecutive budget.

• (1750)

We, on the other hand, met with forestry producers associations, including the Fédération des Producteurs de Bois du Québec, and listened carefully to their requests. Thus, we developed a comprehensive action plan and moved a motion containing some proposals that could be implemented very quickly, with some political will.

Since forests take decades to grow and therefore generate extremely uneven revenue, we are proposing the creation of a registered silvicultural savings plan, which would allow forestry producers to average their income and reinvest it in development projects, thereby continuing to cultivate the forest. In addition to providing socio-economic benefits, this measure would also bring considerable environmental benefits by protecting biodiversity.

We believe that taxation on income is another excellent tool that should be used in order to help wood producers more and support them in developing this resource. This is an intelligent, sustainable measure that all private woodlot owners in Quebec agree on.

But where are the Prime Minister's Quebec puppets when the time comes to defend such ideas within the government? Instead of being the representatives of Quebecers within Parliament, they are the government's representatives, trying to defend its harmful projects, like the oil sands.

Quebeckers and lumber producers can be sure that we in the Bloc Québécois will not back down. I personally promise to come back again with the excellent idea of a registered silvicultural savings plan, which was suggested by all the private woodlot owners in Quebec.

Forest producers, who have lost up to 70% of their income, are finding it increasingly difficult to honour their financial commitments. We are asking the federal government to consider introducing a capital and interest payment holiday, which would help producers weather the economic crisis.

As for workers, we note that the budget measures pertaining to employment insurance are designed for western Canada and the automotive industry in Ontario, but do not help forestry workers in Quebec. This will be especially true if the transitional measures for the lower St. Lawrence region in particular are not made permanent.

The Budget

The Bloc Québécois and I have done our homework. We have come up with real, worthwhile initiatives to create a better future for the forestry industry. Obviously, we have worked together with the other stakeholders, such as the Quebec Forest Industry Council.

The Bloc Québécois suggests setting up a program of loans and loan guarantees, relaxing employment insurance requirements to provide income for workers hit by the crisis, providing assistance to stimulate secondary and tertiary processing of forest products and creating a specific diversification fund for communities that depend heavily on forestry.

The Bloc Québécois even introduced a bill in June 2009 to promote the use of wood in constructing federal buildings. That is what we call consultation, cooperation and clear demands to help the forestry sector, which is a very important segment of Quebec's economy.

• (1755)

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to come back to a few points made by the hon. member concerning the transitional measures and particularly the employment insurance program measures for the economic zones of Madawaska, in New Brunswick, which I represent, and the Lower St. Lawrence, in Quebec, presently represented by a Conservative member, that must be said.

Transitional measures were adopted to ensure that workers from the affected areas are not put at a disadvantage and that their family can have a decent living. The transitional measures were introduced in 2000 and, after 2005, we had to fight to convince the Conservatives to reintroduce this pilot project.

However, in April, the Conservatives will put an end to the transitional measures in the two areas I mentioned. That will be a devastating blow for Madawaska and I believe that it will have the same effect in the Lower St. Lawrence region. The present Conservative member for the Lower St. Lawrence may be inclined to strike while the iron is hot to make sure that the government makes the right decision and reintroduces the pilot projects in these economic zones.

I would like the member to tell me if the effect of not reintroducing the pilot project would be as devastating in the Lower St. Lawrence region as it would be in mine, Madawaska.

Mr. Claude Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very relevant question.

These transitional measures, which will soon expire, are indeed very important to the part of the Lower St. Lawrence region that I represent as well as a portion of my hon. colleague's riding.

In that region alone, the transitional provision soon to expire represents additional funding of \$25 million from the EI fund. Let me point out that \$25 million out of an employment insurance fund of \$18 billion, per year, is insignificant. But this \$25 million makes a world of difference for a number of families at risk of experiencing the so-called spring gap, and therefore going without an income for part of the year.

It has been surprising to hear the comments made by our friend from Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup in re-

cent weeks. He said that all seasonal workers had to do was to follow his example and work three or four jobs to avoid having to rely on employment insurance. That is rather pitiful.

[*English*]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was interested in the hon. member's comments about the forestry industry.

I see that since the last economic action plan, the government has created the pulp and paper green transformation fund with \$1 billion available over three years to support investments by Canadian pulp and paper companies in energy efficiency and performance. In this budget we have added \$100 million over four years to support clean energy generation in Canada's forestry sector.

I would like to find out from my colleague across the way if he agrees with those initiatives as being both good for the economy in the forestry sector and also good for the environment.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the measures referred to by my Conservative colleague are almost laughable because we are talking about \$100 million over four years, or \$25 million per year.

I said earlier in my speech that there is a very broad consensus in Quebec's forestry industry, which is not comprised of just Bloc members and evil separatists. They are people in the industry. There is a consensus: Quebec wants loans and loan guarantees to immediately free up cash flow for these companies so that they can improve their financial situation, prevent further difficulties like the ones they are experiencing and ensure future development.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I see that once again the government is bringing in further corporate tax reductions.

We only have to look to the voodoo economics of the United States back in the early 1980s with George H. W. Bush calling Ronald Reagan's economic plan of the time economics where one simply keeps reducing corporate taxes expecting to get good results.

Let me say that despite a 36% drop in corporate taxes, both federal and provincial, in the last decade and with record profits during that time, business spending on machinery and equipment declined as a share of GDP. This comes from Statistics Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I will use my remaining 30 seconds to sound the alarm once again. The forestry industry, particularly in Quebec, needs a government with a vision and an infusion of cash right now. Private woodlot owners in Quebec and Canada, the 450,000 families involved, need help.

The Budget

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to this budget. As the natural resources critic for the Bloc Québécois, I was looking for certain measures. Unfortunately, as my colleagues will understand after my presentation, I was very disappointed.

The Bloc Québécois toured Quebec extensively. We consulted various groups involved in economic issues, along with our finance critic and with our colleagues, and we presented a series of measures that would have allowed for some flexibility and some new initiatives in order to eventually achieve a balanced budget.

It is appalling that the Conservatives have once again missed an opportunity to meet Quebec's economic, social, environmental and financial needs. They are proving to us, once again, that as far as Canada is concerned, Quebec does not exist. This budget proves that federalism is simply not viable for Quebec and will never allow us to achieve our goals. The only way forward for Quebec is sovereignty.

With regard to nuclear energy, we have been through the famous medical isotope production crisis. The Conservatives, like the Liberals, literally dragged their feet on isotope production. These isotopes are crucial to detecting and treating a number of serious diseases. Because the core of nuclear reactors is exposed to extremely high temperatures and radiation, NRU reactors have a limited lifespan and must be shut down regularly. The Chalk River reactor dated from the 1950s, and clearly no one was surprised that it was corroded. The widely quoted joke was that it was not a matter of whether the reactor would fail, but when.

The Conservatives' failure to act forced the temporary closure of the Chalk River reactor in May 2009, leaving Quebec health care institutions and hospitals to their own devices and creating an unprecedented medical isotope crisis.

Quebec has been paying for the government's negligence and incompetence on this issue for nearly a year now. Despite the seriousness of the situation and lengthening wait times for treatment, the then Minister of Natural Resources, who is now Minister of Labour, even dared to describe the situation as sexy. The minister showed a total lack of respect for the patients and researchers for whom isotopes can sometimes be a matter of life and death.

Calls for help from doctors did not even rattle the government. The Conservatives committed to having the reactors up and running by August 2010. We have seen delay after delay, and now less than 50% of the repairs at Chalk River have been completed, over six months after the government's estimated date to have it running.

Jean-Luc Urbain, a doctor and president of the Canadian Association of Nuclear Medicine, predicted that patients would experience dark days waiting to receive diagnoses and treatment.

Atomic Energy Canada Limited, AECL, is now talking about starting up the reactor by the end of April. That would mean two more months of anxiety for patients waiting for diagnoses or treatment; two more months of having to pay for the Conservatives' incompetence.

It will soon be a year since hospitals have had a guaranteed supply of medical isotopes. We have yet to see any money to cover the cost of what the Quebec government has had to pay to manage the crisis,

and we are talking about over \$1 million. Our healthcare system has suffered greatly; waiting lists are growing longer and doctors are becoming impatient. Quebeckers want a long-term solution so that we do not lose any lives unnecessarily or put anyone in danger, and so that patients can get the treatments they need.

The government had no other choice but to invest in research and development for new technologies to produce medical isotopes, and it will invest in the TRIUMF technology.

But why did the government not take action sooner? Why did they take so long to find solutions, when we knew that this reactor, which dates back to the 1950s, would stop working?

• (1805)

Another problem with the nuclear industry has to do with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. The Bloc Québécois believes that the federal government is currently in conflict of interest as both the shareholder of a corporation that develops nuclear power plants and the guardian of public and environmental safety.

In this budget, \$300 million is earmarked to cover the anticipated commercial losses and to support the activities of AECL in 2010-11, such as pursuing the development work on the advanced CANDU reactor, safely supplying medical isotopes and maintaining reliable and safe activity at the Chalk River laboratory.

With so much investment in AECL, it is important that the government be transparent in its intentions for the future of this Crown corporation. The government is allowing rumours to swirl about the complete or partial privatization of AECL. We know that the National Bank of Canada did a value study of AECL. The government has to inform the House of its intentions at the earliest possible time: how is it going to use public money?

CANDU reactors, which the government wants to promote and develop on a large scale, currently are not very well trusted. The question is: why is a full scale verification of the safety of these reactors not being done, instead of this blind development?

The government is choosing to ignore the recommendations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, which proposes using a new type of low enriched uranium in the years to come. This would require a massive investment of public funds to the tune of several million dollars. This raises a lot of questions.

What can we say about nuclear energy, this supposedly clean energy? We are wondering why the government insists on considering nuclear energy to be as clean as hydroelectricity and wind energy, when the waste generated from nuclear energy has such disastrous consequences for the environment and the burden on future generations keeps getting worse.

We know that it currently costs more than \$100 million a year to deal with this nuclear waste. Why does the government want to invest so much in one of the most polluting industries, and not invest a dime in hydroelectricity?

The Budget

Funding for the industry is unjustified and unfair. Hydro-Québec, Quebec's pride and joy and a clean energy producer, has never received financial support from the federal government. Furthermore, Quebec refuses to become the dumping ground for Canada's radioactive waste.

That is why we tabled a motion passed unanimously in Quebec's National Assembly. It states that we will never agree to take in more waste than we produce.

Quebec chose clean, renewable hydroelectricity. The federal government's decision to promote nuclear energy will not benefit Quebec. The Bloc Québécois feels that the government should not promote nuclear power.

The government's agenda is clear to us: investment in nuclear energy will support exploitation of western Canada's oil sands. This budget is contrary to everything the Government of Quebec is trying to do to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Are we all going to end up paying the price yet again to fill western coffers? The government's attitude toward energy is irresponsible and unacceptable to Quebeckers. Once again, the west gets everything and Quebec gets nothing.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the Bloc Québécois will never consider nuclear energy to be clean energy. Investing so much money in technology that will only benefit Alberta oil companies is irresponsible and will have terrible consequences for coming generations. This budget should take Quebec's values and interests into account, but it does not.

For all of these reasons, I will be voting against this budget.

• (1810)

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I have two questions. The first is related to nuclear energy. How confident does the member think Canadians are in the government's managing nuclear energy in this country when the person who is supposed to guard the safety comes up with a complaint and is fired? How many more employees now are worried about getting fired if they bring anything forward? How many employees have been fired before or told not to speak up?

My second question is related to isotopes. If someone were diagnosed with cancer tomorrow, most Canadians would think that if they went to the hospital, all the tests would be available right away. They would be absolutely shocked and outraged if they knew that they could be told that they were a lower priority and were put off until later, that the isotopes may not be available. I do not think Canadians understand the severity of the situation the government has created.

I would like the member to comment on those two items.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. He is quite right. I am not at all confident that this government can manage nuclear energy. When the senior manager responsible for nuclear safety in Canada is asked to resign, it makes you wonder what is behind it all. This woman wanted to enhance

safety of CANDU reactors. These reactors are problematic and I am very worried about that.

Just last week, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission again alerted managers of nuclear sites to the possibility of explosions and malfunctions with these CANDU reactors. They were asked to assess the possibility of using another fuel, that is, slightly enriched uranium. This type of uranium is not produced in Canada. Therefore, the problems are stacking up and there is no solution in sight. If I were ill and needed isotopes, I would be very worried.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if you had allowed me to speak earlier, I could have asked my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques what he thought about the behaviour of our colleague from Madawaska—Restigouche. They are against the budget, but they will not vote against it. It is the same thing with the member for Yukon, who seems to be against the budget, even if we do not know how he will vote on Wednesday.

I have a question for my colleague. It seems as though those buying isotopes might no longer be required to sell the isotopes produced to healthcare institutions in Canada, and particularly in Quebec. It could therefore sell them to the highest bidder anywhere in the world. So they would be produced here, but we would not have them for ourselves. I think this is connected to the dangers of privatization that she mentioned and the lack of transparency.

I would like to know more about the situation for owners. They are owners, yes, but they do not decide anything and will have absolutely none of the isotopes produced.

• (1815)

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that if a private company is in charge of isotopes, there will be problems with its dealings with AECL, which is responsible for all CANDU sites, and which also wants to promote CANDU reactors and sell them around the world. Still, the government may want to privatize AECL, or it may not. The whole issue lacks transparency. We do not know the details.

The latest budget allocated \$300 million for this. As taxpayers, we have to wonder whether we will be asked to bear the unprofitable aspects of the operation and the risks associated with nuclear waste. Will private companies have control over the isotopes, leaving us, as parliamentarians, with no assurances that sick people will get the isotopes they need? That worries me.

[English]

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

I rise today to support the budget tabled by the Minister of Finance.

Last year in supporting Canada's economic action plan, I said that this budget would be a test of political maturity. Canadians were watching with great interest and quite literally praying that we parliamentarians got it right. A year later I can say unequivocally, "Yes Canada, we got it right". We are cautiously optimistic that the economy is recovering, but we must remain vigilant.

The Budget

The House will hear from many speakers about the good things in this budget, and indeed I will mention some which are important to my riding of Kitchener Centre. However, I will begin by mentioning some things that are not in this budget. Why would I do that? Why would I want people to think about what is not in this budget?

Members of the opposition criticized our government for taking an extra five weeks to consult with Canadians. They did not think we should bother with that much consultation. Now they ask why we bothered to consult only to end up with a stay-the-course budget. The answer is that our consultations told us what Canadians do not want in this budget.

For example, Canadians told us that they do not want the overtaxation of past Liberal governments. When Liberals complain that the government squandered the surplus, they are really just saying that we should not have reduced the GST. The Liberal leader is thinking about hiking the GST back up to Liberal Party levels. In fact, by reducing the GST and reducing tax levels generally, as early as 2007 our government injected consumer spending stimulus into the economy. That helped stave off the global recession in Canada for almost a full year after it was felt elsewhere.

We could take up the Liberal Party's complaints and raise taxes in this budget, but Canadians spoke loudly against that option. That is not in this budget.

We could take up the NDP's suggestion to reverse corporate tax relief. Consulting with Canadians, however, confirmed once again that Canadians know that job growth depends upon competitive Canadian employers, so people will not see any job-killing NDP-style corporate taxation in this budget.

Consulting with Canadians also told us that they do not want permanent deficits. Canadians know that government deficits are a kind of reverse Robin Hood. Even now approximately \$31 billion every year is taxed from low and middle income and other Canadians, and paid as interest into the pockets of those wealthy enough to lend money to the government. People will not find any long-term extra spending in this budget.

People will not find an extension of the March 31, 2011 expiry date for stimulus spending. Instead of major spending programs, such as the Liberal Party's mythical daycare plan promised in every election since 1993 but never delivered, people will find restraint in 2011 and beyond.

However, people will not find any reversal of our commitments. We are keeping our word. We are increasing foreign aid to historic levels. We are maintaining funding to arts and culture at levels never before seen in Canada. Our record high provincial transfers for health and education will not be reduced.

We will slay the deficit with gradual restraint, not by abandoning our commitments. I am very proud to be part of a government that delivers what we promise.

There is a unique feature which is in this budget. What is unique about Conservative budgets is that they are multi-year plans. They demonstrate foresight. They take account of changing circumstances. Prorogation provided an opportunity to take Canada's economic pulse, to confirm that indeed our economy is recovering but not yet

recovered. That is why this budget stays the course with stimulus spending this year. That is also why our government is planning ahead for restraint in later years.

Canadians across our great land already understand the wisdom of this course. As the Governor General said that rainy-day spending must not become an all-weather practice.

I bet Canadians are wishing that just once the opposition parties would find the self-assurance to say, "The government is right. We need to stay the course this year and then exercise some restraint. It is so obvious Canadians want us to support this budget, so that is what we will do".

• (1820)

Would that not be a great gesture of national unity in difficult economic times? We cannot be all things to all people, but this budget rings all the right notes. Here is what the *Waterloo region Record* had to say:

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty walked a fine, intelligent line—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I have to remind the hon. member not to use proper names even when quoting from other publications.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: I will re-read the quote, Mr. Speaker.

The finance minister walked a fine, intelligent line Thursday to deliver a budget that serves Canada's most urgent needs.

I would add that most Canadians agree and would like the opposition to support this budget and get on with things such as the additional \$19 billion in new stimulus spending to create and maintain jobs. This is especially good news for Kitchener Centre, which I proudly represent. Our manufacturers have been hard hit. In addition to the stimulus funding, budget 2010 goes even further to assist manufacturers.

An example is the government's commitment to eliminate all remaining tariffs on manufacturing machinery. Most of these tariffs were eliminated immediately. The remainder will be phased out by January 1, 2015. These tariff reductions will save businesses an additional \$300 million annually. This is a significant cost savings for our manufacturers. It will encourage investment in needed machinery. It will encourage innovation. This is very important to Kitchener Centre.

In my prebudget submission on behalf of Kitchener Centre, I urged the minister to do two particularly important things for my riding. He has addressed both of these concerns. What were they?

The Budget

First, relief for low or no income Canadians is an important issue to Kitchener Centre, which contains our urban core. Those who study such needs agree that social housing is essential to the solution. It is very important to Kitchener Centre that \$2 billion of infrastructure stimulus spending invested in social housing in 2009-10 will be followed by an additional \$2.1 billion in 2010-11. This brings the two year total of social housing, including housing for disabled and for seniors, to a total boost of \$4.1 billion.

This budget would also assist low or no income Canadians with a one year, \$30 million increase in skills linked funding to assist more young Canadians while the labour market recovers. Another \$20 million is added to pathways to education in support of disadvantaged youth. Yet another \$30 million over two years will support aboriginal education.

My second request on behalf of Kitchener Centre, where unemployment remains high, was for continued support for unemployed workers. Once again, this budget delivers. More than \$4 billion would be provided in 2010-11. This includes \$1.6 billion for additional benefits, \$1 billion in enhanced training opportunities, and \$1.6 billion in EI premium relief. Five extra weeks of EI benefits, greater access to EI for long-tenured workers, and an extension of the duration and scope of the work sharing program will all continue into 2010-11.

As the member of Parliament for Kitchener Centre, I wanted our government to assist those hardest hit by the global downturn. This budget delivers exactly that.

As a member of the environment committee, I was also pleased with the measures for green jobs. These include \$100 million over the next four years for clean energy technologies in the forestry sector. We are also expanding eligibility for accelerated capital cost allowance for investment in clean energy generation assets. This builds on the \$1 billion over five years committed in budget 2009 for the development of promising clean energy technologies.

Last year I said:

The Speech from the Throne lays out a path through a dark forest of economic perils. I call on all of our Honourable Members to seize the opportunity to confidently put on the cloak of open mindedness, transparency and mutual trust. Let's travel that path together with common focus on the needs and well-being of all Canadians.

I repeat this request today, but add that there is every reason to believe that we will soon need our sunglasses as we emerge from that dark forest.

● (1825)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely shocking how misinformed the member could be.

He talked about no new taxes. We have huge EI tax increases for people. He is not telling his constituents that the Conservatives are

raising the price of airplane flights by increasing airport taxes. He complained that the poor people are paying taxes. What are they paying for? For millions upon millions of dollars of government advertising of Conservative programs.

He talked about \$100 million for clean energy when the Conservatives cancelled several billions from previous governments.

He talked about a mythical child care program, which was in place. Ten provinces had signed agreements and the money had flowed.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I will address the issue of taxes because our Conservative government believes in leaving more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. It is the right thing to do and we have the records to prove it.

Since coming to office in 2006, we have cut over 100 taxes, reducing taxes in every way government collects them: personal, consumption, business, excise taxes and more. We have removed over one million low income Canadians from the tax rolls completely and we have reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest level in nearly 50 years.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe what I hear from those members regarding corporation taxes. They are taking us back to the 1980s with Ronald Reagan. Even George Bush Senior called his economic plan voodoo economics.

We know that reducing corporate taxes has not done what the Conservatives say that it will do. We have reduced corporate taxes now from the year 2000. The prime minister of the day reduced them from 28% to 21%. Now they are proposed to go down to 15%. Guess what has happened? Independent bodies like Statistics Canada have indicated that despite a 36% drop in corporate taxes in the last decade with record profits at that time, business spending on machinery and equipment has actually declined. Do the members understand that? It has declined as a—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I have to stop the member there to give the member for Kitchener Centre about 38 seconds to respond.

Mr. Stephen Woodworth: Mr. Speaker, I suppose the best way to respond to that is to point out that over 130,000 net jobs have been created or maintained as a result of our economic action plan in the last year. That certainly includes the corporate tax relief that we have put in place.

● (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Monday, March 8, 2010

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Broadcasting Act and the Telecommunications Act

Mr. Dufour	119
Bill C-444. Second reading	119
Mr. Szabo	120
Mr. Bélanger	121
Mr. Cardin	121
Mrs. Boucher	121
Mr. Rodriguez	122
Mr. Angus	123
Mr. Cardin	124
Mr. Galipeau	125

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

THE BUDGET

Financial Statement of Minister of Finance

Motion	126
Mr. McCallum	126
Mr. Shipley	128
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	129
Mr. Rafferty	129
Mr. Szabo	129
Mr. Rajotte	130
Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown)	131
Ms. Ashton	132
Mr. Norlock	132
Mr. Gravelle	133
Mr. Szabo	134
Ms. Demers	134
Mr. Norlock	135
Ms. Sgro	136
Ms. Bourgeois	136
Mr. Calandra	137
Mr. Gravelle	138
Mr. Dechert	138
Mr. Garneau	140
Ms. Ashton	140
Mr. Watson	140
Mr. Cannis	142
Ms. Ashton	142

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

2010 Winter Olympians

Mr. Dreesen	143
-------------------	-----

International Women's Day

Ms. Bennett	143
-------------------	-----

Kim Saint-Pierre

Mrs. Freeman	143
--------------------	-----

International Women's Day

Ms. Leslie	143
------------------	-----

Forestry

Mr. Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	144
--	-----

Status of Women

Ms. Dhalla	144
------------------	-----

Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Games

Mr. Shipley	144
-------------------	-----

Nathalie Morin

Ms. Lalonde	144
-------------------	-----

Status of Women

Mrs. O'Neill-Gordon	144
---------------------------	-----

Claudette Poirier

Mrs. Mendes	145
-------------------	-----

International Women's Day

Mrs. Boucher	145
--------------------	-----

Status of Women

Ms. Mathysen	145
--------------------	-----

The Budget

Mrs. Glover	145
-------------------	-----

International Women's Day

Ms. Gagnon	146
------------------	-----

International Women's Day

Mr. Ignatieff	146
---------------------	-----

The Budget

Mr. Calandra	146
--------------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

Afghanistan

Mr. Ignatieff	146
Mr. Harper	146
Mr. Ignatieff	146
Mr. Harper	146
Mr. Ignatieff	146
Mr. Harper	147
Mr. Dosanjh	147
Mr. Harper	147
Mr. Dosanjh	147
Mr. Harper	147

Status of Women

Mr. Duceppe	147
Mr. Harper	147
Mr. Duceppe	147
Mr. Harper	147
Ms. Demers	147
Ms. Oda	147

Firearms Registry

Mrs. Mourani	148
Mr. Toews	148

Status of Women	
Mr. Layton	148
Mr. Harper	148
Afghanistan	
Mr. Layton	148
Mr. Harper	148
Mr. Layton	148
Mr. Harper	148
International Cooperation	
Ms. Folco	148
Ms. Oda	149
Ms. Folco	149
Ms. Oda	149
Status of Women	
Ms. Neville	149
Ms. Finley	149
Ms. Neville	149
Mrs. Guergis	149
The Budget	
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	149
Mr. Blackburn	149
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga)	149
Mr. Blackburn	150
Rights & Democracy	
Ms. Lalonde	150
Mr. Cannon	150
Ms. Lalonde	150
Mr. Cannon	150
Mrs. Jennings	150
Mr. Cannon	150
Mrs. Jennings	150
Mr. Cannon	150
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mrs. Zarac	150
Mr. Kenney	151
Mrs. Zarac	151
Mr. Kenney	151
Government Appointments	
Mr. Brown (Barrie)	151
Mr. Day	151
Government Spending	
Mr. Mulcair	151
Mr. Baird	151
Mr. Mulcair	151
Mr. Baird	151
Employment Insurance	
Mrs. Beaudin	152
Mr. Blackburn	152
Mrs. Beaudin	152
Mr. Blackburn	152
Citizenship and Immigration	
Mr. Brison	152
Mr. Kenney	152
Mr. Brison	152

Mr. Kenney	152
Status of Women	
Ms. Mathysen	153
Ms. Finley	153
Ms. Mathysen	153
Ms. Finley	153
Public Safety	
Mr. Fast	153
Mr. Toews	153
Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Goodale	153
Mr. Strahl	153
Forestry Industry	
Mr. Bouchard	154
Mr. Lebel	154
Health	
Mrs. Hughes	154
Mrs. Aglukkaq	154
Sealing Industry	
Mrs. O'Neill-Gordon	154
Mrs. Shea	154

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Petitions	
Firearms Registry	
Mr. St-Cyr	154
Assisted Suicide	
Ms. Sgro	154
Earthquake in Chile	
Mr. Maloway	154
Animal Welfare	
Mr. Szabo	155
Mr. Plamondon	155
Canada Post Corporation	
Mr. Oliphant	155
Firearms Registry	
Ms. Demers	155
Animal Welfare	
Mr. Calandra	155
Canada Post Corporation	
Mr. Simms	155
Employment Insurance	
Ms. Bonsant	156
Questions on the Order Paper	
Mr. Lukiwski	156

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Budget	
Financial Statement of Minister of Finance	
Motion	156
Mr. Cannis	156
Mr. Calandra	157
Mr. Stoffer	158
Ms. Foote	158

Mr. Woodworth.....	159
Mr. Gravelle.....	160
Ms. Coady.....	160
Mr. Goodyear.....	160
Ms. Coady.....	161
Mr. Gravelle.....	161
Mr. Regan.....	162
Mr. Wallace.....	162
Mr. Simms.....	163
Mr. Rafferty.....	164
Mr. D'Amours.....	164
Ms. Crowder.....	164
Mr. Bagnell.....	166
Mr. Simms.....	166
Mr. Gravelle.....	166
Mr. Donnelly.....	166
Mr. Bagnell.....	168
Mrs. McLeod.....	168
Mr. Silva.....	169
Mr. Simms.....	170
Mr. Brown (Barrie).....	170
Mr. Richardson.....	171

Ms. Neville.....	171
Mr. McColeman.....	172
Mr. Calandra.....	173
Mr. Lemieux.....	173
Mr. Dhaliwal.....	174
Mr. Allen (Welland).....	175
Mrs. McLeod.....	175
Mr. Cannis.....	177
Mr. Rafferty.....	177
Mr. Payne.....	177
Mr. Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques).....	177
Mr. D'Amours.....	179
Mr. Woodworth.....	179
Mr. Maloway.....	179
Ms. Brunelle.....	180
Mr. Bagnell.....	181
Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga).....	181
Mr. Woodworth.....	181
Mr. Bagnell.....	183
Mr. Maloway.....	183

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