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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 10, 2010

The House met at 2 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week's budget delivered good news for Canadians right across the country.

The big winners in Thursday's budget were taxpayers, as the government committed to balance the budget over the medium term through fiscal discipline, not higher taxes.

From coast to coast, our budgetary plan received accolades from observers and experts. The chamber of commerce in my wonderful riding of North Vancouver is pleased that the government is committed to balancing the nation's books and strongly believes that this is possible without tax hikes.

It also welcomes our strategy to promote a more competitive economy. Part of that strategy was unveiled yesterday as this government moved to enhance the competitiveness of Canadian industry by eliminating tariffs on manufacturing imports. Unilateral tariff relief is a truly exciting concept that will put manufacturers in my riding and across the country in a better position to grow exports and compete with the world.

Improved competitiveness creates jobs and economic growth, and that is good news for Canadians.

TIBET

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are commemorating the 51st anniversary of the national uprising in Tibet, when Tibetans opposed the presence of Chinese communists on their territory.

The failure of this uprising led to the repression of the Tibetan people and ultimately to the exile of the Dalai Lama, who is still exiled to this day.

I want to highlight this sad event to remind Canadians that we must defend our cultural diversity and tolerance of differences.

It goes without saying that I support the people of Tibet who are working to achieve freedom, because unfortunately they continue to live in fear and are unable to freely practice their religion.

To our friends in Tibet, I want them to know that Canadians are standing by their side in the hopes that real progress will be made soon.

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TIBET

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, March 10 marks the 51st anniversary of the Tibetan uprising against the systematic, brutal oppression Tibet suffered at the hands of Chinese authorities.

That is also when the Dalai Lama and other groups of Tibetans fled to India. This anniversary commemorates the thousands of Tibetans who died that day, as well as the thousands of Tibetan martyrs sent to forced labour camps in China.

After more than half a century, the preservation of Tibetan culture and heritage is threatened. Little has changed when it comes to human rights. Unfortunately, Tibetans are not likely to find the peace and tranquillity they once knew any time soon.

Together, let us recognize the strength of these people, who have not lost hope that their government in exile will find the common ground that will allow them to preserve their culture and religion.

The Government of Canada has a moral obligation to defend Tibet's right to regional autonomy and must urge the international community to push for substantive negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.

Statements by Members

[English]

MARK ANTHONY GRAHAM

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend Hamilton City Council, under the leadership of Mayor Fred Eisenberger, with particular recognition to ward 8 councillor, Terry Whitehead, in changing the name of Olympic Park located on the West Mountain portion of my riding to the Mark Anthony Graham Memorial Olympic Park in honour of a respected Hamilton soldier who died tragically four years ago in Afghanistan.

Born in Jamaica, Mark grew up in Hamilton. He attended Chedoke Middle School and Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School, and in 1992 represented Canada at the Barcelona Summer Olympics in the 4x400 metre relay team. Even after his renowned success at the University of Nebraska and Kent State as a track and field athlete, Mark returned to Sir Allan MacNab Secondary School to help coach the next generation of local track athletes.

Mark Anthony Graham went on to serve in the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. He was deployed to Afghanistan where, on September 4, 2006, he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Renaming this park affords our community a fitting tribute to this outstanding Hamiltonian. We will remember his legacy both as a gifted athlete and a soldier who selflessly served our city and our country.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

Mr. Stephen Woodworth (Kitchener Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week is International Women's Week, time to reflect on women's achievements.

Women in Canada have come a long ways since the 1876 law which said, "Women are persons in matters of pains and penalties, but are not persons in matters of rights and privileges".

This was an illogical definition that excluded women from exercising fundamental rights. How could well-educated, civilized, legal minds of that day arbitrarily define a whole class of persons as "not persons".

This law proved that too many people, even well-educated ones, put blinders on their eyes to deny human rights when it suits their own self-interest. By fooling ourselves, we make fools of ourselves in the eyes of history. Even 21st century Canadians are not immune.

In the spirit of the struggle for women's rights, let us ensure that all our laws recognize the human rights of every human being.

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● (1405)

MUSIC AWARDS

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently, Atlantic Canada witnessed a massive outpouring of pride in our culture.

Hundreds of delegates and thousands of music fans gathered for a musical extravaganza highlighting the best in east coast music.

Cape Breton was a sea of music as ECMA's delegates gathered and performers treated fans at night jam sessions, concerts, schools and shopping malls, while the award show at Centre 200 on Sunday night capped off what was arguably the world's longest and largest kitchen party.

It was a night of heartfelt tributes as the famous Inverness county Rankin family were awarded the Director's Special Achievement Award and Joel Plaskett from Dartmouth cleaned up with six awards.

Sydney songwriter and musician, Scotty Turner, along with Richmond county duo, Cornelia and Billy MacLeod, received awards.

I want all members to honour the organizers, delegates, musicians and fans for an amazing display of east coast talent, proving once again that Cape Breton is Canada's music and hospitality capital.

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ARCTIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week, the city of Grande Prairie and the Peace Country at large play host to the circumpolar world and the Arctic Winter Games. These games will proudly represent Canada as a northern nation, exhibiting the best in Arctic sportsmanship.

I have no doubt that our athletes will make us proud showcasing the many talents of our northern communities.

Over the past three years, the local organizing committee has worked tirelessly to plan and execute this world-class event. The hundreds of volunteers, some of whom have spent the last number of months preparing for the games and the cultural events, have demonstrated the vitality and the hospitality of our community and our country.

On behalf of the Government of Canada and on behalf of Peace Country residents, I want to thank the sponsors, the organizers, the athletes and the volunteers who have worked so hard to make the 2010 Arctic Winter Games such an overwhelming success.

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[Translation]

CUBA

Mr. Jean Dorion (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we were shocked to learn that a Cuban prisoner, Orlando Zapata Tamayo, died on February 23 after being on a hunger strike for two months to protest the conditions in which he was being held. Sentenced to 25 years in prison, he is the first political prisoner in Cuba to die in prison since 1972. And now, Agence France-Presse is reporting that another dissident, Guillermo Fariñas, has become seriously ill since he, too, went on a hunger strike.

While the Cuban government has the right to protect its national sovereignty against foreign intervention, that does not relieve Cuba of its international obligations to respect fundamental human rights. Nothing can justify suspending those rights.

The Bloc Québécois joins the international community in expressing its deep regret at the death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo. We also call on the Cuban government to respect fundamental human rights.

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THE BUDGET

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Bloc falsely claims that there is nothing good for Quebec in the budget.

Our government has brought down a budget that will allow Quebecers to benefit from tax cuts, resources for innovation and commercialization, spinoffs from the economic action plan that will help preserve and create jobs, and tariff elimination, which will make businesses more competitive.

The budget also contains other measures for Quebec: continued investment in infrastructure; assistance for our fishers; potential access to \$75 million for livestock processing, in agriculture; several million dollars for community revitalization; help to make SMEs and communities more competitive; and research and development initiatives for green energy in support of forestry industry workers. More importantly, Quebec will continue to benefit from significant federal transfers.

The Bloc Québécois claims to defend the interests of Quebec, but in fact, it is only defending its own interests. Our Conservative government is getting things done for Quebecers and Canadians.

* * *

• (1410)

[English]

JAMES OTCHAKOVSKI

Hon. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the entire Peel Liberal caucus to honour the life of Constable James Otchakovski.

On March 1, Constable Otchakovski was responding to a call when his cruiser collided with another car and then a light post. Constable Otchakovski was rushed to a hospital and sadly passed away on March 2.

Constable James Otchakovski was a two-year veteran of the Peel Regional Police Force's 21st Division where he served with distinction. He was a committed police officer.

His passing reminds us of the important work done by all of Peel's first responders. Our community is a safer place because of the work of people like Constable Otchakovski.

With the tragic news of the loss of yet another officer this week just outside of London, I hope all members will join with me in offering my sincere condolences to the family and friends of Constable Otchakovski and the entire Peel Regional Police family at this difficult time.

Statements by Members

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers are also with those families.

In these times of economic uncertainty, the government has acted aggressively in its pursuit of free trade. Canada is a trading nation. Two-thirds of our economy relies on trade. Free trade is essential in creating jobs and strengthening the economy for Canadian workers.

Last month we negotiated a deal with the Obama administration to resolve “buy American”, which had been a persistent irritant with our strongest trading partner. In last week's throne speech, we stated our commitment to an aggressive free trade agenda with countries in all regions of the world.

Year two of Canada's economic action plan shows that Canada is a world leader in tearing down trade barriers by making Canada the first country in the G20 to create a tariff-free zone for manufacturers. This will enhance economic prosperity and create jobs here in Canada.

It is clear this government is committed to resisting protectionism, and promoting free trade and open markets. Our government is acting and acting aggressively, and making sure Canada—

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

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SOCIAL PROGRAMS

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, following the last meeting with G8 leaders, the Prime Minister announced that the health of women and children must be a priority. Determinants of health include adequate housing, access to nutritious food, and quality child care.

Budget 2010 will be the final year of the government's meagre commitment to affordable housing, emergency shelters, and the homeless.

In my community, this means My Sister's Place, a resource centre for women struggling with abuse or mental issues, will have to find other sources to make up the more than \$145,000 in federal funding or eliminate staff and programs that help the very people the Prime Minister said should be a priority.

Budget 2010 provides a small increase of \$3.25 a week for families with young children, but zero new child care spaces. When it comes to putting our money where the Conservatives' mouths are, they give that money to the big banks and oil companies, and leave women and children behind.

*Oral Questions***UKRAINE**

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are known for promoting democracy around the world. This year is no different.

In February I had the privilege of travelling to Ukraine to observe another historic presidential election. I joined hundreds of dedicated Canadian volunteers, including the hon. member for Edmonton East, Senator Raynell Andreychuk, and Senator Consiglio Di Nino. Our volunteers worked tirelessly to ensure the elections were both fair and democratic.

This afternoon, many of these observers will meet with the Prime Minister here in Ottawa to commemorate this historic event. Among them are representatives from the Canada Ukraine Foundation and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Canadian Ukrainians have strong ties to their home country and we will continue to strengthen this bond. We are proud to support the people of Ukraine during these elections and in their continued democratic development.

I wish to thank each and every Canadian who volunteered in Ukraine and observed the presidential election.

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[*Translation*]

FRANÇOIS LANOUE

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, March 3, Reverend François Lanoue passed away in Joliette. Quebec is mourning the loss of an exceptional person, a man who distinguished himself through his many contributions to the world of education and culture. His memory will live on in the hearts of the people of the Lanaudière region.

One of his accomplishments was co-founding the Musée d'art de Joliette with Father Wilfrid Corbeil. He was also the president of the Joliette-De Lanaudière historical society from 1985 to 1993, where he kept alive the memory of New Acadia.

Born in Saint-Jacques de Montcalm, Reverend Lanoue taught at the Joliette seminary. Bernard Landry and Jean Chrétien, two of his pupils, paid a stirring tribute to this extraordinary teacher.

François Lanoue was ordained in 1943. He worked on a number of cultural projects, including the religious art movement, and was the diocesan representative at the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church until 2007.

It is with great respect that I salute this very dedicated man. We will remember his love for the Lanaudière region and his passion for sharing his vast knowledge.

* * *

•(1415)

[*English*]

JUSTICE

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is always quick to comment on any court judgment that does not align with its get

tough on crime rhetoric. Why just as recently as January, the Prime Minister publicly criticized a Toronto judge for handing down a sentence he deemed to be too light.

Interestingly, Conservative MPs are now maintaining stunning silence when one of their own, a dangerous driver who failed a breathalyzer test and was caught in possession of illicit drugs, was released with no criminal record and just a slap on the wrist. Even the judge in this case called the outcome “a break” for the former Conservative MP.

In the past, the Prime Minister has said, “We believe we have to send a message” to individuals caught with even a small amount of illicit drugs. Why the double standard?

Nothing before stopped them from commenting. Does the government stand by its rhetoric of getting tough on crime or is this just more Conservative hypocrisy?

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LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is the Liberal leader's plan for the economy? Well, he has really only ever talked about two things: tax more so he can spend more.

He says a job-killing GST hike is on the table. He brags he was the first Liberal to call for a carbon tax on everything. All his MPs and advisers talk about is the need for higher taxes. What would the Liberal leader do with the billions of new taxes that he would ask Canadians to pay?

The Liberals want higher taxes on everything: taxes for grandiose and costly environmental plans; taxes for more Liberal social engineering programs; and taxes for megaproject after megaproject.

For the Liberals, it is all about tax, tax, tax and spend, spend, spend.

They just do not get it. Higher taxes and reckless spending will not create jobs, and they will not encourage economic growth.

Canadians know full well that the Liberal plan for the economy is very simple: tax more, spend more.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly a week since the government appointed Justice Iacobucci to study documents in the Afghan detainee torture scandal, but the Conservatives still have not told us about what he has been asked to do, so I want to ask the Prime Minister this.

When will we see Justice Iacobucci's written mandate? What will the mandate be and when will he report to us about his findings?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think we have been very clear. We are asking Justice Iacobucci to look at all of the documents that have been previously reviewed by public servants in terms of access to information. Justice Iacobucci will conduct a thorough inquiry on those documents and he will report according to his terms of reference.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government shut down Parliament. It intimidated witnesses. It withheld crucial documents from Parliament. The Canadian people are tired of this. It is adding a democratic deficit to this country's operation.

We need to know who in government knew what and when about torture in Afghan jails, and that should be the justice's mandate.

Why will the Prime Minister not give him the power to do the proper job? Why will he not appoint a public inquiry?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously, I categorically reject all of the unfounded allegations contained in that question.

The fact of the matter is that Canadian public servants have reviewed and have made all documents available that are publicly available under the law. We are asking Justice Iacobucci to review their work to doubly ensure that that is the case.

However, I remind the House that it was this government that instituted, three years ago, the present transfer agreement with Afghan authorities to correct deficiencies from those agreements that were never dealt with in the past by that government.

• (1420)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the allegations regarding the transfers came after the new agreement was in place. That is the problem. The Conservatives said that they fixed the problem, but they did not. That is why we need a public inquiry led by Justice Iacobucci.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government, through our access to information officials, gave the opposition and the public all of the documents that were legally available. We have asked former Justice Iacobucci to review their work to make sure this is the case.

So far, the evidence has been clear: the Canadian Forces, the diplomats and all the Government of Canada officials have always acted responsibly.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that Justice Iacobucci has done a report on the Canadian government and torture. Nearly two years ago, his report on three falsely accused Canadians tortured abroad was given to this government. It ignored it and did nothing.

Why would Canadians believe it will be different with the torture of Afghan detainees? After prorogation failed to make it go away, all Canadians see are excuses to buy time and bury the issue.

Is the Prime Minister not just using this respected jurist's good name to buy time and then ignore him all over again?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is completely wrong on this. Mr. Iacobucci is a jurist who possesses specific experience and expertise in the area of documents.

These are documents already reviewed by non-partisan public servants, but to add to the comfort level that possibly the hon. member could have, Mr. Justice Iacobucci will have a look at this. He will work as expeditiously as possible, but it is a big job. We should let Justice Iacobucci do his work.

Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not question Justice Iacobucci's credentials. I question a government that ignores his reports.

Justice Iacobucci, Justice O'Connor and others have issued recommendations to this government to stop torture. This government ignored it and did nothing. That is the issue. Now it has set up a process to use this justice's good name, and we are supposed to believe that it will not just ignore him all over again.

This government has spent all of its time on how to spin torture and none on the recommendations that stop it from happening again. Stop spinning. Stop the damage control and call a full public inquiry so we can get the truth.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have complete confidence in the work of Justice Iacobucci. He will have the opportunity to review thousands of documents. I know that this will be done as expeditiously as possible. This should have the complete support of the hon. member and his party.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Conservative government is cutting vacant positions, it is paying huge sums of money for minor work on government buildings. For example, six light fixtures were installed at a cost of \$5,000 and extra cleaning was done in ministers' offices for the modest sum of \$20,000. This same government has the gall to ask Quebec families to tighten their belts.

When it costs \$1,000 to replace a doorbell, would the Prime Minister not do better to preach by example and cut where it really counts?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about a competitive contract awarded several years ago to maintain federal buildings, but it is clear that some of these expenses do not seem justifiable.

The Minister of Public Works has asked her deputy minister to review the contract and examine these invoices to assure us that taxpayers' money is being used responsibly and efficiently.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if this is a competitive contract, he should investigate to see whether the bidders colluded with each other.

Not only has the government done nothing to stop this waste, but it has extended its contract with the firm doing this work. This government definitely specializes in dangerous conduct, whether at the wheel of a car or in handling the economy.

Will the Prime Minister admit that this waste of public money has gone on long enough and that it is time to clean up all these contracts, which are generous to say the least?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just said that some of these expenses do not seem justifiable. That is clear. That is why the Minister of Public Works has asked her deputy minister to look at these expenses and examine this contract and these invoices, because our government demands that every dollar of taxpayers' money be spent responsibly and efficiently.

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TAXATION

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the six major Canadian banks have raked in a "mere" \$5.3 billion in net profit over the past three months.

While the government is raiding the pockets of the unemployed, while it is wasting public money on doorbells and potted plants, the Minister of Finance is not even considering collecting from the banks.

His complacency toward tax havens allows them to avoid paying billions of dollars in taxes.

Why does the government not require the banks, these billionaires in times of recession, to pay their fair share of taxes?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the banks and financial institutions in Canada pay very substantial taxes each year. They are a tremendous success story. As we look around the world now at the global recession, the worst recession since the 1930s, Canadian financial institutions stand out worldwide as being reliable, solid, well regulated and a beacon of financial stability in a troubled economic world.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with \$5.3 billion in three months I can see that they are solid.

The banks and the oil companies are the lucky beneficiaries of this government's tax policy, but there are no Conservative tax

giveaways for Quebec's forestry companies, sawmills, paper companies and manufacturing companies that have not made a profit during this economic crisis.

Instead of gouging the least fortunate, what is the government waiting for to put an end to the tax holiday for the banks and make them pay their fair share?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I gather that what the member opposite wants is for the government to tell the Desjardins group, the caisses populaires movement, and the National Bank of Canada, headquartered in Montreal, how they should run their businesses, to confiscate their profits and to take money away from their shareholders.

That is not our structure in this country. We are proud of our financial institutions. They are performing well in a difficult economic climate.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned from diplomat Eileen Olexiuk, who was second in command in Kabul, that she told the Liberal government she had real concerns about the possibility of torture of detainees in Afghanistan. In fact, she actually met with victims of torture while she was there and reported this to the government.

When will the Prime Minister launch a full and public inquiry so that we can get everybody who knows anything to speak about it, from the former Liberal defence minister, Bill Graham, right up to the current defence minister in this government?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this country, prime ministers are not in the business of calling public inquiries on their predecessors.

The fact of the matter is that this government worked within the framework of the transfer agreement that was in place. We ultimately determined that there had to be an element of strength in that agreement. That was done over three years ago and the transfer arrangements are working well.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, diplomat Eileen Olexiuk tried to warn the government about detainees being tortured. Paul Martin's Liberal government ignored her concerns, and so did the Conservatives. She said that nobody really cared. She wrote reports calling for action but, like Richard Colvin, she was completely ignored.

Does the Prime Minister understand how disappointing this is to people, to Canadians who do not want their country associated with torture?

Oral Questions

•(1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): On the contrary, Mr. Speaker, the record is clear. In the face of allegations and evidence of torture, our diplomats and military took action. We have a transfer agreement that is working well. There is no evidence to suggest that any officers, Government of Canada officials or members of the military participated in the torture of detainees. That is contrary to Canadian values.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister says that it is all clear. It is far from being clear what is going on here. He claims that the agreement is working just fine, but everybody knows that torture was taking place and that there is a very strong possibility that it is taking place today, that the agreement is not being followed to the letter as it should be, and that torture is commonplace in Afghan prisons.

Is the Prime Minister trying to deny that, or does he agree with his own Minister of National Defence who said last November that the Conservatives were aware of torture from the day that they took office? If so, why did the transfers continue, and why are they refusing to—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, any suggestion that Canadian military forces, or diplomatic or other personnel have been involved in any of these kinds of activities are allegations made without any foundation whatsoever.

The fact of the matter is Canadian government officials act responsibly whenever they face information. We have a transfer agreement in place with the Afghan government that involves surveillance and follow up, as well as capacity building for the Afghan government itself. At all times Canadian personnel take their international obligations seriously.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, following his appearance before a parliamentary committee on December 8, chief of defence staff General Natynczyk ordered a board of inquiry into the transfer of detainees as he had not received all the information about an incident known since May 2007. The report was delivered on Monday.

I ask the Minister of National Defence, now that the report is complete, when exactly will this report be made public?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, what General Natynczyk actually ordered was a report on information that was obtained with respect to a specific incident that involved a transfer of Canadian Forces to Afghan officials.

Mr. Natynczyk is out of the country presently. He will be back this week. I will have an opportunity to speak to him about that report and the information will be made public in due course.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this report was questioning the following sentence in the June 2006 field memo. The memo said, "Police did assault him, as happened in the past".

Can the minister assure us that this particular section of the report will not be censored? What did it mean by such assault having happened before?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this really gets to the root of the misunderstanding of the hon. member and many on the opposition side. It is not for the government to censor documents. These documents are examined by impartial arm's-length public servants within the Department of Justice.

With respect to information about this, information will be forthcoming. We have provided documents to parliamentary committees, to military police complaints commissions, and on every occasion Canadian Forces personnel have been found to have performed to the highest standards of integrity. We support them 100%.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the same minister. He said in the past, "The truth is there is no credible evidence to suggest that a prisoner was ever tortured". There now appears to be evidence of photographs being taken in order to ensure that something that happened in the past did not happen again.

If something happened in the past, would the minister not agree with me that that in fact is credible evidence?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): I will answer the righteous member this way, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that if there is credible evidence and we have seen in the past information that led us to believe there were concerns, we acted.

We have continued to put our faith in members of the Canadian Forces, senior diplomats, those individuals who are closest to the ground. On the speculation that the hon. member raises, there will be an opportunity for it to be brought forward and discussed at a parliamentary committee.

•(1435)

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have very simple questions for the minister.

First, will Mr. Justice Iacobucci be able to review this document, and how much of it can and should be made public? Second, could the minister please tell us what are the terms of reference of the Iacobucci inquiry? Who will be represented at that inquiry? Who will have the ability to make representations to that inquiry? What exactly is that inquiry?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not an inquiry.

With respect to redactions and advice with respect to these documents, these are reviewed by non-partisan public servants. Mr. Iacobucci will have complete access to these, a complete review. I think the member should have complete confidence in Mr. Justice Iacobucci on this issue.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as early as 2005, the former second-in-command at the Canadian embassy in Kabul warned the previous Liberal government that detainees transferred from Canadian to Afghan custody were at risk of torture. While in Afghanistan, she wrote three different reports to sound the alarm.

How can the Conservatives deny having, like the Liberals, turned a blind eye to abuse perpetrated in Afghan prisons since 2005?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the events in question took place three years ago. Let us be clear. Soon after, we replaced the Afghan prisoner transfer agreement that was criticized in allegations and remarks by the ambassador.

Perhaps the previous government was too busy handling communication issues, like the sponsorship scandal, to address this matter.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, having learned that the government was warned back in 2005—that was five years ago—about the possible abuse of Afghan prisoners, in violation of the Geneva convention, we now have to get to the bottom of things.

Now more than ever, there has to be a public inquiry to look into this sordid affair and have all documents turned over to the parliamentary committee as soon as possible.

What is the government waiting for to comply with the motion passed by this House on December 10?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government acknowledges that it is appropriate that decisions on the disclosure of information be reviewed independently for the government. This is why we have asked Mr. Justice Frank Iacobucci to undertake an independent comprehensive and proper review of all the documents at issue. That should have the support of the hon. member.

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[Translation]

HAITI

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government claims that it is expediting procedures to welcome Haitians quickly under the family reunification program. Things are dragging, and there is no sense of a real desire to process files more quickly. Refugees from Kosovo were processed more quickly in 1999.

How can the government claim to be speeding things up, when there are still not enough staff at the embassy in Port-au-Prince to meet the record increase in the number of applications?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the entire public service, including Citizenship and Immigration Canada, has made an incredible effort. Dealing with huge challenges following the earthquake in Haiti, including the accelerated processing of family sponsorship cases, we announced that all cases of sponsorship of

family members of Canadian citizens or permanent residents who are in Haiti will be processed as soon as possible. We can do it. We have already processed hundreds of cases.

As our mission in Port-au-Prince suffered damage, our processing ability is limited because of the earthquake. We are, however, doing our best.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the case of Ms. Hippolyte of Beauport is troubling. She has cancer and wants to bring her sister to Quebec to help her out. With buildings in Haiti devastated, Immigration Canada denied the sister entry because she had no real property. Her Conservative MP for Beauport—Limoulou, equally unsympathetic, was not prepared to do anything.

Will the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, who has promised to help Haitians, put a stop to these bureaucratic eccentricities to make it easier for them to come here?

● (1440)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. She is not, perhaps, aware of the Privacy Act.

It does not permit me to discuss the details of individual cases, unless the party in question has signed a statement authorizing me to reveal information in respect of them. I am not at liberty to discuss the details of an individual's case in the House of Commons without such approval.

* * *

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we must not downplay the Public Works Canada contract. Since 2006, the Conservatives have already extended it twice. In fact, the agreement that would have ended in 2011 has already been extended to 2013.

Florists have told me that it should cost \$1,000 and not \$2,000, for the types of plants purchased. Then there was a doorbell at \$1,000. I hope it is a loud one.

Why are they spending \$1,414—more taxpayer money—for three blinds? Why have work done after normal hours, which is more costly?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like any other Canadian, I found these expenses to be over-the-top. This type of contract is awarded and managed by the department and not by the minister. For that reason, I have asked the deputy minister to examine all these expenses.

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government claims to be tightening its belt, but it is clear that the Conservatives would rather cut services and international aid rather than make cuts to their own contracts.

Why spend \$36,000 a year for an extra cleaning of the minister's office? There is an existing cleaning contract, and another cleaning is being done during the day, which costs \$36,000 per year.

Can the new Minister of Public Works and Government Services promise to be cleaner than her predecessor, so that only one cleaning per day is needed?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I, like any Canadian, find these expenses to be over-the-top and, frankly, extravagant. These contracts are competitively awarded, but they are managed and awarded by the department. I have asked my deputy minister to review all of these expenditures.

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[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, taxes on air travel are going up. In the past, the Minister of Canadian Heritage called this measure an air tax, describing it as a total rip-off and suggesting that it would hurt small airports in particular.

Does the Minister of Finance agree with his colleague's description of his new tax?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have come forward with additional security measures that are required to keep Canadians safe. That is one of our fundamental responsibilities at Transport Canada.

We have said two things. One is that the government will be completely transparent on all the funding that will be collected by these charges. It will be a user fee principle. We are prepared to report back in an open and transparent way to the transport committee of the House of Commons.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us recap some Conservative tax hikes that are coming our way: April 1, higher taxes for flying on an airplane; January 1, a punitive 31.5% tax on income trusts; and January 1, EI premiums begin a \$1,200 rise for a two-earner family over four years. This is from a government committed to not raising taxes.

Does any Conservative have the courage to stand up and admit to any of these tax hikes?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no Prime Minister and no Minister of Finance has done more to cut taxes for hard-working middle-class families than the two sitting in the front row of this legislature.

Let us be very clear. For hard-working Canadian families, tax freedom day, that day where Canadians stop working for the government and start working for themselves, arrives more than two weeks sooner than it did just four years ago.

Cutting taxes creates jobs, more hope and more opportunity. That is why the country is on such a strong economic footing compared to every other country in the industrialized world.

● (1445)

HAITI

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today HMCS *Athabaskan* begins its return trip to Canada after working since January 19 to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of earthquake-damaged Haiti. This government dispatched the Canadian Forces to provide relief during this crisis.

Could the minister provide the House with an update on Canada's response to the disaster in Haiti?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, within 20 hours, members of the Canadian Forces were on the ground in the wake of the earthquake, assessing needs and delivering help to Haiti.

Thanks to this government's purchase of the C-17 aircraft, load after load of equipment and disaster relief was brought to Haiti. Then over 4,000 Canadians were brought home. We built runways, cleared roads, rescued people trapped in buildings, produced over two million litres of water and delivered almost one and a half million meals. Canadian Forces medics treated over 22,000 patients, delivered babies and performed surgeries.

All Canadians can be proud of our military, our aid workers and our diplomats who responded so compassionately in Haiti.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new Conservative motto should be "Do as I say, not as I do". And they want to give us a lesson on government spending? Why not get on a plane to go to Tim Hortons? Why not freeze all ministers' budgets, but increase the budget of the Prime Minister's Office by 21.9%? Why not take away judicial discretion in cases of serious offences, like cocaine possession, except of course when the offender is a former Conservative MP, in which case why not give him a break?

Do the Conservatives not see the common thread in all of this—the hypocrisy?

Hon. Stockwell Day (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we plan to maintain spending in all government departments, including the Prime Minister's Office and Privy Council Office, in accordance with our budget.

Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is right, with plants that cost \$2,000 and a doorbell that cost \$1,000.

[English]

Reform Party moralizers are now ready to take their pensions, but despite being in power are refusing to protect the pensions of hard-working Canadians.

Oral Questions

Serious time for serious crime, but if one is part of the Tory family, no treatment, no time, just a \$500 fine. Does the government even realize that Canadians can see through its tough on crime rhetoric?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know for sure that being on tough crime has never been a priority for the NDP. I think we can all agree on that. I want to get consensus where we can.

The issue that the hon. member is talking about, and again he is new to this area, is something investigated by the provincial police, heard in a provincial court and handled by a provincial prosecutor. As always, we are very careful not to intervene or interfere with any cases.

However, if the NDP has discovered that this is a priority now, we welcome any suggestion from that party to strengthen our criminal justice system.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this government is incapable of being open and flexible when it comes to Quebec. Most Quebec municipalities were holding elections last fall and the federal government refused to transfer all the money to Quebec, which meant that an agreement was required for each project, yet now it is stubbornly demanding that projects be completed by December 2010 or March 2011, depending on the program.

Why is this Conservative government refusing to accommodate Quebec municipalities so that they can benefit fully from federal funding?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our main priority in Quebec and across Canada is to create jobs and hope and stimulate the economy. That is why we are spending the money now. We cannot wait another year to create jobs, and that is why we are taking action.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government's lack of flexibility on infrastructure projects will penalize the people of Saguenay. Mayor Jean Tremblay says that it is totally impossible for the city to meet the March 31, 2011, deadline for building the arena in La Baie.

Mayor Tremblay is up in arms against the Minister of Veterans Affairs, who thinks more about his visibility than about the problems he is dumping in the municipalities' backyard.

What is the government waiting for to extend the infrastructure project deadlines?

• (1450)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recently announced more than 100 projects. We have created jobs in every region of Quebec for the first time during an economic crisis thanks to a major infrastructure program. Quebec municipalities are ready to act. We announced more than 100 projects, and all the municipalities said they were prepared to complete their projects in the next 13 months.

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, no one in Canada should be perceived to be above the law, no matter what his or her political connections. There must be clear consequences for behaviour that crosses the line.

I ask the Prime Minister this. Why is the Minister of State for the Status of Women still in his cabinet in light of her abusive, level three tantrum at the Charlottetown Airport? The women of Canada deserve better.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our colleague, the Minister of State for the Status of Women, has issued a pretty clear apology. I would encourage all members of the House to do the honourable thing and accept that apology.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I refer the minister to his regulation 602.46, refusal to transport. The minister bullied, belittled and berated the very people she is supposed to serve without any repercussions. Any other Canadian would have been grounded or, as the Conservative commentator Kory Teneycke put it, "tazed and then arrested".

He and other prominent Conservatives, such as Tim Powers, are calling for a public explanation from the minister. When will they get it and when will there be consequences?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said in my answer to the first question and last week, our colleague, the Minister of State for the Status of Women, has put forward a very sincere apology. When I grew up, I was told that when a sincere apology was offered, it should be accepted. That is the long-standing tradition of the House. I would encourage all members on the other side of the House to do the same.

* * *

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the inaction of the government on dealing with Toyota recalls has left Canadian consumers with nothing compared to their American neighbours. Toyota is providing rental cars and vehicle pickups to Americans but not to Canadians.

A new Toyota research centre is going to the U.S. but not to Canada. U.S. Congress is getting full disclosure on recalls, making discoveries like the book of secrets and documents where Toyota boasts of saving \$100 million by delaying recalls.

Why will the government not stand up for Toyota's Canadian consumers?

Oral Questions

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the most important priorities for us at Transport Canada is the safety of Canadian motorists and others who use our roads. At Transport Canada, we will ensure that all legal measures, the full force of Canadian law, are used to ensure that all efforts will be taken to ensure Canadians are safe now and in the future.

Canada has a strong record of leading in recalls. Many of the major recalls that have been taken have been led by Transport Canada. We are proud of the work we have done. We welcome the opportunity for hearings so those who are in decision-making positions can be held accountable.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last November, while this minister was busy congratulating Toyota, U.S. investigations were launched by several congressional committees: the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Securities and Exchange Commission and also a criminal probe by Manhattan's U.S. attorney. Meanwhile, Transport Canada decided on no further investigation, and the result is that Canadians are getting second-class treatment.

Is the minister going to demand that Mr. Toyoda do what he has done in the United States: come here, apologize and make the same commitments to Canadians that he has made to Americans, yes or no?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it was actually a Conservative member of the committee who first called for hearings before the committee. The government is very pleased to support that.

We have offered members of Parliament a briefing on all of the fine work the Department of Transport has done on this important issue. We have offered the media a full briefing. We have indicated to the committee that we will provide all necessary documents to help it do its work.

We believe that the safety of Canadians is tremendously important, and we will work to ensure that all manufacturers and importers are held to the highest standard under Canadian law.

* * *

• (1455)

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Kelly Block (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, history has shown the world that the perils of protectionism have stagnated even the strongest economies. Today, right here in Canada, through these tough economic times, we see and hear history repeating itself. There are calls for anti-trade measures and protectionism. We even hear this from the members opposite. This is not what Canadian business or workers need.

Could the Minister of International Trade please inform the House what steps he and this government are taking to stand up against protectionism and to promote free trade for the benefit of all Canadians?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes firmly that opening foreign markets to Canadian goods and services is the best way to assist

Canadian businesses and workers in creating jobs and prosperity for this country.

Our recent achievement of an agreement on a waiver from the buy American policies is evidence of our policy at work and of the strong relationship we have built with the Obama administration, which leads our greatest trading partner.

Later today I will be reintroducing in the House our Canada-Colombia free trade agreement, another opportunity for us to open markets to the high quality products produced by Canadian workers and businesses. We can compete and succeed. Let us have some support from the opposition for those efforts to help Canadian workers.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is now 20 days since the Minister of State for the Status of Women called my province "a hell hole", or worse. Yet the member still sits as a full member of cabinet, with no sanctions whatsoever.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, who is from Prince Edward Island, makes lame excuses instead of standing up for Prince Edward Islanders.

What kind of message is the Prime Minister trying to send to the people of P.E.I.? Does he condone the minister's outrageous insult? Why is that minister still there?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the past and will say again, the Minister of State for the Status of Women has made a sincere apology. I think it is important, and it is incumbent upon all hon. members of the House to accept that apology and move on.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I recently visited Prince Edward Island, and what we are seeing in Prince Edward Island is really remarkable. Finally, after a long time, Prince Edward Island is getting strong representation around the federal cabinet table. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans is doing an outstanding job. She is delivering infrastructure projects. She is delivering jobs and opportunity. The people of Prince Edward Island are pretty lucky to have the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canada is already struggling to meet its international aid commitments and now the budget indicates that aid will be frozen. The only budget that will continue to increase over the next few years, although with a few restrictions, is the National Defence budget.

Are we to surmise that this government's policy is more army and less development?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: the international assistance of this government has not been cut. In fact, it is going to be raised to the highest level ever in the history of Canada.

This government is actually making a difference to people living in poverty. It shows results and shows that we are going to lift these people up so they can have aspirations and opportunities to make their lives better in the future.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations voted yesterday to turn financial control of First Nations University over to the University of Regina.

Will the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development agree now that he should reinstate funding to the university, or will he let a great institution die, just when the Speech from the Throne says that education is a priority?

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, there is some dispute about whether it is a great institution or not.

What we have had over the last number of years is an escalating series of problems, starting with investigations, criminal investigations, forensic audits, and there have been reports of trips to Las Vegas and Hawaii. Now the latest one is that \$400,000 of money designed to go to student scholarships has been used for other purposes.

How long does one just cut a blank cheque to that kind of organization? We are here to help the students. That is what we are going to do. That is what we promised to do in the throne speech, and we will deliver on that.

* * *

● (1500)

THE BUDGET

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada says that without the stimulus for infrastructure, there would have been 75,000 fewer jobs in Ontario last year. It also projects that 40,000 jobs will be saved in Ontario this year. That is great news.

Could the Minister of Finance share with us the reactions he has been getting from business leaders and economists since the budget, particularly as it pertains to job growth and the economy?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to do that. The economists have been very complimentary of the budget, as a matter of fact. I met with them in February. We used their forecasts in the budget, as set out on page 33.

The Conference Board and TD economists welcomed it as a credible plan. Desjardins economists called it a clear and well-

grounded plan. At BMO, UBS Securities, and Merrill Lynch, in fact, their economists felt perhaps it was too prudent in its revenue assumptions.

What did RBC economist Patricia Croft say? She said, “Canada, on a relative basis, coming out of this crisis, I think is a winner... a gold medal performance on the fiscal side”.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, talk about righteousness. We have had righteous Conservatives over there by that last answer.

Even prominent Conservatives are condemning the behaviour of the Minister of State for the Status of Women. Former PMO communications director Kory Teneycke said:

This kind of stuff is toxic to the Conservative brand. It speaks to a sense of entitlement and different rules applying...

Now that the Conservative spin doctors are demanding accountability, will the Prime Minister do the right thing and accept his responsibility and fire the minister?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the past, the minister has offered a sincere apology and we should accept that.

What we should also accept is the fact that the Minister of Fisheries is delivering for P.E.I. in a big way.

When lobster fishermen needed help, where did they turn? To the Minister of Fisheries. Did she deliver? Yes. When the health care system in P.E.I. needed a budget increase, did the Minister of Fisheries deliver? Yes. When they needed infrastructure funding to create jobs, hope and opportunity, did the Minister of Fisheries deliver? Yes.

The people of P.E.I.—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

* * *

*[Translation]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when the new veterans charter came into force in 2006, the lifelong monthly pension for injured veterans was replaced with a lump sum payment. This form of compensation is insufficient and ill suited to the needs of injured veterans.

Is the Minister of Veterans Affairs prepared to re-establish the lifelong monthly pension, as requested by a number of veterans' associations, who support the petition launched by my colleague, the member for Québec?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

Points of Order

First of all, I would like to point out the excellent work done by the previous Minister of Veterans Affairs, which was much appreciated by our Canadian veterans.

Having said that, I would like to remind my colleagues that we have two types of assistance for our veterans who unfortunately are injured: first, they receive up to \$276,000 in a lump sum payment; then, they are entitled to a rehabilitation program that provides them with up to 75% of their salary until they find a new job.

The Speaker: That marks the end of question period.

Some members wish to rise on points of order.

* * *

• (1505)

[English]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during the answer by the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, he indicated that the Conservatives had actually called for hearings first. However, the fact of the matter is that on February 24, I called for hearings. It is very clear and it is public.

I would like to offer the minister an opportunity to correct the record, if he would like, because this is well known publicly.

Just a day prior to that, the Conservatives were denying hearings, which is rather interesting. I would offer the opportunity to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities because the record clearly shows that on February 24, we had already called for hearings.

The Speaker: I am not sure that is a point of order.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, late yesterday I electronically made public some information from an earlier in camera meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. Stated simply, I should not have done this.

I take full responsibility for my error and impulsive behaviour, and I apologize without reservation to the House and, specifically, to the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. I can assure the House that this error will not happen again.

STATEMENT BY MEMBER FOR NOTRE-DAME-DE-GRÂCE—LACHINE

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning a statement made earlier today by the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine regarding a decision rendered by a court in the Province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the section of O'Brien and Bosc on page 616, which I know you are familiar with and that I believe is quite clear on this issue. I would like to quote the section, if I may. The quote reads as follows:

Attacks against and censures of judges and courts by Members in debate have always been considered unparliamentary and, consequently, treated as breaches of order.

A similar doctrine is set forth in citation 493 of the sixth edition of Beauchesne's.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to carefully review the statement made by the member and if you find, as I believe, that it was indeed unparliamentary language, that you would rule such and ask the member to immediately withdraw it and apologize for her unparliamentary remarks.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member might want to read the statement I made because the statement I made in no way attacked the judgment rendered by the judge. I actually questioned the fact there is a stunning silence on the part of the Conservatives, who have made their mantra, "If you do the crime, you do the time".

Conservatives are tough on crime and have never shied away from publicly criticizing sentences they feel are too lenient. In fact, the Prime Minister last January publicly criticized a court judgment that he felt was too lenient, and he did so publicly.

The criticism in my statement was of the Conservatives' hypocrisy when it comes to one of their own receiving what they would normally deem to be a lenient sentence and what they would publicly cite as another case where the judgment has been too lenient and the defendant has not been given the severe sentence he or she should have been given. There is a stunning silence on their part.

I understand very well the principle that one should not criticize judgments that come down from our judiciary. I do not. They do, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Justice, and the deputy House leader or deputy whip. They have not shied away from publicly criticizing criminal sentences that are tabled. I do not do so, but I will criticize their hypocrisy. I will criticize their silence now when one of their own gets a slap on the wrist for driving drunk and having illicit drugs in his car while driving.

• (1510)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the rasp that continually comes from the member opposite but she should check parliamentary procedure which talks about debate in the House.

I think you will find, Mr. Speaker, by the member's own statement just a few moments ago, that she is criticizing the decision rendered by a court. She said that it was too lenient, that someone who was apparently impaired and had drugs in the car, which, of course, is not fine, should be treated more harshly than the decision that was rendered by that court.

That is a clear admission by the member just a few short moments ago that she was critical of the decision, which is completely unparliamentary to do so in the House.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary and the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine for their submissions on this point and I will look at her earlier statement that was complained about to see if there was something that apparently breaches the guidelines that affect debate in the House referred to by the hon. parliamentary secretary in his initial submissions. If there is a problem of course I will come back to the House in due course.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-2, An Act to implement the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the Republic of Colombia, the Agreement on the Environment between Canada and the Republic of Colombia and the Agreement on Labour Cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Colombia.

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

* * *

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the house a report from the Canadian Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association concerning the parliamentary committee's workshop that was held in the Port of Spain from November 9 to 13, 2009.

Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region held in Helsinki, Finland, November 18 to 19, 2009.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on a matter arising out of question period. You will find and the record will show that the leader of the New Democratic Party referred in his question today to the Prime Minister about the fact that I had indicated that our government had been aware of torture in Afghan prisons since taking office.

I think you will find that that is patently false. I have in fact said, outside the House, that we were aware of general concerns about conditions inside Afghan prisons and allegations of abuse.

Given the fact that the member of the New Democratic Party has made a statement that is patently false and attributed to me, I would ask that he withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: I am sure that the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party will examine the record and if necessary come back to the House in respect of the minister's point of order.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of the committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this motion later this day.

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) that the following motion be reported to the House at the earliest opportunity.

[Translation]

That the Committee hold a commemoration ceremony each year on December 5, or on the day closest to December 5 if the House is not sitting that day, in remembrance of the date that Bill C-68 (An Act respecting firearms and other weapons) was passed by the Senate and received Royal Assent in 1995.

• (1515)

[English]

A copy of the relevant minutes of proceedings is tabled.

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-494, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (nanotechnology).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill purports to include nanotechnology in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 and requires the health minister and the environment minister to act.

There is a need for public policy that is governed by the precautionary principle, and we need a proper balance between protecting Canadians from potential harmful consequences and allowing us potential benefits of nanotechnologies. The bill would fulfill that need for sound legislative guidance.

The proposed amendments to the act would help implement a national strategy to guide the development of nanotechnology. Nanotechnology is the application of science and engineering to the design and manipulation of materials at the atomic, molecular and macromolecular scale with the view of enhancing performance or quality.

The bill includes risk assessment procedures prior to nanomaterial or nanoparticle release into the marketplace, the environment or to Canadians. A public inventory of nanotechnology and nanomaterials in Canada would be established. The bill would complement regulatory initiatives underway in the E.U., Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.

Since 2005, Canadians and international scientific organizations have been calling for legislation as hundreds of new nanoproducts enter the global marketplace. Canada's New Democrats are acting by proposing this bill.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of residents, I would like to present two petitions to the House today.

As members know, postal services are critical to the delivery of services, particularly in rural areas. Canada Post has recently announced that the time for information dispersal on the closure of a postal agency in a particular area will be reduced to one month.

The petitioners ask that Canada Post make it very clear that more time is required when notice is given to close down a post office.

● (1520)

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to a universal declaration on animal welfare.

Routine Proceedings

The residents who have signed this petition point out that animal husbandry is extremely important, particularly in rural and agricultural areas, and that animals should be protected from the harm that is done when they are subjected to testing beyond reasonable and accountable controls.

The petitioners are asking for a universal declaration with respect to animal welfare.

AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

In the first petition the petitioners claim that they support the Air Transport Association of Canada in its efforts to obtain compensation for the aviation businesses that were affected by the restrictions on air space during the Olympic Games in Vancouver. Those businesses were shut down from January 29 to March 24, almost a two month period.

The flight businesses, in particular flight training businesses at Boundary Bay Airport and at Squamish, are hurting desperately. They would like compensation similar to that which was provided to businesses that were hurt during the G8 meetings in Kananaskis.

FRASER RIVER

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with dredging on the Fraser River.

The petitioners note that the secondary channels of the Fraser River are silting in and that nothing has been done for years to address this issue. They point out that they are a hazard for navigation, reduce habitat for fish and are detrimental to businesses on the secondary channels.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to provide funding for dredging.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am presenting to the House today eight petitions signed by several hundred constituents from the riding of Manicouagan.

The petitioners are calling on the government to maintain the moratorium on closing regional post offices, thus allowing Canada Post to enhance and improve postal services.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

COSMETIC PESTICIDES

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present several petition. The first two have been signed by about 200 residents who are asking the government to impose a moratorium on non-essential use of cosmetic pesticides until they are proven safe in the long term.

The petitioners wish to prevent the kind of negative, endocrine-disrupting impacts that research is now showing atrazine to have. They ask the government to respect the precautionary principles to protect children's health and to pass Bill C-368.

HOUSING

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third and fourth petitions have been signed by Victoria resident in support of Bill C-304 for a national housing strategy.

They feel that there is an important federal role to create adequate, affordable housing for every Canadian by investing in green, non-profit and accessible housing.

BURNS BOG

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise for the third time to present a petition calling for Burns Bog in Delta, British Columbia, to become a UNESCO world heritage site.

This recognition of Burns Bog's status as a cultural and environmental landmark will go a long way to preserve the bog for generations to come.

We should commit to include Burns Bog in our next submission to UNESCO.

I congratulate Eliza Olson, the Burns Bog Conservation Society and others for their work and support to protect the bog, which includes four others of the government, including Her Worship Mayor Loise Jackson, the previous prime minister, and the Right Hon. Paul Martin.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of Canadians who believe that animals feel pain and can suffer and that efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

Therefore, the petitioners request that the Government of Canada support a universal declaration on animal welfare.

HARMONIZED SALES TAX

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions from my community with regard to the imposition of the HST by the federal government.

The petitioners make the case that this will hurt families and indicate that it will hurt the economy. They are very much opposed to the federal government transferring this \$4.3 billion, which would give the provincial government the money it needs to impose this unfair tax on the people of my province.

● (1525)

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am presenting today a petition signed by one thousand Quebeckers calling for changes to public safety standards by limiting the public's exposure to microwaves.

The petitioners asked me to bring this matter to the attention of the Standing Committee on Health. I intend to ask the members of that committee to consider studying the impact of microwaves on human health at a future meeting.

[English]

AVIATION INDUSTRY

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with dozens of pages and dozens of names. The petitioners state that whereas Transport Canada is reducing traditional oversight and inspection methods and delegating its responsibility to aviation companies via safety management systems, and that whereas aviation workers and the travelling public are in danger as a result, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to initiate a commission of inquiry headed by a Superior Court judge to conduct a judicial review into Canada's state of national aviation safety and government oversight of the aviation industry, to be followed by further reviews at defined interventions.

CANADA POST CORPORATION

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to introduce two petitions from Canadians who have growing concerns over activities taking place within the post office.

The first one, if I might, calls on 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 major stakeholders to develop a uniform and democratic process for making changes to this network.

The other petition also speaks to the pending legislation that has been in front of this House twice. We are expecting it a third time. It calls on the Government of Canada to maintain the moratorium on post office closures and withdraw the legislation to legalize remailers. If the Liberals would join with the NDP and the Bloc, we could kill that bill.

It also calls upon the Government of Canada to instruct Canada Post to maintain, expand and improve postal service, a position that the NDP caucus has taken and will continue to hold.

NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to table a petition signed by over 130 folks from the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas, many of whom are members of the Korean-Canadian community.

These petitioners are very concerned about the difficulty that North Korean refugees, who escaped from North Korea to the People's Republic of China, have in finding safe passage to South Korea.

The petitioners urge Canada to strongly support the international effort to seek a change in the policies of the People's Republic of China to make sure these refugees find safe haven in South Korea.

They also call on Parliament to support a motion to this effect, tabled by my colleague the member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

AIR PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, dozens of Canadians are calling for the adoption of Canada's first air passenger bill of rights, Bill C-310.

Bill C-310 would provide compensation to air passengers flying with all Canadian carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly. It would include measures on compensation for over-booked flights, cancelled flights and unreasonable tarmac delays. It would deal with late and misplaced baggage and it would deal with all-inclusive pricing by airline companies in their advertising.

This law was inspired by a European law where overbookings have dropped significantly. In fact, Air Canada is already operating under European laws for their flights to Europe. The question is: why should Air Canada customers be getting better treatment in Europe than in Canada?

The bill would ensure that Canadians passengers are kept informed of flight changes, whether there are delays or cancellations. The new rules have to be posted at the airport, and airlines must inform passengers of their rights and the process for compensation.

This bill is not meant to punish the airlines. If they follow the rules, they will not have to pay one cent in compensation to the passengers.

This petition calls on the government to support Canada's first air passenger bill of rights.

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the most significant petitions that I have delivered as a member in 16 years. It has to do with income trusts and it comes from the proponents of the Marshall savings plan to try to find some fairness and equity for pensioners.

These petitioners, from my riding of Mississauga South and from other surrounding areas, want to remind the House that the Prime Minister promised not to tax income trusts during the 2006 election, and then he broke that promise. He imposed a 31.5% punitive tax on those income trusts.

S. O. 52

They also want to point out that in claiming that income trusts cause tax leakage, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance did not provide the proper calculations, in fact, there were redacted documents. Notwithstanding, other reputable groups like HLB Decision Economics, BMO Capital Markets, RBC Capital Markets and PricewaterhouseCoopers had in fact verified that there was no such justification.

They also point out that the income trusts did not cause a tax leakage. This has now resulted in the takeover of some 51 income trusts by foreigners and other non-taxable entities, which was a direct consequence and has three times as much tax leakage as was falsely alleged in the first place.

The income trusts also create an unlevel playing field between 75% of Canadians without pensions and those who must pay this punitive tax, and also adds to the risk of foreign takeover and for further tax losses.

And finally, that the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament for the specific purpose of recalibrating his policies and the budget to be tabled to Parliament on March 4, 2010, that addresses the needs of Canadians and deals with Canada's deficit and pension crisis that arose from the recent financial turmoil.

Therefore, these petitioners call on the Government of Canada to acknowledge that the government's financial justification for imposing the tax was flawed, and to recalibrate and remedy the matter it should adopt the Marshall savings plan as part of its budget 2010 on the basis of the following signatures, which I referred to, some 3,414 Canadians.

* * *

● (1530)

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.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

TUBERCULOSIS OUTBREAK IN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

The Speaker: The Chair has received a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Winnipeg North, and I will hear her submissions on this point now.

The Budget

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 52 to ask you to agree to holding an emergency debate as soon as possible on an urgent and life-threatening situation pertaining to Inuit and first nations people in this country, and the emergence of tuberculosis in very serious numbers. I make this case today for an emergency debate because of new information, new revelations that have come to our attention as recently as a couple of hours ago.

Today, representatives and elders from the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and from the Assembly of First Nations brought this frightening reality to our attention. They pointed out that TB infection rates in Nunavut are 185 times greater than most other parts of Canada, and in first nations communities, the rates have risen to 31 times that of non-aboriginal Canadians.

These revelations follow on the heels of an indepth series of articles by Jen Skerritt in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, who brought to our attention alarming statistics showing, in fact, that rates of TB in many of our communities in Canada, particularly in first nations, Inuit and aboriginal communities, are higher than that of third world countries. One such country, for example, that I visited a year ago, Bangladesh, where I was shocked to learn about TB, only to return home and find out that rates are actually even higher in this country, a first world nation, a country as wealthy as Canada.

This is new information, new data. We are not acting on this information. The government has no plan of action, never mind talking about this information. It is new and it must be talked about.

I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to consider holding this debate so that we can get it out in the open, bring forward to Canadians the serious nature of this issue, and encourage our government to come forward with a plan of action as soon as possible.

If Parliament cannot talk about it, then who can?

• (1535)

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Winnipeg North for her submissions on this point. I have no doubt of the seriousness of the matter that she has raised. This is not infrequent in requests for emergency debates in the House, but I am going to say no at this time.

I would point out to her that the debate today is on the budget, which gives an opportunity to debate any financial considerations in respect of the matter because it is a very general debate. We will be on the Speech from the Throne tomorrow. There will be three opposition days between now and next Wednesday, I believe, any one of which could be used for this purpose, and so I do not think the circumstances are right at the moment for an emergency debate.

Accordingly, I will deny her request at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from March 9 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton—Spruce Grove.

“Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth”, that is what budget 2010 is doing for Canada, and that is what I heard in Newmarket—Aurora during my prebudget consultations. My constituents wanted to see their government lead the way on jobs and growth.

Seniors, families, single parents, entrepreneurs, and youth all came out to have their say on what was important to them, what they felt would help improve their lives, and what they wanted their government to do on their behalf. Our government listened and we delivered a jobs and growth budget.

I think it is important to remember that this budget is an extension of the prudent management and vision our government has consistently demonstrated. Entrepreneurs and business leaders know, and they are the generators of jobs and economic wealth, that to be successful one has to have a solid long-range plan.

I remind the House that back in 2006, our government laid out a strategic long-term economic plan called “Advantage Canada”. It was a plan that charted our country's future course. It was a road map that acknowledged we were in a transition economy, one that was evolving to new jobs of the future, requiring new skills and a new way of thinking. It mapped out and answered these questions: where do we need to go and how will we get there?

We set out to strengthen our nation; show a modern, ambitious and dynamic Canada to the world; create jobs; help entrepreneurs start businesses; and provide the wealth Canada needs to invest in health care and strong communities.

This contrasts with members of the opposition, especially those on the Liberal benches, who have no long-term plan and each day decide to take on a new issue to discuss. Our government chose to take a solid long-range view to planning.

How did we do it compared to the rest of the world? As members know, we were one of the last countries in the world to enter the recession and one of the first to come out. The International Monetary Fund predicts that Canada's economic growth will be the best of all G7 countries in 2010-11.

The Budget

We recognize the challenges facing us. The world economy is changing. New players are emerging as major economic powers, and competition in the world markets is fierce. These are challenges we set out to meet head-on. We also said that as we adapted these global changes would also bring tremendous new opportunities for Canadians.

In 2006 we identified five advantages for Canada and set our road map to translate these into opportunities. These five pillars were the following. Our tax advantage included reducing taxes for all Canadians and establishing the lowest tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Our fiscal advantage was aimed at continuing to eliminate our debt, even after we recover from the recession, and creating a strong foundation on which to build sustainable prosperity.

I am proud to say that before the recession hit we were able to reduce our debt by a record \$38 billion, allowing for that interest saving to be reinvested. Our entrepreneurial advantage aimed to reduce regulation and red tape, and build a more competitive business environment. Our knowledge advantage was aimed at creating the best educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world.

Our infrastructure advantage included creating modern world-class infrastructure to ensure the seamless flow of people, goods, and services across our roads and bridges, through our ports and gateways, and through public transit.

Budget 2010 is a continuation of this work that is helping us achieve these goals. We are making great progress. We are on target to establishing the lowest tax rate on new business investment in the G7. Our goal of cutting paperwork by 20% for businesses has been met. That is a record of which we can all be proud.

• (1540)

I know what it takes to run a small business and I understand what it takes to create jobs. As a business owner, I had to plan and execute my business strategy or I would no longer be in business. Our government takes the same approach, for we cannot finance the programs Canadians rely on without taking care of the revenue generation.

The recession, which none of us expected, may have slowed down the implementation of advantage Canada. However, instead of throwing up our hands at this unanticipated course of events, our government reacted assuredly and with a plan. We did this by bringing forward fiscal stimulus that was targeted, timely and temporary in our economic action plan. Throughout this economic crisis, we maintained our objectives and our long-term goals.

Some adjustments had to be made because of the global economic situation. For example, we saw our investments expedited through the economic action plan, which has seen 19,000 infrastructure projects initiated across the country. I submit that by rising to the challenge, we have given Canadians and the world confidence that Canada is a great place in which to invest.

I would also like to point out that prior to budget 2010, our government undertook one of the largest prebudget consultations in history. We invited ordinary Canadians to share their thoughts, suggestions and priorities with us. I personally held a prebudget

consultation town hall in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora and held numerous round tables and drop-ins.

I can personally attest that the input I received was duly considered by our Minister of Finance. In fact, many of the suggestions put forward in my riding were contained in budget 2010. Suggestions such as conducting value-for-money audits of departmental spending, strengthening the laws governing intellectual property and copyrights, and launching a digital economy strategy were all submitted by residents of Newmarket and Aurora.

The strategic investments our government has been making through our economic action plan are paying off. New jobs, new partnerships and new products have resulted from investments such as that involving the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce which received assistance from the community partnership fund.

That project involves a unique partnership between the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, the Newmarket Public Library, Southlake Regional Health Centre and the town of Newmarket and has created shared digital infrastructure. Not only did this project create immediate jobs, but it was leveraged so that the chamber now works with local businesses to assist them in opening new markets and developing a competitive edge in the knowledge-based economy.

Small and medium size businesses employ half of Canada's workforce and are leading the way out of the recession. Budget 2010's commercialization innovation program for small and medium size companies will also support this sector by helping these companies develop and market new technology, thereby creating new markets and new jobs.

This is just one of the many specific strategic actions that our government is taking to help businesses today create the jobs of the future. A jobs and growth budget: that is what we planned and that is what we have put forward.

• (1545)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member for Newmarket—Aurora what she, as a small business owner, thinks of the new payroll tax that will be imposed on small businesses. I would like to read to her what the CFIB said:

—the budget's assertion it does not increase taxation is nonsense. While taxes are frozen for the calendar year 2010, every employed Canadian and every Canadian business that has staff will experience a significant Employment Insurance premium hike starting in January 2011.

EI premiums are a form of job-killing payroll taxes—one of the most harmful forms of taxation to small business.

I would like to know what she thinks about that new tax.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind my colleague that the suggestion being put forward by the Liberal Party is that anyone in Canada who works for 45 days ought to be able to receive a year's worth of EI. That is what is going to kill jobs and kill the economy.

The Budget

We have said that EI premiums have been frozen for the last two years. Any change to that is going to be decided by an arm's-length body from the government. We will see what happens when it does that review.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the Conservatives really are concerned about jobs and have a solid long-term plan, I would like to ask the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora whether they have any kind of plan other than to shift the tax burden from the largest and most profitable corporations on to the backs of small business people, and especially consumers.

The government has been bragging about the fact that it has the lowest taxes in the G7. Why do we feel the need not to have just a couple of percentage points less but half the tax rate of the United States? The large corporate tax rate in the United States is around 35% whereas ours is 18% heading to 15%.

In last year's budget we had \$22 billion in large corporate taxes and \$134 billion in personal and consumer taxes. Next year we are going to have EI increases of \$19 billion, a job killer if there ever was one.

Why are the realities of the budget so at odds with the claim that it is going to create jobs?

When the numbers in the Conservatives' own budget say that corporate tax increases only have a multiplier of 0.1% to 0.3% when infrastructure has a multiplier of 1.5%, 1.6% or 1.7%, why are they spending money recklessly on large corporate tax cuts?

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, we are the government that has reduced taxes in every jurisdiction across this country, starting with the reduction in the GST by 2%, which has helped Canadians from coast to coast.

We also believe that by reducing corporate taxes we are going to ensure that there will be jobs for the future.

I would like to refer my colleague to page 83 of the budget document. Just to put it on the record, it says:

Small and medium-sized businesses are an important component of our economy, estimated to account for about 98 p. 100 of all businesses in Canada and employing more than 5 million people, roughly half of the private sector workforce.

Any time that we can reduce taxes for our small and medium size businesses will create jobs in the economy.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people in my riding who would certainly benefit from something less than 45 weeks, but it has to do with the seasonal nature of employment. I am not quite sure what the member is getting at, but when it comes to working less than 45 weeks, some of these people do not have a choice really, because of the seasonal nature of employment.

I wonder if she could talk to the people of my constituency who do not have the possibility of working that much longer and why they do not qualify.

Ms. Lois Brown: Mr. Speaker, working 45 days and qualifying for a year's worth of employment insurance would kill jobs across Canada.

We have said that we are going to work with the people who need training for new skills. We have put five weeks of extra EI benefits in place for unemployed people, and we have given them the opportunity to get job skills retraining.

• (1550)

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to the budget.

Of course, I am very proud to support the action of Canada's economic future which my colleague, the Minister of Finance, introduced on March 4.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the member for Newmarket—Aurora for all of the great work she is doing on behalf of her riding. She very eloquently stated the impact of the budget. We know that the economic action plan will continue to support communities like Newmarket—Aurora, Edmonton—Spruce Grove and others across the country, investing to create jobs for all Canadians.

In addition, we will begin the extremely important task of returning to balanced budgets by freezing operating expenses, by freezing salaries and by ensuring that value is being achieved for every dollar contributed by the Canadian taxpayers. We will also target investment to strengthen innovation, attract investment and build jobs and growth for the next generation of working Canadians.

One sector of particular interest to me is enabling the success of small and medium size businesses in Canada. As members may well be aware, Public Works and Government Services has an office that is dedicated to helping small and medium size businesses gain access to more government business. Moreover, as the government's main purchasing agent, the department has been working very hard to streamline its procurement policies. This will be beneficial to all businesses, especially to those small and medium businesses that do not have the capacity, frankly, to navigate the complicated web of government procurement requirements.

I would like to draw hon. members' attention to the section of budget 2010 that states that the federal government will also help promote smaller businesses by adopting and demonstrating some of the innovative prototype products and technologies that they have developed.

As the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, I am proud of the role the department has played in bringing the economic action plan to life. In year one, the department was among the first to spring into action and put its share of the stimulus funding to work. Many projects to come will continue to make a difference to our economy, while leaving a lasting legacy of modern and efficient federal infrastructure.

I would like to take a minute to share with the House the impact of this effort in the five streams where my department has been working.

The Budget

First, the department has provided funds over two years for the repair and restoration of public owned infrastructure across the country. This allowed the department both to accelerate its ongoing renovation programs and to start new projects. The numbers are truly impressive. To date, a total of 324 repair and renovation projects have already been completed, and over 900 projects are currently under way, creating jobs across the country.

Second, funding was allocated over two years to improve the accessibility of federally owned buildings to people with disabilities. I am pleased to report that 40 projects have been completed and more than 175 projects are currently under way, again creating jobs across the country. To date we have awarded subcontracts to more than 580 small and medium businesses across the country for projects under the economic action plan.

Third, we have invested in the rehabilitation of four federal bridges, all of them critical traffic arteries. Here in the national capital region, major rehabilitation work on the Alexandra Bridge began last April, creating about 60 jobs locally, while contracts for rehabilitation work on the Chaudière crossing were awarded last October.

In Kingston, Ontario, rehabilitation work on the LaSalle Causeway began in November, and work on the Burlington Lift Bridge in Burlington, Ontario has been under way since January, again, creating jobs across the country.

Finally, Public Works and Government Services has also been heavily involved in supporting the activities of other departments, such as Fisheries and Oceans, Parks Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency, that received funding under the economic action plan. Together we are investing in infrastructure and creating jobs across the country.

I also have the privilege of being the member of Parliament for Edmonton—Spruce Grove and the minister responsible for northern Alberta. The economic action plan has made a huge impact in my region, with hundreds of projects creating thousands of jobs for the economy. We have funded projects such as the expansion of the Edmonton light rail transit system, the Edmonton ring road and the Art Gallery of Alberta. In fact, in total from all levels of government, Alberta has now received \$1 billion in support to help it through this economic downturn.

● (1555)

Key to the success of Canada's economic action plan was to get projects off the ground quickly, while providing taxpayers with the accountability and transparency that they expect and they deserve.

There is little disagreement that the economic action plan is achieving what it set out to achieve; that is, to put Canadians to work and to keep many who already were working in their jobs. My colleague, the Minister of Finance, reports that the action plan has contributed to the creation of more than 135,000 jobs recorded in Canada since July of last year.

We are committed to the well-being of Canadian small and medium businesses. Year two of the economic action provides the tools necessary to support hard-working Canadians and their businesses. Under this government's watch, small and medium businesses have accounted for an average of 43% of public works

procurement spending over the last three years. I am confident the budget will unlock even more of this investment for small and medium businesses.

I am very proud of the contribution that our department is making to the economic action plan. I am also very proud to say that budget 2010 has my full support as we continue our work as a government to lead the way on jobs and growth.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating the Minister of Public Works and Government Services on her appointment to the Department of Public Works and Government Services. I believe, as many members do, that she is heading an important department. I say that not simply because my father was one of her predecessors in that department 25 years ago, but because her department is engaged not only as an economic player in every region of the country, but as an important employer in many regions of the country.

When the member for Kings—Hants, for example, was minister of her department, he and I visited the superannuation directorate of Public Works and Government Services located in Shediac, New Brunswick in my constituency. Over 740 talented public servants work very hard and very productively and efficiently at her department in Shediac, New Brunswick.

As the government goes through its exercise of reviewing the programs and expenditures, I hope she will be sensitive not to impede the important work that has been done to increase the workforce in Shediac. Her government, to give it credit, has continued the modernization of the superannuation directorate, adding important jobs in a community like Shediac. I hope the minister will be vigilant, as the government goes through the cost cutting exercise, to continue her commitment to the work done in Shediac. Perhaps she could assure the people of this region that she continues to support the important work they do.

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I would like to echo the sentiments of the member opposite. Our department and myself, as Minister of Public Works, appreciate greatly the work that is done in the regions by the public servants of the department. They do excellent work. The superannuation office has been there for many years. As the member said, it was actually his father who took the office to the region.

We appreciate all the good work that is done in the regions. I can assure the member it is well respected and well received by me and by the department.

I also want to take note of some of the things that stakeholders have said across the country about our budget. Those are the kinds of things about which I have been talking to my constituents.

They have been asking what the chamber of commerce has been saying locally. I know the chamber of commerce has said that it welcomes the federal government's strategy to achieve its recovery plan, to return to balanced budgets and to promote a move innovative and competitive economy.

It is incredibly important that the people of Edmonton—Spruce Grove know the chamber of commerce is behind this government.

The Budget

•(1600)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague. She spoke about infrastructure, buildings, heritage and the need for speed.

I am particularly concerned about the fact that heritage dollars could be used not just to build infrastructure but to tear it down. For example, the historic downtown in Brantford obviously needs revitalization, but since the government has no program for revitalizing heritage buildings, the city of Brantford is looking for \$1.38 million to tear down 41 historic buildings, the vast majority of which pre-date Confederation.

Therefore, we have the speed to get the money out, yet no due diligence on the fact that buildings of historical significance in southern Ontario will be sent to the landfill pile.

In the review of stimulus projects is there any concern at all for maintaining historically significant buildings, for maintaining Canadian heritage and for working with municipalities to actually revitalize historic downtowns rather than sending in a wrecking ball because they have no other options?

Hon. Rona Ambrose: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked the question because one of the large components of our economic action plan is investment in infrastructure.

I point out that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has applauded the federal government for protecting core investments in cities and communities, as it also reduces the federal budget deficit. It says:

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 kinds of comments speak for themselves. People from across the country, including mayors and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, are incredibly supportive of the work that our government has done, not only to invest in infrastructure, but to create jobs everywhere across the country.

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join the debate on the budget and I will be sharing my time with the member for Kings—Hants.

In my first debate since “parliamentus interruptus”, when the House unexpectedly adjourned, I would like to wish you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues a happy return to Parliament. On this side of the House, we missed this place.

In my time I would like to discuss three important issues about the budget and why we cannot support it: first, a lack of job creation measures; the second, the lack of vision the government has shown; and, finally, the lack of strategy for seniors and pensioners.

Rather than recalibrating, we should have been discussing a vision for Canada in January, not in March. Instead, the government decided it needed an extended holiday to avoid debate on uncomfortable issues such as the torture of Afghan detainees or the delivery of unredacted documents to Parliament. It created an unwanted and unnecessary hiatus from its responsibilities. Shame on the government. What is clear to Canadians is the Conservatives hope for resuscitation, not recalibration.

Last year I joined the same debate and emphasized the need for stimulus funding, infrastructure moneys, changes to employment insurance, protection for manufacturing jobs, investment and innovation in green jobs and jobs for youth and new Canadians. That is what Mississaugans and Canadians wanted.

One year later, the government has once again ignored Canadians and introduced a flatline budget full of cuts, freezes and gimmicks. Meanwhile, Liberals have been working hard on the priorities of Canadians such as protection for the jobs of today, investment in innovation and the jobs of tomorrow, protection for the most vulnerable and a plan to help us climb out of the Conservative-made \$56 billion deficit.

The shortcomings of the budget are numerous: no job creation strategy; no investment in early childhood development; no national child care plan; no affordable housing strategy; no pension reform; no national vision or legacy such as a national electrical grid or a high-speed rail; and no real jobs. The bottom line is no real benefits for real Canadians.

On jobs, the government has missed a chance to own the employment podium. It lost a golden opportunity. Unfortunately, this time on this issue Canadians will not even reach the podium, let alone own it.

At a time when Canadians are crying out for a plan for job growth and job creation, the government comes up short. In the past year we saw over 300,000 Canadians lose their jobs and remain out of work. The budget offers no solution to compensate for those lost jobs or the 8% of Canadians who are unemployed, a staggering 11% in Mississauga.

To inflict further pain, the Conservatives will impose a \$13 billion job-killing small business tax. What were they thinking? Even the CFIB reported that this measure would kill more than 200,000 jobs.

While the Conservatives were on holidays, Liberals were working. As a caucus, we met with real Canadians facing real problems through the more than 33 round table consultations we held. The recurring issue was definitely jobs. We were told that getting people back to work was job one and Liberals listened. We made concrete and well documented proposals. Unfortunately, the government did not listen.

The first proposal involved support for our manufacturers. Our manufacturers can only create jobs if they have better access to the capital they need to invest in new equipment and to get ahead of their global competition. Our plan would boost productivity and competitiveness through a cash advance on the accelerated capital cost allowance, helping manufacturers to purchase new equipment, become more profitable and create more jobs.

The Budget

The second proposal addressed was the high youth unemployment rate at an unprecedented 17%, higher in certain regions, the worst in a generation. Our plan would introduce a temporary financial incentive to hire young Canadians, thus giving employers a greater incentive to hire and train the next generation of workers. Mississauga—Streetsville has the potential to be a leading community in high-quality learning. Investing in children and youth will help students strive and reach their full potential. By not listening, the Conservatives robbed young Mississaugans of that opportunity.

Finally, we need to encourage investment in startup companies. By extending new investment models to emerging sectors, we can help bridge the gap between research and commercialization and create those high value-added jobs of tomorrow in the process.

● (1605)

We encouraged the government to adopt these proposals in the budget if it were truly concerned about stimulating and incentivizing job creation and strengthening Canada's economic future but it did not listen.

Last month, while we were prorogued, I attended the Mississauga job summit, along with 300 other concerned citizens. Mayor Hazel McCallion stated that Canadians were desperate for hope, jobs and functional government. *Toronto Star* columnist, David Crane, challenged us to be innovative, global in outlook and focused on education. John Tory talked about the basics of business.

There was a consensus on the need for a jobs agenda: short-term jobs for students, newcomers and those most recently unemployed, and long term, higher paying jobs for all Canadians.

Second is infrastructure spending. Through its black curtain of transparency, the government failed to take advantage of a once in a lifetime opportunity to make an historic impact through the infrastructure stimulus plan and, sadly, it fell short.

Where is the leadership and the vision to make a real difference in our national infrastructure? After allegedly committing \$50 billion over two years, what will the government have to show for its infrastructure investment? Certainly no dramatic or historic development, such as a high-speed rail corridor between Quebec City and Windsor, or a national electrical grid, or a green economy built on sustainable energy sources, or an innovation platform with a competitive advantage in R and D.

Rather than being historic and visionary, their legacy will be one of gimmicks, cuts and freezes. In fact, the Conservatives cut \$148 million from Canada's Research Council in the last budget. Now we see them wanting to take credit for re-investing \$32 million this year, which is still a \$116 million shortfall.

Then there is the cancellation of the eco-energy program for renewable power production and the Conservatives' refusal to allow the Canadian Space Agency to spend \$160 million in approved spending over the past two years. Now they want to take credit for adding \$23 million in this budget. That is another \$137 million shortfall.

It is no wonder the budget bounces around like a rubber ball. We heard the deficit numbers go from \$16 billion to \$36 billion to \$50 billion to \$56 billion and now I am hearing \$49 billion because the

government cannot count. We know why the deficit number will be lower next year. It is called lapsed funding. The Conservatives are masters of re-announcing old programs with old money, thus, fooling Canadians into believing it is all new programs with real money. It is not.

The Conservatives create optical illusions with lapsed money, committed money that is never sent out. Those funds are redirected back into general revenue and used to reduce the size of the deficit and the Conservatives try to take credit for it as prudent fiscal managers.

The Conservatives can fool Canadians by diverting attention onto the lyrics of our national anthem but Canadians are on to them and so are we.

Finally, where is the strategy to meet the challenges of our aging population and the reform to our pensions that the government promised?

The task force has not even begun yet. While Nortel pensioners burn, the government tinkers at the margins. Liberals proposed a supplementary CPP or changes to the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to allow pension funds to become secured creditors. Why has the government not adopted these proposals? Why has it not acted? All it has done for seniors is give them a day off that they cannot even afford to take.

Some will ask how we would fund these proposals. Of course the legacy infrastructure project would have been funded from the economic action stimulus fund but other measures on job creation could be funded from existing spending by eliminating wasteful government spending, such as the \$100 million hyper-partisan advertising campaign, the overuse of management consultants, the unbridled use of ten percenters or the use of government jets for promotional announcements in donut chains. The PMO, while preaching austerity, has raised its own budget at the PCO by 22%, or \$13 million, and that is pure hypocrisy.

Eliminating wasteful practices, such as those, would have saved \$1.2 billion. The government should be ashamed of this budget for what it has not done to stimulate job creation, create a legacy with the stimulus fund or a strategy for our seniors and our pensioners.

We will not support these cuts, freezes and gimmicks. We understand the shortcomings of this budget. We understand the will of Canadians. We will be strategically voting on this budget to avoid the unnecessary election that no one wants.

The Budget

• (1610)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague comment rather negatively about Canada's economy. I wonder if she is aware that her own leader, in January of this year, said "the good news is that the basic economic fundamentals of Canada are strong".

Is she also aware of the positive view of Warren Lovely, the CIBC economist, who said:

Simply put, highly rated Canada offers safe harbour in today's global debt storm.

Few advanced economies boast stronger real GDP growth prospects—a view endorsed by our (CIBC's) economics department, a broad cross section of private sector banks, the Bank of Canada, the IMF and...the OECD.

Could the previous speaker mention one country that is better off than Canada from an economic recovery perspective?

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point to China and India as having incredible growth rates. I will not be preached at by him. I want to reinforce the notion that in the 1990s his government, under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, created a financial crisis where the IMF almost had to come in and bail us out. It created a deficit of \$43 billion, which, as a percentage of GDP, is even larger than it is today. It took a Liberal government to come in and bail the Conservatives out.

Let us look at what the economy looked like when the Conservatives inherited the government. They inherited a \$14 billion surplus and a \$3 billion contingency plan, which, of course, they squandered right away. They also announced that there would not be a deficit. They called deficits stupid.

Now we have evidence that they cannot even track the size of the deficit that they have created. They started with \$13 billion. It went to \$36 billion, then \$50 billion and then \$56 billion. Who knows where it is going to end up? It is a bouncing ball.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, citizens in my riding and across Ontario, including in the member's riding, are united and vocal in their opposition to the harmonized sales tax. This budget provides billions to implement this much hated HST. Starting this summer, people will have to pay more taxes on funerals, Internet fees, home sales and medical fees for dogs and cats. We know that times are tough already without the tax burden being shifted from the big oil companies to ordinary Canadians.

In the past, we have seen the Liberals and Conservatives work together to push this HST through the House of Commons. We have a new session now. Could my Liberal colleague please tell me why she voted against the NDP motion last night to strike out the HST in this budget?

• (1615)

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member for Trinity—Spadina that she worked with the government to kill the national day care system that the Liberals were about to introduce, the national child care program that would have been so relevant for so many Canadians.

In response to her question, it was the Minister of Finance who cut a deal with the Governments of Ontario and B.C. to allow this structure that created the HST.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are becoming very familiar with the Conservative strategy of shifting taxes from corporations onto the backs of ordinary Canadians. The tax shift from business to working Canadians underlines what is going on with the harmonized sales tax in Ontario and British Columbia.

In fact, budget 2010 also shows that the government intends to rely on personal income tax for more than four times as large a share of its revenues in the future as contributed by corporate income tax. Ordinary Canadians will pay four times more in personal income tax than corporations in this country.

It is also important to note that since wealthy Canadians receive a large proportion of their income in the form of stock options, equity and dividends from profits, corporate tax cuts actually increase the rich people's incomes. Furthermore, that income is taxed at a lower rate than the income of an average worker. How is this fair for working Canadians?

Mrs. Bonnie Crombie: Mr. Speaker, I will share with my colleague the impact that this budget and the government have had on my riding of Mississauga—Streetsville.

The government has created a crisis in Mississauga so acute that our mayor had to call a job summit just to address our needs. She brought together business, government and labour because of the 11% unemployment rate, which is only at 8% nationally. The unemployment rate in my colleague's riding of Essex is almost 20% despite the rosy picture that he had painted.

The EI cases are some of the highest across the country in my riding and there is a 21 year waiting list for affordable housing—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Resuming debate. The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the budget, challenges and opportunities for Canada in the 21st century.

[*English*]

It is important to have some historical context on how we got to this budget.

In 2006, the Conservative government inherited the best fiscal situation of any incoming government in Canadian history, a \$13 billion surplus. Over a period of three years, through increased spending by 20% and misguided tax reform, it put Canada into a deficit even before the economic downturn. In short, it spent the cupboard bare in the good times, gutting the government's capacity to invest and help people get through the tough times.

The Budget

Then, in November 2008, in the middle of the global financial crisis, when governments and leaders around the world were uniting their citizens and their political parties to address the crisis and to protect jobs, here in Canada we had a Prime Minister who said, “We have a global financial crisis. What a great time to put the boots to the opposition”. He took a financial crisis, turned it into a parliamentary crisis and turned it into a quasi-constitutional and national unity crisis. That was the response and the leadership we got from the Prime Minister during that crisis.

Two months ago, the Prime Minister shut down Parliament saying that he needed more time to recalibrate and to develop some ideas for the budget. There were no new ideas in this budget. We know why he shut down Parliament. He shut down Parliament because he wanted to escape the scrutiny of Parliament on the Afghan detainee issue.

[Translation]

This is not a normal recession, but rather a global economic restructuring.

• (1620)

[English]

In a global economic restructuring, it is not good enough to recover to where we were before the restructuring began if other more innovative governments and economies have moved ahead, and that is exactly what is happening now to Canada.

Other countries are using this crisis to restructure and make their economies more competitive. It is a shame to waste a good crisis. In fact, for the Chinese, the word crisis and opportunity are actually related. During this crisis, the Chinese have used the opportunity to reposition and restructure their economy, focusing on the opportunities of the green economy.

[Translation]

Wise, visionary leaders, governments and businesses use major crises to create opportunities. During this crisis, other countries—our competitors—have used their stimulus packages to make their economies more energy-efficient, greener and more competitive.

The overall consensus is that the focus should no longer be on environmental responsibility, but increasingly on economic competitiveness. Tomorrow's jobs depend on it.

[English]

The Conservatives are boasting of a recovery and they call this a stay the course budget. The problem is that the course is not working because too many Canadians are not working. Almost one in five young Canadians are out of work. This is a jobless recovery and a human recession. In fact, on page 34 of the government's own budget, its own figures project that unemployment will continue to rise this year. It is an unambitious budget with no vision, no ideas, and no hope for Canadians.

Around the world other countries used this crisis and their stimulus packages to create the jobs of tomorrow, particularly in the green economy. I will give some examples. South Korea invested 79% of its stimulus directly into the promotion of green technologies, which is forecasted to create 1.8 million jobs in the

green sector. The U.K. invested 11%, or \$3.7 billion of stimulus on green initiatives. France invested \$6.1 billion of stimulus on green investments. The EU invested 64% of stimulus on green investments. Germany invested 13%, or \$13.8 billion. Japan earmarked \$36 billion, promising to create 1 million new jobs in the tech sector. The U.S. earmarked \$66 billion for clean energy, or six times more, on a per capita basis, than the Canadian investment. In fact, Canada only committed around \$1 billion to investments in clean energy. Once again, on a per capita basis, the Obama administration has put six times more into green and clean energy investments than Canada.

The U.S. is also putting \$2 billion of stimulus into battery research, \$8 billion for research and development in the department of energy, including \$3 billion for carbon capture and storage, which is being matched by \$7 billion of private sector investment in the U.S. The United States Secretary of Energy Steven Chu recently noted that because of this funding, 20% of all batteries for electric cars in the world will be made in the U.S. by 2012. That is up from 2% today.

Australia invested \$4 billion in clean energy and environmental technology as part of its stimulus. China dedicated \$218 billion, or 34% of its stimulus package toward clean technology. This is producing results. Two years ago China became the largest manufacturer of solar panels in the world. Last year China jumped past Denmark and became the largest manufacturer of wind turbines in the world. In fact, last November a deal was announced for Chinese wind turbines to be sold to a massive wind farm in Texas. China is focusing on the export markets.

Canada has one of the lowest proportions of green spending in its stimulus package. Once again, the Obama administration is putting in six times what Canada is putting in to green investments.

It is the same for innovation, and research and development. Australia and Sweden are spending five times as much as Canada, as a percentage of GDP, on innovation focused stimulus. Germany and the U.S. have doubled what Canada is spending on innovation focused stimulus. This bodes well for those countries because the jobs of the future are going to be linked to education, research and development, and commercialization. As they pull ahead, Canada's prospect is to be a country that is falling behind.

The Conservative government has no vision of the jobs of tomorrow. In fact, when it comes to the green economy, I was in the room at the Davos forum this year in January when the Prime Minister said that any measures to address climate change “will hurt the economy with real impacts on jobs and economic growth”. All the other leaders were talking about the opportunities to reposition their economies to be competitive in the global carbon constrained economy, to invest in the green jobs of the future, to render their manufacturing plants greener, to cut their energy consumption as governments and as manufacturers, and to help their citizens do the same thing.

• (1625)

The only leader in the world at Davos this year who was saying that environmental responsibility comes at an economic cost was the Prime Minister of Canada.

The Budget

For the others, they have moved beyond addressing the topic of climate change from the perspective of environmental responsibility. They are now speaking of climate change and measures to address it in terms of creating economic opportunity. That is where the debate has gone.

The Liberal Party has proposed a three-prong strategy to create the jobs of tomorrow and to protect the jobs of today: support for manufacturers; investments in jobs for young Canadians; and encouraging investment in start-up research companies and high tech companies.

We have also proposed that the government develop a better approach, a more forward-thinking approach, to the three Es: energy, economy and the environment. This is Canada's sweet spot if we look at the future of our economy and the real opportunities we have.

We are a leader in energy. We could be a leader in clean energy if we only had leadership from the national government. We must invest in clean energy technologies. We must help our citizens, our companies and governments invest in technology to green our energy production and to cut our energy consumption.

In terms of our current leadership role in energy, we cannot claim credit for putting the oil or the gas under the ground or under the water. The fact is we have benefited tremendously as a generation of Canadians and created massive wealth as a result of our good luck. But we are frittering that luck away and squandering the opportunities to be leaders in the new kinds of energy, and I am talking about clean conventional energy, which means a lot in places like Saskatchewan.

Forty per cent of all CO₂ sequestered anywhere in the world is sequestered in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. That investment by the former Martin Liberal government, working with the private sector, led the way. Today we see the U.S. investing \$3 billion of government money, \$7 billion of private sector money, with the capacity to effectively take that leadership position from Canada. Recently, the Obama administration signed a deal with China on the research and development of CO₂ sequestration.

What I am saying is that we have an advantage now, but if we do not move quickly we are going to lose that advantage because other countries like the U.S. and China see the opportunities for a green economy in the future, and we cannot let that happen.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary for Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given that the recovery is so fragile and given that economists, not only in our country but in other countries, acknowledge that Canada has done a very good job at coming out of this recession but that it is fragile, I am curious to know from the member where he positions himself, given that he has in the past criticized the Liberal government for slashing much of the transfer payments that went to our provinces during a terrible fragile time.

I want to quote something that the member said in the past:

Shifting the burden to the provinces for these services was the easy but cowardly way to accelerate deficit reduction...The Chrétien-Martin cuts sent the health and education systems into crisis in every Canadian province.

Given that the member said that in the past when the Liberals made these mistakes, I am wondering if he could in fact support our

government in our efforts not to make the very same Liberal government mistakes by what it did to artificially balance the books on the backs of the provinces.

• (1630)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, our government actually worked with the provinces. In fact, the Martin government invested record amounts in health care, the largest investment of any federal government in health care in the history of Canada. We achieved a very important health care accord, which stopped the bickering in terms of federal-provincial relations on health care, and it was a deal that made a great difference. I was proud to be part of the cabinet that delivered that deal with Canadian provinces.

It is also important that we work with provinces on energy modernization, that we work with the provinces to convene provincial-federal meetings to develop approaches to smart energy grid corridors, to invest in green technology, and to work on issues like carbon pricing. We cannot sit back, like the Conservative government is doing, and just let the Americans impose a carbon price on Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his very clear and informative presentation.

Still, I would be curious to know why he thinks this government did not do like others did in their budgets. The United States, European countries and Korea allocated 20%, 35% and 79% respectively of their stimulus budgets to greening their economies.

How much did this government allocate to that? A mere 8%.

Could the hon. member tell me how come, in the United States, every overall economic budget currently includes 14% more funding per capita for the green economy than in Canada?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, it is very hard for me to explain this government's behaviour. In Davos, for instance, no one suggested that environmental measures were bad for the economy. It is obvious to everyone, except the Prime Minister, that the jobs of tomorrow will be part of a green economy.

I totally agree with the hon. member. It is very difficult for me to understand where the Prime Minister and his Cabinet are coming from, refusing to act and to invest in the jobs of tomorrow, given that the other countries are now ahead of Canada.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was totally impressed with the homework, the eloquence, and the rhetoric of the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

The Budget

My question for him is this. Will he be working hard to ensure that his fellow Liberals follow through on second reading and move to third reading, and through the Senate on Bill C-311 to ensure that we set the targets and the timetables to force the government to do what he has so eloquently expressed?

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I commend his commitment to environmental measures. I think one of the most important things we can do to move the Canadian economy and create the jobs of the future is to implement policies that actually move and render our economy more green. It is more than just targets as well. We have to ensure that the policy framework is there to deliver on the attainment of those targets.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Windsor West, Foreign Investment.

[English]

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells.

I would like to extend an invitation to the member for Kings—Hants to visit Estevan, Saskatchewan, my hometown. The Conservative government invested \$240 million in a project that will be valued at \$1.4 billion with respect to carbon capture and sequestration. It is a project that is perhaps known across Canada and around the world.

In Weyburn, Saskatchewan, which is in my riding, EnCana is using carbon capture and CO₂ for the purpose of enhanced oil recovery and has been doing so for years. It is a world leader in that regard. Certainly it would be a good place to visit to see what is now being done and what will be done in the future and the jobs it is going to create.

This budget focuses on jobs and growth now and into the future. During the good times we paid down debt by approximately \$38 billion, and during these difficult times we introduced almost \$40 billion of stimulus, of which \$19 billion is proposed to be spent in 2010. With the additional \$19 billion in stimulus investment across Canada, we are solidifying Canada's recovery by creating jobs and building roads, waterlines and infrastructure projects in our communities throughout Canada.

The stimulus money that our government has been investing through Canada's economic action plan has impacted hundreds of communities across Canada, including a number of communities in my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain. Over \$60 million has flowed into Souris—Moose Mountain on the federal side alone through various programs, such as the building Canada fund, the infrastructure stimulus fund, the knowledge infrastructure program, the RInC program and the eco-energy program. In fact, to my knowledge, Souris—Moose Mountain has not seen this level of federal investment ever.

We are building new water plants for communities. We are building roads for communities. We are boosting up sewage infrastructure and sewage lagoons. These infrastructure investments have not been made for many years. In fact, the previous Liberal government downloaded \$25 billion to the provinces which got passed on to the municipalities. Indeed, they may have balanced their books, but at the cost of infrastructure that we are only now attempting to mend and there is more that needs to be done.

That said, while government stimulus dollars are being put to work under Canada's economic action plan, budget 2010 focuses on the task of returning to a balanced budget, which is essential to economic growth and job creation over the long term.

Budget 2010 outlines a clear three-point plan to return to a balanced budget. First, we will follow through with the exit strategy built into the economic action plan by completing the balance of the investments; second, we will take action to ensure government lives within its means; and third, we will conduct a comprehensive review of government administrative and overhead costs. These actions are what Canadians want. These are actions we must take. This is something we must do to ensure long-term success and a long-term recovery of the economy.

As the Minister of Finance has stated, we had to run this deficit temporarily because of the most serious economic crisis since the 1930s. Nobody will dispute that, but it does not mean we have to continue with it. Everything considered, in my opinion, the budget strikes the right balance. It is the right budget for this time in our history.

The economy is still fragile and the recovery is tentative, but it is now taking hold. Although a lot remains to be done, much has been accomplished to position Canada for future growth, including Souris—Moose Mountain. At the same time, the people of Canada, including the constituents of Souris—Moose Mountain, want us to get back to balanced budgets but in a logical and measured way that will not harm the economic recovery. That is exactly what we are doing. That is exactly what the budget is addressing.

We said we would not balance the budget by raising taxes and we will not raise taxes. Canadians have been very clear that they do not want taxes raised and taxes have not been raised. I know the Leader of the Opposition has mused openly about raising taxes from the GST point of view, and in fact spending more money. Where he is going to get it I do not know, maybe by driving us further into deficit or raising taxes as he has openly mused. That is certainly the wrong thing at the wrong time and Canadians do not accept it and do not want it.

● (1635)

In the throne speech we said that balancing the nation's books will not come at the expense of pensioners. It will not come by cutting transfer payments for health care and education, or by raising taxes of hard-working Canadians. What we will do is restrain growth in spending by \$17.6 million over five years.

The Budget

Starting this year, the government will freeze the total amount spent on salaries, administration and overhead in government departments, including the budgets of ministers' offices. Legislation will be introduced to freeze the salaries of the Prime Minister, ministers, members of Parliament and senators.

In addition, a review of administrative services will be launched to improve efficiency and eliminate duplication. All department spending will be aggressively reviewed to ensure value for money and tangible results.

That is what Canadians expect. That is what we will do. Once that takes hold, we will be on our way to balanced budgets.

Canadians want prudent governance. They expect their government to set out a clear road map that will bring us out of this downturn in a position of greater strength. Canada's economic action plan is doing just that.

The IMF has predicted that Canada's economic growth will be at the head of the G7 in 2010 and 2011. We are on the right track. We are headed in the right direction.

One of the tools our government has used to keep us on track is lower taxes. Since coming into office in 2006, we have cut over 100 taxes, reducing taxes in every way possible, in every way that the government collects them. We have reduced personal tax, consumption tax, business and excise taxes, and more.

Our current tax plan is reducing taxes on Canadians by an estimated \$220 billion over 2008-09 and the following five years. This is the right thing to do. This is what Canadians expect us to do. This is what will get the economy recovering as it should.

What is more, by lowering taxes, our government has sent a strong message to the world, the message that Canada is open for business. Canada will have the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment in the G7 this year, and the lowest statutory corporate tax rate in the G7 by 2012. This is the type of action that will create jobs, boost our competitiveness and increase investment at a time when we need it most.

In my constituency of Souris—Moose Mountain the agricultural sector is one of the key economic drivers. Our farmers play an important role by providing healthy, safe and nutritious food for families in Canada and around the world, but they are facing challenges with respect to commodity prices and so on.

Our government launched various initiatives in 2009 to help the sector adapt to pressures and improve its competitiveness. Canada's economic action plan announced the \$500 million agricultural flexibility fund and the \$50 million slaughter improvement fund.

In recent months our government also took measures to promote access to foreign markets for Canadian agricultural products through the establishment of a market access secretariat and extended support to the hog industry to assist with restructuring.

The cattle sector in my constituency has been hardest hit. It seems since the BSE crisis there has been one thing after the other that has placed added pressure on an industry that has seen low cattle prices, a high dollar, high input costs and unpredictable market fluctuations. Budget 2010 announces three measures to help ensure Canadian

producers continue to have access to competitive cattle processing operations in Canada.

First, funding available under the slaughter improvement program will be increased by \$10 million in 2010-11 to support the introduction of new cost-effective technologies. Second, \$25 million in 2010-11 will be targeted to cattle processing plants that handle cattle over 30 months of age, something that is much needed and much required. Third, our government is providing \$40 million over three years to support the development and commercialization of innovative technologies related to the removal and use of specified risk materials to reduce handling costs and create potential revenue sources from these materials. These measures will be funded from the existing agricultural flexibility fund.

We have also committed millions of dollars to modernize the Canada Grain Act, something that is very important to our farmers.

Looking forward, my riding of Souris—Moose Mountain has a substantial foundation to build upon as our economy grows into the future. We are currently sitting on one of North America's premium oil reserves in the Bakken oil play. As this resource is untapped, it will bring significant economic benefits to our corner of the province, our province and our country.

In Estevan the groundwork is being laid at Boundary Dam for the development of one of the world's first and largest commercial scale clean coal, carbon capture and storage demonstration project. That is world-class technology being completed right in our backyard.

• (1640)

As part of economic action plan, money is flowing to the Southeast Regional College for the development of the new Saskatchewan energy training institute in Estevan.

Mr. Speaker, I see my allotted time is up so I will end my speech here.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to provide my colleague across the way with a few facts.

The Conservatives announced a \$19 billion recovery plan. Let us be clear about this, they are also announcing a \$49 billion deficit. They are the worst managers Canada has had in its entire history. Thirty billion dollars as a result of bad management will be added to the debt, incurring interest as well that will have to be paid.

Because of this government, there are citizens who will not get services in the future. The Conservatives cannot make us believe they are good managers when it is clearly not the case.

The Budget

The Conservatives say they want to eliminate taxes but they do the opposite. Income tax was 15%. The Conservatives raised it to 15.5%. That is an increase, not a reduction.

Now they are proposing a tax on air transportation. They are increasing the employment insurance contributions for workers and employers, as well as the penalty for people who want to retire at age 60 instead of 65.

The reality is that this government has always increased taxes. All they want to do is be bad managers and cut people's services.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. I am not sure if the hon. member was listening to what I was saying, but we cut over 220 million dollars' worth of taxes over a number of years. Families today are far better off than they ever were under the previous Liberal government. They needed to run really hard just to stay ahead of the taxes. What the Liberal Party proposes is to tax and spend. That is not what Canadians want.

On the EI program for instance, the Liberals were suggesting a 45-day work year that would cost billions of dollars. Where would they get that money from? Either through deficit or raising the premiums, which would further cut into jobs, when we froze the premiums to make sure that jobs were created, or they would raise the GST or other taxes.

The leader of the opposition said he would have a national daycare program, something the Liberals have promised for years and years and would cost billions of dollars. How would they do that?

If Canadians want management, good management, they should stay with us.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, the parliamentary secretary asked the following question: how can we move toward a green economy without increasing taxes?

Since the budget was tabled and even before, the Bloc Québécois has been trying to tell the government that the money is there. The oil companies have been given \$3.2 billion in tax cuts. Could we not get a green economy with this money? We could also go and get a few billion from the tax havens.

It is not a matter of raising taxes, except those of the highly paid who can afford it. But the government does not want to go and get the money where it can be found. Instead they give it to their friends.

I would like my colleague to explain why the government does not get the money out of the pockets of its friends, the oil companies.

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, one thing we have done, as I have said, is we have cut billions of dollars in taxes on the average working Canadian to leave more money in the pockets of Canadians so they can decide where they can put those dollars, so they can cause the economy to revive and go forward.

Also, we have made the climate such that there will be investment, not only by corporations and businesses and individuals within Canada, but from without Canada into Canada.

What do investors do when they invest? What do they do when they go into exploration? What do they do when they set up corporate offices? They create jobs and more jobs. What we are doing is making sure that jobs are created so people can indeed contribute not only to our society, but can contribute by paying taxes and creating more jobs so this economy can go upward and forward and not downward as it would under the Bloc.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, public transit is the backbone of our urban economies, but the Conservative government once again refuses to provide dedicated funding for public transit. Without funding for public transit, projects like Toronto's transit city will end up being put on the shoulders of the property taxpayers. It is the same thing when it comes to buying new streetcars.

Potential green jobs are thrown out the window and commuters waste time and energy idling in their cars on clogged highways or waiting for streetcars that take a long time to come.

I want to ask my Conservative colleague why the budget provides no new dedicated funding to operate public transit, given that Canada is the only G8 country that does not provide such funding for public transit—

• (1650)

The Deputy Speaker: I will have to stop the member there to allow the parliamentary secretary 30 seconds to respond.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, there is no question that urban transportation is important to all of us. If she looked at the economic action plan and some of the major infrastructure projects that we put forward, she would find that millions of dollars were spent to ensure that transportation was looked after, to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure was there to take us forward and into the future.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to participate in today's debate on budget 2010.

Our budget is a responsible plan to solidify Canada's economic recovery, while paving the way to a more prosperous future. This budget builds on Canada's economic recovery with actions to create jobs and stimulate growth, to sustain our country's economic advantages and chart the way forward to budget balance.

Our government has held hundreds of consultations with Canadian workers and businesses across the country. Individual MPs like myself have talked with constituents to discover where people want the country to go. The result is the budget we have before us today, a budget which is a response to the concerns of everyday Canadians about jobs and the economy, with prudent measures to ensure our long-term prosperity.

The budget is about supporting families and communities and helping those who helped build Canada. The budget invests in jobs and growth, helps youth gain lasting employment, modernizes infrastructure and works to ensure our position as an energy superpower with money for clean energy projects and green jobs.

The Budget

It is a budget for both today and tomorrow that deserves the full support of the House. The budget implements year two of Canada's economic action plan. Canadians across the country can attest that Canada's economic action plan is working and helping to keep Canadians working. Already the plan has created or maintained an estimated 130,000 jobs and is expected to create or maintain 220,000 jobs by the end of 2010. That does not even include the 225,000 jobs that were saved through our expanded work-sharing program.

We are in the middle of the largest federal investment in infrastructure in over 60 years. We are putting Canadians to work in over 16,000 projects across Canada to build better roads, bridges, public transit, colleges, universities and much more.

The economic action plan is having a direct and lasting impact on the lives of my constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells by providing federal money to projects and programs. In the last year, there has been \$7.3 million for the Fraser River flood protection, \$30 million for a new Surrey City Centre library, \$1 million for Tynehead Regional Park, over \$120,000 for the Surrey Art Gallery, over \$800,000 for youth employment, \$3.4 million for skills development, \$1.7 million for employment services, \$2.9 million to help people find work, \$345,000 for the Cloverdale Rodeo, over \$400,000 for youth crime prevention and \$3.5 million for local recreation facilities.

That is money being spent right in Surrey and it does not even include the millions more our government is spending on the Pacific gateway to improve our roads, highways, bridges and ports, or the thousands more pumped into the local economy through programs like the home renovation tax credit.

As we roll out the second part of Canada's economic action plan, budget 2010 will invest \$3.2 billion in personal income tax relief. This includes allowing Canadians to earn more income before paying federal income tax and before being subject to higher tax rates. It includes the enhanced working income tax benefit to strengthen work incentives for low income Canadians, higher child benefits for parents and lower taxes for low and middle income seniors.

Budget 2010 will invest over \$4 billion in actions to create and protect jobs. This includes additional EI benefits and more training opportunities to help unemployed Canadians.

Budget 2010 will invest \$7.7 billion in infrastructure stimulus to create jobs. This will modernize infrastructure, support home ownership and improve social housing across Canada.

Budget 2010 will invest \$1.9 billion to create the economy of tomorrow. This investment will help develop and attract talented people, strengthen our capacity for world-leading research, improve commercialization, accelerate private sector investment, enhance the ability of Canadian firms to participate in global markets and create a more competitive business environment.

Finally, budget 2010 will invest \$2.2 billion to support industries and communities for affected sectors, including forestry, agriculture, small business, tourism, shipbuilding and culture. This will provide job opportunities in all parts of Canada that have been hit hard by the economic downturn.

● (1655)

In addition to delivering year two of Canada's economic action plan, budget 2010 will also invest in a limited number of new targeted initiatives to build jobs and growth for the economy of tomorrow, strengthen Canadian innovation and make Canada a destination of choice for new business investment.

For example, British Columbia will benefit from the \$222 million to be provided over the next five years to strengthen the world-leading research taking place at TRIUMF, Canada's premier national laboratory located at UBC. Communities in B.C. will also benefit from the purchase of a new hovercraft for the Canadian Coast Guard near Vancouver.

Federal transfers support for provinces and territories is at an all time high and it will continue to grow under our government.

For British Columbia, this support will continue and it totals to almost \$6.3 billion for the upcoming year. It provides resources for the essential public services, including health care, post-secondary education and other key components of Canada's social safety net. It includes about \$3.6 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of \$231 million from last year, and \$1.5 billion through the Canada social transfer.

British Columbia will also benefit from continued targeted support in 2010-11, including \$54 million as its share of the community development trust and the police officers recruitment fund and \$67 million for labour market training.

Budget 2010 also includes a three point plan to return to balanced budgets once the economy has recovered. First, there is an exit strategy to end temporary stimulus spending measures by the end of next March. Second, we will restrain spending, \$17.6 billion targeted saving over five years. Third, there will be a comprehensive review of government administration and overhead costs.

Our government assures that we will not raise taxes and we will not cut major transfers to persons or other levels of government. Under our government, pensions are safe and we will not repeat the mistake of the previous Liberal government that devastated health care and social services by slashing federal transfers to the provinces.

The Budget

As a result of our three point plan, the deficit will be cut nearly in half in two years and by two-thirds in three years. Budget 2010 will save taxpayers more than \$17 billion by freezing the salaries of ministers, MPs and Senators, eliminating 245 Governor in Council positions, freezing departmental operating budgets, reviewing government operations, freezing foreign aid, slowing growth of national defence spending and closing tax loopholes.

With these measures budget 2010 charts a course to bring Canada's finances back to balance over the medium term and well before any other G7 country.

Our jobs and growth budget continues a plan that is working. It will help solidify Canada's economic recovery and sustain our economic advantages now and for the future.

Unlike the Liberals, our government will not raise taxes. Unlike the Liberals, our government will not cut spending on health care, education or support for seniors. Together we will create a stronger Canada and a stronger economy now and for the future.

• (1700)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells for making a very passionate speech. She mentioned the Asia-Pacific Gateway. Of course that was a Liberal initiative and I am very proud of that.

On the other hand, she is concerned about low and middle-income seniors. I can see she is coming from the greater need in the Surrey and Delta part of the world.

In the federal buildings there are two plants that cost taxpayers \$975 each, \$1,000 for the door bell and six spotlights installed at a cost of \$5,300. If the government would have spent this money wisely, that money could have been used to provide better services for low-income seniors. Does the member agree with that?

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, our government believes that seniors, after a lifetime of building Canada, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Since 2006, our Conservative government has taken significant steps to improve the financial security of Canadian seniors.

Overall, Canada's economic action plan is working and helping Canadians to keep working. Our plan is expected to create or maintain about 220,000 jobs by the end of 2010. That is a big step.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we must remember that between 1984 and 1993 we had a Conservative government under Brian Mulroney. In 1984, Canada's debt was about \$212 billion, and when the Conservatives lost power to the Liberals in 1993, the debt was \$550 billion.

If my father had been here and had heard what was said, he would have said they have an awful lot of gall. How can the Conservative members rise in the House and say with a straight face that they are cutting taxes and have reduced the GST? All that time they have been paying for the groceries with a credit card, they have been borrowing to pay for the groceries. So where are we going to end up?

Remember that in 1993, Canadians threw the Conservatives out. Only two Conservative members were elected.

[English]

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, all of us on this side of the House are very proud of the fact that we are putting Canadians to work in some 16,000 projects across Canada to build better roads, bridges, public transit, universities and colleges. Our government is doing a great job and all of us are very proud of that.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the member forgot to say in her speech is the government is shifting the tax burden from the corporations to ordinary Canadians. In fact, it was pointed out by one of my colleagues today that the corporate tax rate in the United States is around 35%. When the government is finished reducing the corporate taxes, it will be around 15% in Canada.

There is no need for it to be half the corporate tax rate of the United States when we have Nordic countries that are in the 50% range. Someone has to pay. Someone has to make up the tax deficiencies. The government is planning to rake in over \$19 billion more in EI premiums than it pays out over the next few years. In that way, the citizens of Canada have to make up the shortfall in revenue that the corporations should be spending.

How is this fair to Canadian workers?

• (1705)

Mrs. Nina Grewal: Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals would like to hike the GST and the NDP would increase the job-killing business taxes, we will not raise taxes. Our Conservative government believes in lower taxes. We are leaving more money in the pockets of hard-working Canadians. That is what we believe in.

[Translation]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the budget, which I will refer to, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois.

At the end of the year, once the 2009 audits are complete, Canadians will have a record deficit somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$53 billion, according to the numbers in the budget.

This is a record deficit for which the Conservatives can take much of the credit. Their election promise to reduce the GST cost \$14 billion per year. Their decision was political. The Conservatives' last GST cut, which cost \$7 billion, came just a few months before the crisis, even though they were told, in the middle of the election campaign, that the crisis was coming. They refused to acknowledge that the crisis and the recession were around the corner.

To those who think that the Conservatives are good managers, this is how my colleague from Manicouagan described Brian Mulroney's Conservative government: a government that knows how to grow a deficit. The current government is yet another typical Conservative government that knows how to run up a deficit.

The Budget

The Bloc Québécois is the only party in the House that proposed measures to the government. Our measures focused on finding revenue, not on investment. The Bloc Québécois is responsible. When it proposes spending, it also tells the government where to find the money.

Since the resumption of proceedings, we have pointed out a number of times in this House that one way to find money is to begin by eliminating access to tax havens. During today's question period, the leader of the Bloc Québécois and the finance critic stated clearly that the banks had made huge profits of over \$5 billion over the past three months. We have the figures, because the law requires the banks to report in their financial statements the amounts they save in taxes when they transfer funds to or invest in tax havens. In the banking sector alone, these savings amount to some \$2.3 billion.

The banks are stating openly that they are making economies of scale. The Minister of Finance even told us today that the banks are the best in the world. That is not hard to understand—they do not pay taxes.

The banks do not contribute to society. They are allowed to invest in tax havens and thus save taxes to the detriment of society as a whole. What is terrible is the way the Conservatives repeatedly encourage the rich, so as to better crush and stifle the poor.

The situation is the same for the \$3.2 billion in tax credits for the oil companies. It was quite something to hear the parliamentary secretary tell us that the government was creating jobs. What he does not see is that the tax credits increase the profits of the oil companies. They do not have a quarterly deficit. They pay their shareholders dividends. Their shareholders make profits. This is because the government gives the oil companies \$3.2 billion in tax credits. We have suggested to the government that it recover this money.

The government could recover \$3 billion as well by eliminating access to tax havens. The Bloc has proposed a surtax on society's top wage earners, 2% on those who earn \$150,000 and over and 3% on those who earn \$250,000 and over. This measure would have meant the recovery of \$4.8 billion. Those who come out furthest ahead in a time of crisis should contribute to the overall spending to help society's disadvantaged.

We suggested to the government that it review its military spending policy so as to recover \$1 billion. It chose to slash \$1 billion in a review of military spending policy, a suggestion the Bloc had made.

● (1710)

We asked it as well to save \$1.5 billion by putting an immediate end to the mission in Afghanistan. In addition, we suggested it reduce operational spending by \$5.4 billion.

Like me, my colleagues no doubt saw the excesses revealed by the media this morning. When \$1,000 is spent to change a doorbell and \$5,000 on replacing six lights, significant amounts, in my opinion, can be recovered. The Bloc Québécois suggested that \$5.4 billion be recovered from the government's operating expenditures. We showed the government how to save \$18.9 billion. It chose simply to close its eyes, except with regard to the billion dollars earmarked for military spending. These savings

would have meant that Quebeckers could have been given what they were requesting.

According to the figures appearing on page 259 of the budget, despite the deficit of \$53 billion in 2009-10, \$9.718 billion was paid out to the automotive industry and \$62 million to the forestry sector.

Seen from the standpoint of a Quebecker, it is quite clear that, despite the government's accumulated deficit, much of the money was not invested in Quebec. We have always criticized the Conservative government on this spiteful way to get Quebeckers to pay. We have seen it all in the pages of this budget.

The decision to help the nuclear industry create energy—to produce electricity from nuclear power—will give rise to a new competitor for Hydro-Québec. That is the reality.

The government has decided to help the nuclear industry in order to create, with government money, a new competitor for Hydro-Québec. Quebeckers pay 23% of the bill.

The same can be said about the decision to invest \$10 billion in the automotive sector, but only \$62 million in the forestry sector. What this means is that 23% of Quebeckers' money is invested in the automotive industry. I would like to point out that automakers closed all their plants in Quebec. That is the reality. There was no compensation in this budget. In 2010, no additional investment is being made in the forestry sector to compensate for investments. However, \$108 million will be invested in the forestry sector, bringing the total for 2009 and 2010 to \$170 million compared to \$9.7 billion for the automotive sector. There has been no compensation for the aerospace sector either.

What happened in the infrastructure sector is even worse. Most mayors of Quebec cities asked the government to extend the March 31 deadline for completion of work because elections were held in Quebec. It was the only Canadian province that held elections in 2009. In the midst of the Conservative government's infrastructure program, the cities asked that the deadline be extended because elections had delayed work by three to six months, depending on changes in municipal councils. Once again, the minister decided to ignore them.

That is just like the Conservative Party, to decide to make Quebec pay for something it did not do.

● (1715)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of ways and means Motion No.1.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1740)

[Translation]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 3)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Aglukkaq	Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Arthur	Ashfield
Baird	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blackburn	Blaney
Block	Boucher
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Cadman
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casson
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fast
Finley	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Généreux
Glover	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hiebert
Hill	Hoback
Hoeppner	Holder
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Lemieux	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mark
Mayer	McColeman
McLeod	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	O'Neill-Gordon
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Payne
Petit	Poillievre
Prentice	Preston

Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Richards	Richardson
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Scheer
Schellenberger	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson	Tilson
Toews	Tweed
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young — 142

The Budget

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	André
Andrews	Angus
Ashton	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bains	Beaudin
Bélanger	Bellavance
Bevington	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brisson	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrier
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Coady
Comartin	Crombie
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Desnoyers
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dion	Donnelly
Dorion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Dufour	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter	Faille
Folco	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Godin	Guadere
Gravelle	Guarnieri
Guay	Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Basques)	
Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord)	
Hall Findlay	
Harris (St. John's East)	Holland
Hughes	Hyer
Ignatieff	Jennings
Julian	Kennedy
Laforest	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lavallée
Layton	Lee
Lemay	Leslie
Lessard	Lévesque
Malhi	Malo
Maloway	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard
Mendes	Minna
Mourani	Mulcair
Nadeau	Neville
Oliphant	Ouellet
Paillé (Hochelaga)	Paillé (Louis-Hébert)
Paquette	Pearson
Plamondon	Pomerleau
Proulx	Rae
Rafferty	Ratansi
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Savage

Private Members' Business

Savoie
Siksay
Simson
Stoffer
Thi Lac
Tonks
Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Scarpaleggia
Simms
St-Cyr
Szabo
Thibeault
Valeriote
Volpe
Wilfert
Zarac — 132

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[*English*]

It being 5:42 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1745)

[*Translation*]
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES ACT

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ) moved that Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, last fall, before the government locked the 308 members of this House out for three months, when my turn came, I introduced in this House Bill C-429 concerning the use of wood in the renovation and construction of federal public buildings.

Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood), states:

Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

1. Section 7 of the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) Despite subsection (1), before soliciting bids for the construction, maintenance or repair of public works, federal immovables and federal real property, the Minister shall give preference to the concept that promotes the use of wood, while taking into account the cost and greenhouse gas emissions.

Bill C-429 is a well-thought-out bill in which the Bloc Québécois has backed up talk with action.

The Conservative government often says it will do a lot of things. For example, it put 308 hon. members on a parliamentary lock-out for three months. The House rose for the holidays on December 11, 2009 and between Christmas and New Year's, the Prime Minister adjourned for another two and a half months by proroguing the House of Commons. He slapped a lock on the door and said he was going to take this time to engage in some wide-ranging thought.

We assumed he would undertake some broad consultations. He said he had consulted Quebecers. When we asked where and when, he said it was in Vancouver. But Quebecers are in Quebec. He probably met some in Vancouver during the Olympics, but that is not what we call broad consultations. It is a friendly gesture to say hello to someone who is visiting Vancouver and runs into the Prime

Minister. But they do not necessarily talk about the crisis in the forest industry or the problems in our paper mills and sawmills.

While we in the Bloc Québécois were locked out of Parliament, we went all over Quebec because our party had a consultative process. First, our leader traveled all across the province. The hon. member for Hochelaga organized a pre-budget tour, accompanied by his assistant, the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan. There was also an employment insurance tour, which was combined on the North Shore, in Manicouagan, with the pre-budget tour. In addition, the hon. member for Brome—Missisquoi spent time traveling all across Quebec to consult stakeholders about social housing. All these hon. members were hard at work talking with constituents.

The Prime Minister says he consulted Quebecers in Vancouver, but that is not what the Bloc did. At least, we think he did. We saw him in the stands watching the game between Canada and the United States. We saw him watching the curling match between Canada and Finland. All that time, though, we were actually out on the hustings.

The Prime Minister said he had to answer reporters' questions about why he shut down the House of Commons. He had to justify all his cogitating, saying there would be another Speech from the Throne and a budget. He would also have to see how to recalibrate his economic plan after the financial crisis.

To our great surprise when we flipped through the throne speech from the first page to the last—a speech that my colleagues were lucky enough to obtain—there was not a thing there that reflected the wishes of Quebecers, especially people working in the forest industry or in our paper mills and sawmills.

● (1750)

With Bill C-429, the Bloc Québécois would allow sawmills to use timber for materials that are or were normally used, such as steel or cement.

When we say we can use our natural resources, God knows that the North Shore was developed largely thanks to the forest industry in the 1950s.

But there is nothing about that in the Speech from the Throne. Then there was the tabling of the budget. We looked through it—and it is quite a lengthy tome—and all it says is that the federal government expected to put in \$170 million to help the forest industry, that is, \$70 million last year and \$100 million this year.

We could also look at the economic action plan. Do they talk about the forest industry in it? Yes they do. It is the only place. Let me read a few lines on forestry—there only are a couple in any case:

The global economic downturn and the collapse in the U.S. housing market have created challenges for the forestry sector. To date, a total of \$70 million has been provided to Natural Resources Canada to support market diversification and innovation initiatives for the forestry sector, including research and demonstration projects on new forest products and initiatives to help forestry companies market innovative products internationally to protect and create jobs. This investment will be supplemented with a further \$100 million next year.

It does not take a genius to see that \$100 million plus \$70 million is a total of \$170 million in financial assistance for the forestry industry across Canada.

The Bloc Québécois is calling on this House, particularly the Conservatives, to help the forestry industry. This industry employs 88,000 people in Quebec alone.

We just heard that there was nothing in the throne speech, nothing in the budget, aside from \$170 million, a drop in the bucket to help the struggling forestry industry.

The \$170 million is in the economic action plan, where the government tries to justify it.

In light of the magnitude of the economic crisis, the Government of Quebec has decided to move forward. Last week, the Deputy Premier, Nathalie Normandeau, went to Baie-Comeau, where she was joined by Serge Simard, the minister responsible for the Côte-Nord region, and Julien Boudreau, the president of the Conférence régionale des élus de la Côte-Nord.

The Deputy Premier, Ms. Normandeau, said, “We must break down prejudices and get back to our roots. Wood is a part of our culture.” She said that the project was in line with the Government of Quebec’s wood use strategy. The Quebec government has a wood use strategy.

In all, nine lobbyists will be hired at the provincial level. The Conférence régionale des élus de la Côte-Nord, for example, has received \$80,000 in financial assistance to hire Mr. Bois. He will be responsible for the industry, primarily for the use of wood in non-residential construction.

The lobbyist will be responsible for encouraging the use of wood in the construction of various non-residential buildings, and for providing regional oversight to identify future infrastructure projects.

Wood is used in fewer than 15% of buildings, whereas it could be used much more extensively, in upwards of 80% of buildings. This goes to show how much room there is for using wood in non-residential construction.

• (1755)

On page 105 of Canada’s economic action plan, reference is made to a \$170 million investment in the forestry sector. In the same budget, the Conservative government provided grants totalling \$10 billion to the automotive industry.

I encourage the members of the Conservative Party to read page 282 of Canada’s economic action plan, which states:

As a result, the governments of Canada and Ontario worked together, in partnership with the Government of the United States, to support the auto sector. Combined support by Canadian governments, provided through loans and other instruments to General Motors and Chrysler, totalled about \$14.6 billion... Currently, General Motors and Chrysler plants directly employ about 14,000 workers.

While the automotive industry is getting \$10 billion, the forestry sector is getting \$170 million.

Stakeholders have been asking the government to give the forestry industry, paper mills and sawmills loans and loan guarantees, but the Minister of State for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, who is from the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-

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Jean region, and the member for Jonquière—Alma, the former mayor of Roberval, say that they cannot provide loan guarantees because of the agreement with the Americans. It is strange that although they are unable to do this for the forestry industry, which is concentrated in Quebec, they were able to give Ontario’s auto industry \$10 billion worth of loans and loan guarantees.

Such loans and loan guarantees would have enabled the forestry industry—mainly the sawmills—to upgrade their facilities and be ready to compete after the economic turnaround. Bill C-429, which was just introduced, would enable companies to upgrade their equipment, reduce operating costs, and become very competitive.

Stakeholders are asking the government for loan guarantees because many of these companies have trouble recruiting workers. When a company like AbitibiBowater is on life support and has placed itself under the protection of the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, it is highly likely that people will decide to find work elsewhere.

It is also likely that specialized, skilled workers will leave the company before it even closes its doors. That is why the regions have to fight so hard to curb the exodus of young people. They leave the regions to study, and many of them never return. Those who want to work in the forestry industry cannot. In these tough times, paper mills and sawmills have all they can do to temporarily maintain existing jobs as long as they are open.

Many towns in my riding depend exclusively on the forestry industry. Sawmills in Rivière-Pentecôte, Rivière-Saint-Jean, Baie-Trinité, and Ragueneau—Kruger—have all closed their doors.

Companies cannot participate in the economy when the government ignores their needs. The Bloc Québécois wants the government to provide loan guarantees to the forestry industry. If the government could do it for the auto sector, it can do the same for the forestry sector.

I introduced a bill to promote the use of wood in non-residential construction.

My time is up, but I will have another five minutes for questions and comments, and I will be happy to answer any questions the members want to ask.

• (1800)

[English]

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to talk to this particular topic because I certainly do feel the pain of my hon. colleague, particularly when it comes to AbitibiBowater, which recently closed a mill in my riding affecting over 1,000 people.

To help diversify the economy in my riding we are trying to attract business in the wood pellet industry, which involves burning wood pellets to provide heat and energy to a particular house or commercial building.

I would like the hon. member to talk about that in the case of not just constructing a building but also in renovations and particularly in a situation where wood pellets could be used in order to heat and provide energy for some of these government buildings.

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I would certainly like to see an initiative in my province born from more wood products when it comes to biomass energy. These are the things on which we could rely more than just subsidies. It could be a direct program to help our industries and forestry as well as providing energy efficiency.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Madam Speaker, in light of the problems facing the forestry industry, the federal government needs to invest more in research and development. We should be asking our engineers and our architects to make using wood a priority when they are preparing their plans and estimates, especially when the cost of wood is the same as that of other construction materials.

As my colleague mentioned, if we want to use wood as another source of energy, we know it produces much less greenhouse gas than steel and concrete production. We can kill two birds with one stone by using more wood in the construction and renovation of non-residential buildings, that is, commercial, industrial and government buildings. This would keep sawmills busy across Canada. We are not reinventing the wheel here. This is being done in several other countries, particularly in Sweden and France, which have construction policies for buildings with six or more dwellings, and in British Columbia.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, as the member knows, legislation has been introduced in other jurisdictions, specifically British Columbia. I believe a bill was passed in British Columbia last fall and Quebec also has legislation. I would like to ask the member, what results has the industry experienced in Quebec and in B.C. where the legislation has been passed? Could the member point to any specific projects that have been let under this legislation and any positive results that have come from the initiative so far?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Madam Speaker, I would like to answer the member's question in the affirmative. I introduced a bill before the holiday break, but the government decided to adjourn for three months. I am introducing it again at second reading. We will see the positive effects of the bill once it passes in the House of Commons and the Senate, and once it is implemented. I do not have the statistics for the countries that use wood in non-residential construction, nor do I have those for British Columbia.

I was very pleased that the Deputy Premier of Quebec, Ms. Normandeau, and the minister responsible for the Côte-Nord region, Serge Simard, came to Baie-Comeau. However, Mr. Simard has his work cut out for him as a Quebec minister. He must convince his two federal colleagues from Saguenay—Lac Saint-Jean—the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the Minister of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec)—to vote with the Bloc Québécois on Bill C-429, An Act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act (use of wood). Mr. Simard's most important job will likely be to convince his federal colleagues.

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague on his excellent bill. The advantage of this extraordinary bill is that it will not cost the government anything. It simply proposes that wood be used in the

construction of buildings, instead of steel and concrete. Therefore, there is no reason for the government to oppose such a strong and important bill.

• (1805)

Mr. Gérard Asselin: Madam Speaker, I am convinced we will be able to conclude on this.

It is a good question. It allows me to say that I hope this bill will have the support of the Liberal Party, the Conservative government and the NDP. As the member for Brome—Missisquoi was saying, the bill will not cost the government anything, not one penny. All it requires is the political will to help workers.

[*English*]

Mr. Richard Harris (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to Bill C-429, an act to amend the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act. This bill is all about the promotion of wood.

I come from an area that is the country's main source of softwood lumber. In my riding we produce more softwood lumber than any other riding in the country, and so it is a pleasure to see the steps that the government has already taken to promote the use of wood across Canada and worldwide.

Let me begin by thanking the hon. member for Manicouagan for the sentiments behind his private member's bill. Coming from a forest-dependent area myself, I can appreciate his sentiments. While he may not recognize what the government is already doing, I am sure the bottom line is that he wants to see more wood in use in construction, but the government is already there.

We are already spending tens of millions and hundreds of millions of dollars across the country in helping our forestry industry and promoting the use of wood. Right across this country, Canada's forestry sector is undergoing a reconstruction, a transformation, in order that it can address the competitive and cyclical challenges that face us.

All of us in this House would agree that the federal government has an important role to play in assisting this important industry, and so today, for the benefit of members in the House, I would like to mention some of the initiatives that the government has already taken to promote the use of wood, not only in Canada but around the world.

Before doing so, let me just make one mention of the fact that there are some statutory restraints in the form of building codes and standards that would prevent the implementation of Bill C-429. As attractive and well-meaning as it may be, there are some challenges to it. The record shows that right from the beginning, when these forestry challenges came upon us, the government has been taking quick and decisive action to assist Canada's forestry industry.

Canada's economic action plan, for example, has taken some unprecedented steps to support forestry workers in communities while helping to secure a sustainable forestry sector for the future. As a matter of fact, I do not think that in the history of any Parliament, any government in the history of Canada has done so much to help the forestry industry as this Conservative government has done under the leadership of our Prime Minister.

For example, \$1 billion under the economic action plan is provided under the community adjustment fund to mitigate the short-term effects of restructuring and the challenges we have, and this assists the communities in the forestry sector. Also, \$170 million over two years is being provided to specifically help our forestry industry develop new products, new technology, new and more efficient ways to process the construction wood, so that we can stay ahead of our competitors in other countries.

Of that \$170 million, \$50 million is being devoted to expanding domestic and foreign markets, as I mentioned earlier. As a matter of fact, in 2009, I believe that our softwood exports to China increased by over 50%, and it is predicted that this year, that number will double again on our exports to China.

It is a huge assistance to our forestry industry and it is giving us a lot of help to stay out of the trap of putting all our eggs in one basket that we have been in with our lumber exports to the U.S. Now we have something to mitigate when the U.S. market is not favourable to us.

There is a proposal to permanently eliminate tariffs on a range of machinery and equipment. This budget will save the forestry industry \$440 million over the next five years.

● (1810)

Profitability, efficiency and cost savings all amount to more jobs in the forest industry. Budget 2010 is built on the already unprecedented investments the Government of Canada is making and has made in the forest sector, with a \$100 million allocated in the forest sector initiative for next generation renewable power from wood waste and the bioenergy plants that are cropping up all over the country. I have a number of these plants being built in my riding by the forest industry, which is helping to reduce energy costs and helping them to become more efficient in using the wood they harvest.

The program will help to accelerate renewal and transformation in the forest sector by commercializing and advancing the implementation of clean energy technologies in the forest sector so it can not only provide energy for itself but also sell it to other users. This helps the sector's bottom line, helping it to retain and create jobs and making the forest industry healthier.

We have provided \$8.3 billion through the Canada skills and transition strategy to help workers directly affected by the economic downturn, including enhancements to employment insurance. We made extensions to EI and supported work sharing. Thousands of forest workers were able to keep their jobs and not get laid off.

There are always some consequences from economic downturns. Certainly we have had one of the worst downturns in many decades, and the forest industry has been hurt badly by prices being at the bottom of the barrel, and the U.S. market has not been responding over this period of time. However, we have done a lot to help the forest workers. We have helped them improve their skills so they can get jobs that will not be as affected by the challenges we face.

We put \$8.3 billion through the Canada skills and transition strategy, again to help workers affected by the downturn, and we have made enhancements to EI and provided funding for skills and training in the forest sector.

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We provided \$1 billion over two years to assist provinces and territories delivering training support for up to 100,000 workers who qualify for EI benefits.

Furthermore, the government provided \$500 million over two years for a new strategic training and transition fund, and has a targeted initiative of \$60 million to help older workers transition.

We have designated a lot of money for the province of Quebec. We went into partnership with the Government of Quebec and agreed to lead a Canada-Quebec task team to co-ordinate our efforts and have identified a number of key areas where we have shared interests in the forest industry.

We provided a \$200 million loan for silviculture in Quebec, an advance that would support silviculture operations in the province. Each government contributed \$100 million to that. Also, we provided another \$30 million to restore bridges and culverts on multi-resource and wildlife roads in Quebec. It goes on and on, resulting in the creation and maintenance of more than 8,200 jobs in the province of Quebec.

We have been working together with the Province of Quebec, which wants to work with the federal government. This is a good partnership because we can leverage our funding and get more bang for the buck.

In 2008 Export Development Canada provided financial services with a total value of \$85.8 billion to over 8,300 businesses across the country, helping them with their accounts receivable and exports.

It goes on and on. The Business Development Bank, for example, is supporting the forest industry in many areas.

As I said earlier, the sentiments for the bill are there, which we all understand. The fact is that the Government of Canada has already been doing yeoman's work in trying to help the forest industry get up and running again, and it is really working. We are starting to see a turnaround. The assistance we have given to the forest industry has helped it during its transformation.

We are going to keep helping the forest industry because we recognize how important it is to our economy and to our country.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Alexandra Mendes (Brossard—La Prairie, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the House of Commons to speak to Bill C-429. We have already heard from the bill's sponsor, the member for Manicouagan, whom I thank for this proposal, as well as from the government.

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I will begin by saying that I am surprised, if not stunned, that the government simply rejected the bill for a whole slew of technical reasons. The minister seems to believe that all these measures would give preferential treatment to one industry. According to him, they would violate Canada's supply obligations under its domestic and international trade agreements. But the minister's staff seem to have forgotten or failed to grasp that the ultimate aim of Bill C-429 is to help Canada's forestry industry while logically promoting new ways of reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Once again, it is clear that the government refuses to consider the positive side of measures that come from this side of the House. It prefers to reject the spirit of this bill out of hand instead of working with us to better serve the interests of all Canadians. It claims to want to work with the opposition parties to make government run smoothly, but it soon shows its real face.

The irony in all this is that if this bill had been introduced by the party in power, I am certain that all these supposed problems and complications would not have been seen as barriers. In addition, if the government had introduced such a bill itself, I am sure that the minister would not have worried about the appearance of preferential treatment or the possibility of trade disputes. But because the idea did not come from the government, all it can do is shoot the whole thing down.

I would like to congratulate the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois who continues to defend the interests of the Canadian softwood lumber industry, while the government continues to stand idly by at a time when a major sector of our economy is having serious problems during this difficult economic period. By making such efforts to defend the Canadian softwood lumber industry, the Bloc is showing that it understands the important role this sector plays in Canada's history.

I find it interesting that the bill before us could very well promote a sense of unity for our country. Its target is the best interests not just of Quebec, but all of Canada.

[*English*]

The bill simply asks the government and, in particular, the Department of Public Works and Government Services, to look at its procurement practices in a new light. Of course, we are well aware that one cannot always use wood to build. Often building codes, engineering specifications and structural integrity will dictate what materials can and should be used. What this bill proposes is that when decisions are being taken in determining what materials to use for a project, wood should be the preferred material.

By giving preference to wood as a building material, it does not prevent or undermine the use of other building materials. The bill simply says it should be considered, with preference given to promotion of the use of wood, while at the same time taking into account the cost of materials and greenhouse gas emissions that will be created.

[*Translation*]

I would like to point out that Public Works and Government Services Canada manages 23% of all the premises administered by the federal government and that the minister's mandate covers less

than 1% of crown buildings. This bill would not apply to the entire government procurement and contract process.

This bill only focuses on a small portion of crown buildings and asks that a new approach be taken in the procedure used for government contracts in one department. Such a measure would support our forestry industry directly and promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

If we consider that using one cubic metre of wood to replace other construction materials can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by almost one tonne, it is easy to understand the importance of using more wood. It seems like a win-win situation to use Canadian materials such as wood, which would allow us both to help an industry and reduce greenhouse gases. We have been told for years that we must reduce greenhouse gases and now we have a bill in hand precisely to do so. We must defend it with conviction.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Unlike the party opposite, my party and I are committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and realize that every choice we make can be a step in the right direction. This bill may seem like a small step in the total amount of greenhouse emissions that we could actually reduce, but these little changes will add up to a cleaner and greener Canada.

The current procurement process established at public works was developed with the idea of it being open and transparent. It is designed to provide a fair and level playing field. This amendment to the Department of Public Works and Government Services Act does not impede this procurement process. Rather, it asks the department to rethink and be more cautious in its procurement practices while considering the economic and environmental benefits.

[*Translation*]

We all know that we have to take another look at the way we do things. For example, we are now often asked to pay for plastic bags when we shop. Consumers have begun bringing their own reusable bags with them, which reduces the use of plastic bags and thus the harmful effects of these non-biodegradable bags in landfill sites. This small action has had a positive effect on costs and on the environment for the businesses themselves and for consumers. This trend seems to be continuing. Consumers are adopting this practice, which has become a new reality. Either we bring our own bags or we have to pay for plastic bags.

If consumers had been asked if they were prepared to make this change five years ago, we would likely have heard a lot of angry complaints. However, this approach seems to be becoming the norm, more and more stores are adopting such a policy, and consumers are prepared to support this environmental initiative.

I have no doubt that, in five years, we will be so used to it that we will wonder why we ever used plastic bags.

[English]

It is much the same with Bill C-429. It is a new way of looking at our current procurement practices. The bill does not say to use only wood; it is saying that the use of wood and the environmental impact of procurement decisions should be considered.

The bill is a first step to a greater good, and I realize that it scares the party opposite. My party has already committed to setting mandatory clean energy federal procurement standards. This bill would fall under that commitment, and I believe it is time to start rethinking the way we work. It is a small step to a greater good and I believe that in the future we will change these guidelines.

[Translation]

If we cannot make such changes within the government, how can we expect Canadians to do so? We have to take a leadership role and show that we are prepared to make positive changes. We have to change the way we do things. We must improve our methods. As lawmakers, we must take the lead for the good of society and not create roadblocks to changes in our objectives to have a better country and a healthier environment.

I am sure it is clear now that I will vote in support of this bill at second reading. I think we must put it to a committee, which will study it in order to strengthen it. I would also like to know what the various stakeholders on both sides think of it so that it can be as practical as possible. We have to change the way we do things. We must not be afraid of change. We must accept it joyfully, because as a country, we have the opportunity to proceed progressively.

Whatever the government may think, I hope the parties on our side of the House will support the bill so it can go to committee as soon as possible.

[English]

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to support this bill. I would like to thank the hon. member for bringing it forward. It is a modest piece of legislation but it can end up in committee and be strengthened. I think that would be a good thing.

The important thing to note is that it is a very supportable piece of legislation and not just by the parties or speakers we have heard. I believe the government should seriously look at supporting this piece of legislation and getting it through quite quickly.

Wood and wood products are found in abundance right across this country, and it only makes sense that the Government of Canada through public works would make use of this renewable resource. It would assist the forestry sector.

In the 2010 budget, \$25 million a year for four years, \$100 million altogether is the only mention of forestry. I will also say there was no

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mention in the budget of northwestern Ontario or northern Ontario, or FedNor for that matter. The government is not much interested in the forestry industry.

What the government needs to keep in mind is that the forestry industry in Canada contributes as much to Canada's GDP as does the auto industry, for example. The government had lots of help for the auto industry in many ways. Of course, I do not begrudge the auto industry the help it received, but forestry is an industry that is coast to coast. Many small communities right across this country depend on forestry, and when I say communities I mean that families depend on forestry. It behooves us to do all we can to ensure that we keep these communities strong and ready to compete in the 21st century.

By the way, there is a large pulp and paper mill in my riding. I have a couple of them in my riding but there is one in particular that is quite large. That \$25 million mentioned in the budget would not even pay its annual electricity bill, just to put into perspective that \$25 million a year from the government.

The bill is a very meaningful one. It is modest. Public works provides office space for over 100 government departments in 1,800 locations right across this country. There are some real opportunities to make wood work for all Canadians, not just Canadians in the forestry sector, but all Canadians.

The Conservative government like the Liberal government before it neglected the forestry industry in the past decade. This bill could be of more assistance and have a greater impact on the industry and a greater impact on forestry dependent communities than all those other policies in the last decade. This is a very important piece of legislation and I am very committed to it.

There may be some who would say that we are going to be using wood above all else. That is not the intention of this bill, as I understand from reading it. The intention of this bill is to make people aware that wood is an alternative that we should be using. I will go into some of the reasons a little bit later.

I would like to assure other industries, the cement industry for example, that wood would be used as an alternative but only if the engineers and the architects and everybody else agreed that it could and should be used. I do not think other industries including the construction association and others should have a real concern at all about the impact this bill could have on their business. In fact, it may promote even more construction. I thank the hon. member for this bill.

We did have a lot of problems with U.S. subsidies. Last June the government made an announcement about \$1 billion. There was one mill in my riding that was supposed to receive \$32 million to help put a condenser in that would help save electricity and heat. Nothing has happened. I checked and no one seems to know where the money is, or if the money is coming. I do not know what is going on.

I am not sure we can depend on the government. It makes these promises and then nothing really happens.

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•(1825)

Members will have to ensure the bill gets all our attention and that we get it through as quickly as we possibly can.

Members have heard me speak before about the government trying to get the United States to end its subsidies or to match its subsidies as they come up. As one ends, there seems to be another one that returns. It is always a problem.

Let me briefly talk about why we should be building with wood in every opportunity. Using wood can limit climate change due to the reduced energy required to create wood building products and through carbon storage in the wood itself. Every tonne of wood material used in construction saves about 5.7 tonnes of carbon dioxide from being released into the atmosphere. That alone should be reason for all parties and members of the House to support the bill.

As we know, wood is strong, lightweight, flexible. Wood building systems have proven to be seismically safe. They withstand a lot of energy from the earth, and that is a good thing. Wood is organic. We all know it is sustainable. It is natural and renewable. Wood requires less energy to manufacture than most other building products. Wood is cost effective.

One of the most important things is that wood is sourced locally. People can get whatever wood product they need for building pretty well locally wherever they are building. That saves on energy, transportation costs, greenhouse gases.

•(1830)

Those of us who are in forest dependent communities and ridings know that wood is visually appealing. It is warm, inviting.

One important thing to note is that wood buildings and wood products in buildings are easy to renovate. When the time comes 20, 30, 50 years down the road, most wood actually gets better with age. If one does need to renovate, wood is a very adaptable material. It is easy to renovate, expand upon and adapt. For those reasons, all members should be looking very seriously at supporting the bill.

One of the problems Canada has had in the last decade or so, and particularly with the Conservative government, is a lack of a forestry strategy. It does not seem to be interested. This bill, when it is adopted, could be used within a forestry strategy. The problem is the government does not have a forestry strategy.

There does not seem to be any vision or assistance for the forestry sector except the occasional handout on budget day, meant to pacify people who are in forestry dependent communities. They are not fooled.

If the government actually had a strategy, if in fact it felt forestry was an important sector to protect and enhance and one that could grow, it would have fought to end U.S. subsidies or at least match them. It would have extended the proper and responsible kinds of EI benefits that older workers in particular need, whose shops close when they are not too far from retirement. There is no reason why employment insurance benefits cannot be used to bridge that gap to retirement for a lot of people.

The government has a responsibility to protect pension funds. It is interesting, last year the government talked about protecting workers' pensions. I do not believe there was anything about pensions in the budget, not even remotely.

There is a problem with the government not having a forestry strategy. However, I invite it now to make the bill if not a cornerstone to at least incorporate it into a forestry strategy. I am sure the government has thought about it, but we just have not heard it yet.

I urge everyone to support the bill as we do in the NDP.

•(1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today on this bill, especially as I worked so hard to ensure that a bill like this would be introduced.

I want to congratulate and thank the hon. member for Manicouagan for agreeing to sponsor Bill C-429 on the use of wood in the renovation and construction of federal buildings.

There are a number of reasons why the Bloc Québécois decided to introduce the bill. First, it sends a clear message about the opportunities afforded by wood technology and the resources we have in Quebec and Canada, in addition to stimulating wood consumption in Quebec and Canada.

In addition, there are environmental benefits to using wood in regard to greenhouse gas emissions and energy use.

I believe very deeply that the government has a moral duty to implement this measure on both economic and environmental grounds.

Bill C-429 says that the government shall give preference to the concept that promotes the greatest use of wood, costs being the same or less, when renovating or constructing a building.

This means that the federal government would use more wood in its buildings, thereby boosting domestic demand. In addition, the cost to the government would be absolutely nothing. My colleague and other members have spoken about that.

It is incredible that, despite all the appeals by the forest industry over the years, we are still calling upon the Conservative government today to do something to help it out.

The Quebec and Canadian forestry industry is currently going through one of the most difficult periods in its history. John Allan, the B.C. Council of Forest Industries president, said in his testimony before the Standing Committee on Natural Resources that the industry is currently experiencing an unprecedented crisis.

Guy Chevette, the president of the Quebec Forest Industry Council, said the same thing before the subcommittee on manufacturing, namely that the industry was in a very difficult state.

More than ever, major structural adjustments appear to be necessary to help the industry adapt to the current slowdown.

Bill C-429 is a partial response to this problem. The Quebec forest industry employs 88,000 people, a third of all the jobs in Canada. The forest industry is key to the economic life of entire regions in Quebec.

In Quebec, 230 towns and villages are primarily dependent on the forestry industry, and 160 of them are totally dependent on it. Nearly half of all forestry communities in Canada are in Quebec.

Since the Conservatives came to power, almost a third of Quebec forestry jobs have been lost. In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, 36% of the jobs have disappeared. It has been devastating. Some regions have been hit even harder. For example, Hautes-Laurentides has lost 58% of its jobs. One of the main causes of the crisis is the decrease in demand for softwood lumber.

The U.S. economy has slowed in the past few years, sending the home construction industry into a downward spiral. This has resulted in a significant decrease in lumber sales and prices.

A sense of urgency was shared by all participants at the summit on the future of Quebec's forestry sector held in Quebec City in December 2007. The consensus at this summit was that more wood should be used in the construction industry.

• (1840)

This is certainly not the first time we have talked about increasing the use of wood in construction. Bill C-429 offers an opportunity to take real action. The future of the forestry industry is important to my region. Last month, some twenty members of the Pastoral council in Chicoutimi forwarded to elected members from my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, the Maria-Chapdelaine RCM's manifesto to ensure the future of forestry. It contained a number of proposals: that the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region should continue to rely on forests to secure its future; that forestry resources should be processed near where they are harvested; that each RCM should be a necessary partner in exploiting and processing forestry resources; that all RCMs should have the right to make positive contributions to solutions affecting them.

I want to mention one of our colleagues, the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, who refuses to listen to the demands of forestry workers from my region and from the whole province. That is unacceptable.

Bill C-429 is an initial response to the Maria-Chapdelaine RCM's manifesto. Using wood to build public buildings is a good environmental choice. Consumer demand for ecologically sound products and governments' desire to protect the environment are important factors. Wood products can be substituted for products with high embodied energy that are at the mercy of rising fuel costs. Using wood is also a good way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a fact confirmed by several studies of a variety of building techniques. The wood processing industry uses far less energy than other industries, such as steel and concrete. Furthermore, trees help

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reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This is both a good way to reduce greenhouse gases and an immediate response to the environmental problems we are facing right now.

Several countries have put forward initiatives of that kind. In France, the Wood, Construction, Environment plan is designed to increase by 25% the market share of wood in the construction industry. This alone represents 14% of France's target under the Kyoto protocol. In New Zealand, the government introduced a program to neutralize the carbon footprint in public buildings. To this end, the government requires that wood and wood frames be considered as the main construction materials for government buildings of three stories or less in height. In Norway, increasing the use of wood is essential, and the government put in place a structure to promote and show the possibilities for the increased use of wood. Sweden and Austria also have similar initiatives. Personally, I have submitted a project to the Minister of National Defence.

At the military base in Bagotville, in my riding, hangar no. 2 could be rebuilt. This hangar could easily be rebuilt using wood. This way, the federal government would be setting an example and showing how easily it can be done. Across Canada, arenas are built. In Chicoutimi, in my riding, an arena was recently built using a lot of wood. The roof and walls are made of wood. That is unprecedented. At the Université du Québec in Chicoutimi, the medicine pavilion was built using wood.

I will conclude by saying that two provinces are currently on board in Canada, namely Quebec and British Columbia.

• (1845)

The latter province is even in the process of amending its building code to ensure that buildings of six stories—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired, and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am proud today to raise an issue that I raised in the House of Commons with regard to the Investment Canada Act, a real important issue for Canadians across this country. Some specific communities are suffering egregiously because of the government's handling of the Investment Canada Act and the way it is selling out Canada without any accountability.

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We all know there are issues with regard to the economy, which has been a challenge. I come from a community that has been devastated by the fiscal irresponsibility of the corporate sector in the United States and in Canada that has put workers on the front line.

When I specifically asked questions relating to the Investment Canada Act, the government changed the act through its budgetary process as opposed to a regular one, which is unacceptable. Also, through the Investment Canada Act the government has not been successful in ensuring that, when there are takeovers of Canadian companies, accountability exists to protect workers.

I recently had the chance to visit Sudbury with the members for Sudbury and Nickel Belt to see firsthand the consequences of a bad policy of foreign takeovers and what it has done to ordinary working Canadian families. I had a chance to go to the picket lines and speak with the workers who have been on strike for seven months with a company that was sold off from Canada's iconic mining divisions to a Brazilian company that basically operates from the other side of the hemisphere. It does not have the same type of relationship in the community and is trying to drive down workers' wages that were hard fought and make a significant difference to the community and families.

It is about the erosion of middle class Canada. It is about the erosion of the dreams that people have of working hard, being responsible and benefiting. It is an attack on a system that actually makes a lot of sense.

I am talking about the workers at Vale Inco who have been fighting to retain their nickel bonus. The nickel bonus is a benefit to them but also socially responsible to the corporate identity of the company. If the price of nickel is low, then the nickel bonus will be low for the workers. If it is higher, then they benefit in better times.

I want to point out the obvious truth of this. The mineral deposits that those Canadians extract belong to Canada and Canadians. It is something we have in trust for future generations and it needs to be recognized. We should have control of this.

Because of the lax rules of takeovers and the government's indifference, in fact the minister has shown a callous attitude toward the workers there, we now have a situation where people in Brazil are making the decisions about how we run our country. Ironically, they are making record profits. Billions of dollars are going to this company in Brazil at the expense of throwing workers out the door. It is unacceptable. It is unacceptable that the government remains silent on that.

The government will say that it is a dispute between the workers and the company so it cannot say anything about it. That is bunk because it was the Conservative government that decided, at the height of the auto crisis, to attack workers and their wages, saying that was the problem and the solution was to drive down their benefits and profits.

The government needs to come to the table, support those workers and ensure the men and women get back on the job. It should be strong in telling Vale Inco that because it is about the middle class in Sudbury, the surrounding area of Nickel Belt and other areas like Timmins and U.S. Steel in Hamilton that are paying the

consequences for this irresponsible government policy and the lack of enforcement for which the government is responsible.

Mr. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in my place to respond to the concerns expressed by the hon. member for Windsor West regarding investment in Canada and its impact on the Canadian economy.

In the original question, the hon. member claims that we are selling our companies to foreign speculators. Let me remind him that based on recent StatsCan data, many Canadian investors buy foreign-owned companies. In fact, over the past several years, Canadian companies invested more abroad than foreign companies have invested in Canada. In 2008 foreign-direct investments in Canada reached \$505 billion, while Canadian investments abroad reached \$637 billion.

Erecting barriers and restricting entry into the Canadian economy is not an approach that will ready Canada for the challenges ahead. In order to ensure that Canadian firms prosper domestically and continue to have access to investment opportunities abroad, it is important to adopt policies that encourage trade and investment. Investment, innovation and adaptation fostered by openness and competition are the primary drivers of productivity growth of our nation. Our ability to make the best use of our resources will determine our capacity toward improving Canada's standard of living.

We live in an era of economic globalization, characterized by new, enabling information and communication technologies, a substantial decrease in transportation costs, and an increasing number of countries open to trade and investment. Canadians need to adapt to a global market and take advantage of each opportunity, including deriving benefits from foreign investment.

There is no doubt that foreign investment is important for Canada's economy, as foreign companies introduce new technologies, ideas and skills, as well as new capital investment into our economy. A high level of investment from abroad is a signal that investors view Canada as a good place in which to do business. It also indicates that our business culture is open to new ideas, skills and leading-edge practices, and it is a vote of confidence in the business environment and the quality of the country's businesses.

Canada's economic success will be determined by how well we deal with the forces that are driving globalization. The hon. member for Windsor West is proposing more protectionism and suggesting that we close our economy to foreign investment and turn our back to potential opportunities for growth. This is not a viable option in a globalized world. Following such an approach will harm our ability to compete worldwide and hurt Canada's economic growth.

It is almost universally known that openness to international trade allows both citizens and firms to enjoy the benefits of competition and choice. We cannot turn back the clock. We must look forward. The government is proposing more openness to trade and investment. This will create more opportunities for our companies to access worldwide markets and provide Canadians with more and innovative new products and lower prices.

In the 2010 budget, the government committed to removing the existing restrictions on foreign ownership of Canadian satellites. This will allow firms to access foreign capital and know-how, and to invest in new and advanced technologies.

In closing, foreign investment contributes positively to our economy and is critical to Canada's long-term growth and prosperity. Ultimately, these investments lead to higher living standards for Canadians through better paying jobs, more innovation, more international trade, increased domestic competition, and lower prices to consumers.

● (1850)

Mr. Brian Masse: Madam Speaker, that is higher living standards for a select few. Let us talk about those select few from this particular company, Vale, where executive pay in the last two years has gone up 121%. Those executives have enjoyed the fruits and the benefits of a \$4 billion profit and a company that had around a \$13.2 billion annual profit in 2008. So yes, they have doubled their profit line. They went up 121% for those individuals and meanwhile the minister would not even stop for the men and women on the picket lines who are actually facing this with strike pay. They are trying to actually make things go by right now. All they want is the pre-existing relationship that historically has been very fruitful for both sides and is very balanced. The government has blown it and it needs to fix it. It needs to have a voice for those workers.

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I stand here in solidarity with Local 6500 USW President John Fera and Local 598 CAW Richard Paquin from Xstrata. They have actually negotiated a settlement to say to the government to take its responsibilities seriously and help the workers this time.

Mr. Mike Lake: Madam Speaker, I will remind the hon. member that, despite the fact that the global economic situation has caused difficulty and hardship for many people who have lost jobs, Canada is the best country in the world in which to live because of actions taken by this government in addressing this issue.

The OECD, the World Economic Forum, the IMF, and other organizations and experts have said that Canada will come out of this global slowdown sooner and stronger than other countries. We are already seeing evidence of that in the most recent job numbers. We heard from Nobel prize-winning economist Paul Krugman, who said:

We need to learn from those countries that evidently did it right. And leading that list is our neighbor to the north. Right now, Canada is a very important role model.

I will close by quoting Patricia Croft, who works for RBC Global Asset Management and summed up what many of the experts have said when she said, "In terms of the global comparisons, Canada is the envy of just about every other country in the world".

● (1855)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:56 p.m.)

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