



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, April 1, 2010**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

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

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, April 1, 2010

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### DOCUMENTS REGARDING MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among all parties and I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to table approximately 6,200 pages of documents relating to the mission in Afghanistan.

I also want to say that these documents are without prejudice to the question of privilege currently before the House.

Finally, let me say and assure all opposition members that should unanimous consent be granted, copies of all of these documents will be provided immediately to opposition parties for their examination.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to table these documents?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 41 petitions.

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### DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION ACT

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867 (Democratic representation).

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

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following five travel motions.

I move:

That, in relation to its study of medical isotopes, 12 members of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources be authorized to travel to Chalk River, Ontario, in the spring of 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip 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)

### HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to its study of the federal contribution to reducing poverty in Canada, 8 members of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities be authorized to travel to Lac Simon Reserve and Kiteisakik Reserve, in the province of Quebec, in the spring of 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip 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)

### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to its study on young farmers and the future of farming, 8 members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food be authorized to travel to Kelowna, British Columbia; Brooks and Crossfield, Alberta; Lanigan, Saskatchewan; and Warren, Winnipeg and Portage La Prairie, Manitoba; in the spring of 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

*Routine Proceedings*

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip 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)

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to its study on young farmers and the future of farming, 8 members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food be authorized to travel to Quebec City, Quebec; Kentville, Nova Scotia; Sussex, New Brunswick and Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island; in the spring of 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip 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)

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to its study on young farmers and the future of farming, 8 members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food be authorized to travel to London, Strathroy, Guelph, Warton and Meaford, Ontario, in the spring of 2010 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. chief government whip 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)

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**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 10, 12 and 52. [Text]

Question No. 10—**Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to the Airport Soundscape Consultative Committee for Montreal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport, of which Transport Canada is a member, and as a follow-up to the October 5, 2009 letter from the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to the honourable Member from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine: (a) what have been the exact measures implemented over the last 15 years by this Committee designed to minimize aircraft noise around Montreal's airports; and (b) what impact have these measures had on minimizing aircraft noise around Montreal's airports?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows: (a)

During the December 1998 Airport Soundscape Consultative Committee, it was decided that the approach path angle for runway 06L was to be increased to 3 degrees from 2.5 degrees, thus ensuring that aircraft are at a higher altitude while flying over Dorval and Pointe-Claire. Since February 1999, turbojets departing runway 24R must climb to 4000 feet before turning right. This higher altitude, compared to the previous 3000 feet, results in noise reduction of 3 dBA for the Beaconsfield and Pointe-Claire residents. In 1999, in order to increase the altitude at which Boeing 747 fly over residential areas, the operators of those aircraft were advised to review their operational procedures to ensure a minimum rate of climb at take off. In 1999, the preferential runway for night landings was changed to 06R instead of 24R. By flying over Lake St-Louis instead of over the residential areas of Montreal and Ville St-Laurent, fewer residents are affected by the noise.

Starting April 1st, 2000, exemptions to restricted hours were not granted for delays due to mechanical defects. In June 2000, amendments to the general aviation flight takeoff procedures were made so that departing aircraft operating between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. and flying over industrial areas would avoid Montreal's residential areas. In 2000, implementation of a noise awareness program for air traffic controllers was put into place. In March 2001, a new exemption program to restrict hours of operation for mechanical problems was introduced. This program only applies to chapter 3 aircraft, the most modern and quieter types, and allows the operators to extend their operating hours by one hour in case of real and documented problems. An annual quota was established at 200 exemptions, which will be prorated according to each airline's movements. This procedure gives greater flexibility to airlines without increase in the total noise footprint.

In 2003, changes were made to the preferential runway procedure for day flights. Until then, with westerly winds, jets were taking off on runway 24L and landing on 24R, causing noise disturbances to a group of Dorval's residents. The procedure was therefore changed to allow a number of take offs from 24R. In September 2006, a new preferential runway system was implemented for night flights. When there are favourable winds, departures take place in priority from runway 06L, followed by a left turn over highway 13; and landings take place on runway 06R. Residents of South Dorval, who were usually overflown by departing aircraft between 11:00 p.m. and 07:00 a.m., are now overflown by landing aircraft and Cartierville residents are overflown by departing aircraft. On February 9, 2009, since two of the performance criteria were not met, the historical priority runway system that was in effect prior to September 2006, ascribing priority to Runways 24 between midnight and 7 a.m., takeoffs and landings toward Lake St-Louis, was reinstated.

(b) After the implementation of the February 1999 procedure requiring that turbojets departing runway 24R climb to 4000 feet before turning right, studies have shown a reduction of 3dBA for residents living under the flight path.

According to Aéroport de Montréal's annual report published in May 2009, "the most recent Noise Exposure Contour NEF 25 shows that the noise footprint at Montreal/Trudeau was 32.3 km<sup>2</sup> in size in 2007, representing a 60% decrease from 1995. During the same period, the number of residents living under the noise footprint has decreased by 83%, from 107,333 to 17,902. Airlines retiring older and noisier chapter 2 aircraft and replacing them with a new generation of modern, quieter and better performing airplanes and the implementation of noise abatement procedures are the factors that contributed the most to this improvement."

The noise exposure forecast, NEF, mentioned in Aéroport de Montréal's report is produced to encourage compatible land use planning in the vicinity of airports. A NEF 25 contour represents the area within which Transport Canada does not support or advocate residential housing.

Question No. 12—**Hon. Marlene Jennings:**

With regard to canola and canola-related products manufactured in Canada: (a) do these products contain any genetic use restriction technologies (GURT), also known as "terminator technologies"; and (b) have these products ever in the past contained any genetic use restriction technologies?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows: (a) No applications have ever come forward for the regulatory approval of any plants, including canola, with GURT traits in Canada.

(b) Plants with GURT traits, including canola, have neither been planted in research field trials nor commercialized in Canada.

Question No. 52—**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:**

With respect to the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, what discussions regarding the reservation of tickets for purchase by Members of Parliament have occurred (i) within the department of Canadian Heritage, (ii) between the department of Canadian Heritage and the Privy Council Office?

**Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the 2010 winter games provided a rare opportunity to further domestic, international and business relations and to showcase Canada to the world.

In accordance with the terms of the multiparty agreement signed by the previous Liberal government in 2002, 2010 winter games partners, including the Government of Canada, GoC, and other government partners in the games had advance access to purchase 2010 Olympic and Paralympic winter games tickets at face value.

The government has made it mandatory that all members of parliament, House of Commons and Senate, pay for their own tickets. The cost of these tickets will be fully cost-recovered by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Tickets were paid for by the ticket holders, not the Canadian taxpayer.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

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

#### Routine Proceedings

Question No. 69 could be made an order for return, this return would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 69—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With respect to the Listeriosis Investigative Review: (a) what is the status of each of the 57 recommendations contained in the report of Sheila Weatherill released in July 2009; (b) who did Ms. Weatherill interview; (c) were any of those interviewed provided with any or all of the report prior to its being completed by the investigator; (d) what are the names of all consultants as well as all seconded staff from any other federal department or agency who assisted the investigator; and (e) what was the total cost of the investigation including the cost of staff, contracts, travel and rents?

(Return tabled)

\* \* \*

• (1010)

[English]

#### PETITIONS

##### CLIMATE CHANGE

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition signed by numerous residents of Guelph. They know that 350 parts per million is the number that leading scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Exceeding that limit will seriously endanger our food, water and ecosystem security.

My constituents implore all federal parties to engage and participate in proactive, constructive environmental solutions by passing the climate change accountability act to spur the government into action.

The government said in the throne speech, "Nowhere is a commitment to principled policy, backed by action, needed more than in addressing climate change". The reality, of course, is that the Conservative Party has sabotaged global environmental progress through its obstructionist tactics at the Copenhagen climate summit and completely failed to address this issue in Canada.

I present this petition on behalf of my constituents. I have a second and third petition as well.

##### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I also present a petition signed by my constituents of Guelph who are seeking federal action to strengthen animal transportation regulations. Animals that become injured or diseased during transport both suffer and threaten the quality, health and safety of Canadian food products. Canada's allowable animal transport times are among the longest in the industrialized world and are not consistent with scientific findings on animal welfare during transport.

*Routine Proceedings*

This petition calls on the Government of Canada to amend the animal transportation regulations under Canada's Health of Animals Act to be consistent with the findings of the EU scientific committee on animal health and welfare.

In October I seconded Bill C-468, sponsored by the member for Brossard—La Prairie, to improve the lives of Canadian farm animals during long distance transport and to protect the health of Canadians.

My constituents believe that the current regulations are outdated and in need of revision, and I present this petition on their behalf.

**Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Finally, Mr. Speaker, I present a petition signed by my constituents of Guelph who wish the Government of Canada to support a universal declaration on animal welfare. There is scientific consensus and public acknowledgement that animals can feel pain, and all efforts should be made to prevent animal cruelty and reduce animal suffering.

Over one billion people around the world rely on animals for their livelihood, and many others rely on animals for companionship. I present this petition on behalf of my constituents in support of the universal declaration on animal welfare.

[Translation]

CANADA POST

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions from my riding today, one from the people of Trois-Rives and one from the people of Hérouxville.

The petitioners are calling on the government to maintain its moratorium on closing rural post offices. They join thousands of other petitioners across Quebec who are urging the minister responsible for Canada Post to maintain postal services in rural areas. These services are very important to the people there, as are the hundreds of jobs involved.

It is clear that the public truly wants to retain these rural post offices.

CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERIC SCIENCES

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to present a petition today, calling on the Government of Canada to reinstate funding to the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences.

The petitioners want the government to know that university climate research is primarily funded by the foundation in question and that, since 2008, despite a number of requests, the government has still not renewed funding.

So far, no other granting body has committed to taking over for the foundation in funding climate science research.

Interruptions in funding for climate science may cause experts to leave Canada and some research groups to shut down. It takes decades to develop such groups, and their disappearance would not only negate the significant investments of time and money made in the past but would also be wasteful if ongoing research projects could not run their course.

The loss of Canadian expertise in climate science would decrease our ability to predict and adapt to climate change.

For these reasons, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reinstate research funding to the foundation, without making changes to its mission or directions.

● (1015)

[English]

NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to present a petition today with signatures of residents from right across the GTA in support of North Korean refugees.

The petitioners are concerned about the plight of refugees from North Korea who have escaped North Korea, gone to China, and are then routinely being sent back to North Korea. Members will know there is an appalling disregard for their human rights and they are punished by the brutal North Korean regime.

The petitioners call upon the House of Commons and the Government of Canada to support the NDP Motion No. 383 and vigorously participate in the effort to support these refugees from North Korea and ensure that they are not sent back to North Korea, but instead are sent to South Korea or other safe havens.

AIR PASSENGERS' BILL OF RIGHTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. Thousands of Canadians are calling on Parliament to adopt Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights. Bill C-310 would compensate air passengers with all carriers, including charters, anywhere they fly in the world.

The bill provides compensation for overbooked flights, cancelled flights and long tarmac delays. It addresses issues such as late and misplaced bags. It requires all-inclusive pricing by airlines in all of their advertising. The airlines have to inform passengers of flight changes, either delays or cancellations. The new rules have to be posted at the airport and the airlines must inform passengers of their rights and the process to file for compensation.

This type of legislation has been in effect now in Europe for five years. Why should Air Canada passengers receive better treatment in Europe than they do flying in Canada? If the airlines follow the rules, it will cost them nothing. The petitioners call on the government to support Bill C-310, which would introduce Canada's first air passengers' bill of rights.

## EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by dozens of Canadians, calls on the Canadian government to match funds personally donated by the citizens of Canada for the earthquake victims in Chile. As the House knows, on February 27 an 8.8 magnitude earthquake occurred in southern Chile. The Chilean-Canadian community has been mobilized in Winnipeg. They have put on two very successful fundraising events in the last few weeks.

When will the Prime Minister and the government give the same treatment to the earthquake victims in Chile as they did for the earthquake victims in Haiti and match funds personally donated by Canadians to help the earthquake victims in Chile?

## CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by numerous citizens from new Brunswick and the east coast of Canada calling on the government to carry out a human rights impact study when it comes to free trade with Colombia. They are saying to the government that we need a fair trade agreement with Colombia, not a free trade agreement.

I would impress upon all members of the House to realize that there are literally tens of thousands of people who are signing petitions when it comes to Bill C-2, the free trade bill on Colombia, formerly known as Bill C-23. Even though we have seen it stop and start again, Canadians across this land from coast to coast to coast are clearly saying no to Bill C-2.

They are saying that we need a human rights impact study carried out before we enter into any agreements. I am pleased to present this on behalf of them.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, following up on my colleague from Welland, I too am presenting a few hundred names of petitioners who are concerned about the Canada-Colombia trade deal. It is important to note, particularly for Liberal members, that all of these petitioners come from the riding of Kings—Hants and the region of Wolfville. Those petitioners profoundly disagree with the member of Parliament for Kings—Hants, who has tried to give a rubber stamp to this trade agreement.

Colombia has the worst record in the world for killing labour activists, and forced and violent displacement of rural Afro-Colombians and aboriginal people. Because of that horrendous track record and all of those reasons, these petitioners are calling upon Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia trade deal until an independent human rights impact assessment is carried out. These few hundred constituents of Kings—Hants are asking Parliament to reject the deal.

**Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I too have petitions from the riding of Kings—Hants. The petitioners want the government to stop this bill that would have Colombia access Canada through the free trade agreement.

The petitioners call on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia trade deal until an independent human rights impact assessment is carried out and to negotiate the agreement along the principles of fair trade, which would take environmental and social impacts fully into

*Points of Order*

account while genuinely respecting labour rights and the rights of all affected parties.

Like I said a while ago, these petitions are all from Kings—Hants. There is a PS on this petition. The petitioners would like to know when their member of Parliament is going to start listening to them.

\* \* \*

● (1020)

## POINTS OF ORDER

BILL C-304—SECURE, ADEQUATE, ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT

**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 with respect to the admissibility of an amendment to Bill C-304, An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians, which was adopted by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities on December 8, 2009.

On Monday, March 22, 2010, the committee agreed to re-adopt its report on Bill C-304 that was agreed to in the previous session on December 10, 2009. On March 24, 2010, the committee's report on Bill C-304 was tabled in the House.

The amendment appears as clause 3.1 in Bill C-304 which states:

The Government of Quebec may choose to be exempted from the application of this Act and may, if it chooses to do so, receive an unconditional payment equal to the total of the amounts that would otherwise be paid within its territory under this Act.

During the committee's clause-by-clause consideration of Bill C-304, the chair ruled that this amendment was inadmissible on the grounds that it was beyond the scope and principle of the bill agreed to at second reading. The chair stated:

...Bill C-304 provides for the minister responsible for CMHC to consult with the provincial ministers to establish a national housing strategy. This amendment proposes to allow the Province of Quebec to opt out of the national strategy. As *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, states on page 766, "An amendment to a bill that was referred to a committee after second reading is out of order if it is beyond the scope and principle of the bill".

In the opinion of the chair, the introduction of this opt-out provision is contrary to the principle of Bill C-304, and therefore is inadmissible.

Mr. Speaker, Bill C-304 would require the development of a national housing strategy. Clause 3 of the bill would require the responsible minister to consult all provincial and territorial ministers on the development of such a strategy. Amending clause 3 to allow a province to opt out of a national housing strategy is inconsistent with the purpose of the bill and with clause 3 in particular.

There is no suggestion in the bill as adopted at second reading to support the addition of a provincial exemption from the national strategy. Obviously, such a change would fundamentally alter the purpose of the bill.

*Privilege*

I regret that opposition members on the committee overturned the chair's ruling and the amendment now appears as clause 3.1 in Bill C-304, as reported to the House.

I would note that the chair's ruling on Bill C-304 is similar to the October 20, 2005 ruling of the chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages on an amendment to Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act. That ruling stated:

I'm informed that amendment BQ-1...is inadmissible. That may be explained by the fact that Bill S-3 reinforces the binding nature of the government's obligations across Canada whereas this amendment is contrary to that spirit. Instead of reinforcing it, it instead provides for different treatment for Quebec.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to Bill C-304 is beyond the scope and principle of the bill agreed to at second reading. Therefore, clause 3.1 of Bill C-304 should be ruled out of order.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is the first we have heard that the government's objection would be raised this morning. We are in no position to respond at this time.

I would ask that you hold any decision until we can respond, which will probably be after the break.

**The Speaker:** That is fine. I will give the hon. member time to come up with a response to the argument advanced by the parliamentary secretary.

Is the hon. member for Saint-Jean rising on a point of order?

\* \* \*

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

**PRIVILEGE**

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE  
CANADIAN MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I listened carefully to what the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and the Minister of Justice had to say about the question of privilege I raised concerning the December 10, 2009 motion.

I would first like to respond to a point raised by the parliamentary secretary. He claims that the government does not have to comply with the motion of December 10, 2009, because it is not an address. He quoted from page 1121 of O'Brien-Bosc to support his claim. I would like to quote another passage from the same page:

It is the responsibility of the Speaker to ensure that the motion proposed is appropriately worded so that it can achieve what it intends to do.

On December 10, 2009, which was a Liberal opposition day, the House debated and adopted an order to produce papers. Early that day, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader tried to have that motion ruled out of order, without ever saying that it was improperly drafted.

When you ruled on the issue on December 10, 2009, you even talked about the scope of Parliament's power to obtain documents, and you quoted the following passage from pages 978 and 979 of O'Brien-Bosc:

The Standing Orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the type of papers likely to be requested; the

only prerequisite is that the papers exist—in hard copy or electronic format—and that they are located in Canada.

...

No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in the House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records.

By bringing forward new arguments, the parliamentary secretary to the leader of the government is trying to have the motion ruled out of order and inoperative after the fact.

He concluded his speech by needlessly stating that you cannot unilaterally change the wording of a motion once it has been adopted by the House. That goes without saying.

But it also goes without saying that you cannot rule a motion out of order and inoperative once it has been adopted by the House, especially almost four months later.

If the parliamentary secretary wanted to argue about the wording of the December 10 motion, he should have done so before it was passed. But, he did not do that.

And now, I would like to briefly respond to the Minister of Justice's arguments. The minister is saying, first, that there is no prima facie question of privilege and that the government has taken the necessary measures to provide the documents requested.

In saying that there has been no prima facie breach of privilege, the minister is claiming that the members have not been prevented from doing their jobs.

I believe that the minister is asking the wrong question. Obviously I raised a question of privilege, but that was to bring your attention to a situation which is related to contempt of Parliament.

In this case, there are two questions: is there a House order related to producing documents? And is the government, acting through the ministers who have these documents, refusing to comply with this order?

This debate over whether the members have been kept from doing their jobs is not pertinent in this matter. If you were to decide that it is pertinent, it seems to me that members are being prevented from doing their jobs.

The majority of members agreed that the House should pass an order to produce documents so they could have access to the necessary information and hold the government accountable on the Afghan detainee issue. The members still do not have access to these documents and, consequently, are unable to do their jobs.

• (1030)

Lastly, the minister alleged that the matter of which documents should be made available to Parliament was debatable, thereby demonstrating his complete lack of understanding of the role of this House. The fact is that the government must be accountable to Parliament. Parliament has broad powers and the means to compel the government to respect those powers and deliver accountability.



*Government Orders*

During my last interventions, I discussed at length the House's power to compel the government to produce documents. I quoted a number of authorities to support my argument, and I will not revisit that today.

The matter before the Chair today is fundamental. This is not just a difference of opinion or an issue up for debate. This is about preserving Parliament's power to hold the government to account. Subordinating Parliament's power to the government's whims regarding information it provides to Parliament is the same as subjugating legislative powers to executive powers. This is not a matter for debate. This is about ensuring that the House can play the part assigned to it by the Constitution.

I am not a fool. The two statements we heard yesterday, which came two weeks after the point of privilege was raised in the House, are nothing but another government delay tactic. No matter what the Minister of Justice says, the government is not acting in good faith on this issue. It has used every parliamentary tactic available to prevent the opposition from getting to the bottom of things on the Afghan detainee file.

I think that we have heard all of the arguments on this subject. That is why I urge you, Mr. Speaker, to rule as quickly as possible on these issues.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we heard a very long presentation yesterday by the Minister of Justice and some remarks by the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader. To give those arguments their due, I would want to have some time to respond. I do say that I agree principally with what has been said by the member for Saint-Jean. You have already ruled that the order itself that was before the House was in order and the references that you made there to the powers of Parliament are sufficient to deal with the issue. I will say also that the powers that Parliament does have in the reference given there are very broad, extremely broad, and only require explicit limitation in order to be limited.

The question before you I think is rather simple; that is, whether or not on the face of it, *prima facie*, there was a violation of that order. I think it is fairly obvious that there was.

I do want to say that because a substantial list of references was made in the remarks, particularly in the speech by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, I would not want to limit my argument to simply saying that this is a very basic question. I would want to be able to give a detailed response to the references that were given and make a more lengthy and cogent argument when we return after the Easter break.

Having said that, I would ask for indulgence to do that and make a more full argument when we come back.

**The Speaker:** Yes, the Chair is quite willing to wait to hear the hon. member's submissions.

The government took its time, as the hon. member knows, in coming back to the House after the initial submissions made by the two hon. members who have just spoken and the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

[*Translation*]

Given the importance of the subject of this question of privilege, I think I shall have to exercise patience, so that we may hear the hon. members' interventions on this.

[*English*]

It will happen whenever we get back and I look forward to the hon. member making his comments at that time.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from March 31, consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is an opportunity today to talk about this inaptly named jobs and economic growth recovery act since it is my view that the government has had virtually nothing to do with this recovery, notwithstanding a great deal of back patting that seems to go on by those on the side opposite.

Members might have noticed a pattern over the years of the Prime Minister not being overly fond of those who contradict him, especially those who used to be his best friends.

The people at the Fraser Institute, which is well described as a right-wing think tank based in Vancouver, used to be among the Prime Minister's best friends, at least they were until recently when they were on the receiving end of the Prime Minister's wrath. Why would the Fraser Institute, which is hardly a bastion of liberal thought, be on the receiving end of the Prime Minister's wrath? Well, it produced an analysis of the recovery which showed that the stimulus moneys that the government put into the economy which ran up the debt had virtually no impact on the recovery of the nation.

I do not know whether I should admit this in public, but I read the Fraser Institute publications and sometimes I agree with them and sometimes I disagree with them. They are generally well written, fairly piffy and generally provocative. It behooves us all to read widely, even those with whom we disagree. The Fraser Institute has even from time to time been so generous as to invite me to speak at one of its functions. I suppose from time to time it needs a token Liberal at one of these functions, but I appreciate its generosity in inviting me. I do not know whether in fact I will be invited again. I do have the tie to prove that I was at one point an invited speaker. I regularly wear it to any funeral I go to.

What is it that has actually caught the Prime Minister's wrath? I will quote from Niels Veldhuis of the Fraser Institute, the senior economist and one of the study's co-authors. He says:

Although the federal government has repeatedly claimed credit for Canada's improved economic performance in the second half of 2009, Statistics Canada data show that government spending and investment in infrastructure had a negligible effect on the country's improved economic growth.

Home reno tax credit's impact 'negligible'.

### *Government Orders*

That is notwithstanding its popularity.

The report's authors say they're not surprised by their findings, noting that infrastructure spending takes time to work its way through the system.

"The fear now is that spending on infrastructure will occur as the economy naturally begins to grow, meaning that government will be competing with the private sector for resources, resulting in increased costs and fewer private-sector projects", Veldhuis says.

He goes on to question the stimulative value of the renovation tax credit which was, as he says, a "popular measure", but it had a "negligible impact" on the GDP growth in the second half of 2009.

He goes on to say that "less than a tenth of the \$47.2 billion in the stimulus package was earmarked for personal income tax reductions", which the Fraser Institute argues was a far better method for economic stimulus.

He further states:

What we see now is that the stimulus packages put in place by Canadian governments in 2009 created massive government deficits, resulting in increased debt while contributing little to the economic turnaround.

That is what made the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance so exercised. This self-described right-wing think tank, formerly the best buddies and soulmates of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, had the audacity to say that the "emperor had no clothes". It is not a good idea to criticize the finance minister or the Prime Minister if one expects to retain the best buddy status. The institute said that the impact of the stimulus package was negligible, which really hurts coming from friends.

• (1035)

What we do know is that the Conservative government has run up the debt by \$165 billion, \$49 billion in this year alone. That is the hard, cold fact directly from its budgetary documents.

What we can say for sure is that \$165 billion has been loaded onto future taxpayers instead of any kind of a realistic plan. Instead of actually dealing with the runaway freight train, that is, the expenses of the government, it has postponed decisions and will continue to postpone decisions.

The closest the government gets to a decision is the \$17.5 billion so-called savings measures, money that it was going to spend but are now not proposing to spend. The biggest component of the money it was going to spend and is not now going to spend is the money for the world's poor, \$4.5 billion. So \$4.5 billion of the \$17.5 billion, somewhere in the order of 20% to 25% of the entire package, will be loaded on people who do not vote, who cannot vote and who live in other countries. That is kind of an easy decision to make if the government really wants to show it is semi-serious about getting costs under control.

The other biggest hunk is the \$6 or \$7 billion for the civil servants. These are the ones who were hired to implement the jobs and growth agenda which, arguably, according to the Fraser Institute, has had a negligible impact, and they are being fired or will be fired or anticipate being fired as part of the so-called savings. Therefore, \$6 or \$7 billion out of the \$17.5 billion will be put onto the backs of the civil servants who were actually hired to implement the plan that does not work.

Even one of the Prime Minister's former speech writers, Michael Taube, had some rather uncomfortable things to say to the Prime Minister. He repeats the material from the Fraser Institute, and states

...the 1.1% GDP growth between the second and third quarters of 2009, stimulus spending and government consumption "played a negligible role in the economic turnaround" and only accounted for 0.2%. Meanwhile, the 1% GDP growth between the third and fourth quarters was "solely responsible" due to net exports, and not stimulus spending and government consumption.

The PM also said the Fraser Institute report was "completely wrong," and "economic theory and history is clear, governments.... So much for [the Prime Minister's] reputation as a free market champion. ... The [the Prime Minister's] I knew supported the economic theory and history models of small government, private enterprise supporters such as Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek. Apparently, he's now switched over to Paul Krugman.

Interestingly, I had an opportunity to talk to Mr. Krugman and ask him whether there was a model to show that if in fact one puts *x* number of billion dollars into an economy whether it can be identified as actual economic growth out of the economy.

If the government is taking taxpayer money and putting it into the economy of the nation, how does it measure that there is something that comes out the other side, or does it simply just run up a debt and have no product at the end of the day?

Mr. Krugman was not entirely forthcoming as to what that model would look like. I dare say that Mr. Krugman and the Fraser Institute might actually, from both sides of the economic spectrum, be able to argue quite cogently that if one is a Keynesian person, one cannot actually measure the economic product, and from the right-wing side of the equation, whatever measurement is there is negligible and one may well have just wasted all one's money.

Mr. Taube goes on to say:

But to take distinctly un-conservative positions after his stimulus spending's net benefit was shown to be insignificant by an important Canadian conservative think-tank isn't a wise strategy.

Kool-aid Conservative supporters might be happy with [the Prime Minister's] mock outrage. But red meat conservatives are tired of these shenanigans.

• (1040)

Mr. Taube is a former speech writer for the Prime Minister.

That is what the Conservatives' friends are saying. What do they get for their analyses? Mr. Taube or the Conservative think-tank get epithets from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. They call it shabby, wrong, contradictory, poorly done, et cetera. What we get are vitriolic attacks, which is what we see in this place, rather than any reasoned debate.

The Prime Minister actually had the courage of his convictions saying that he or the finance minister would table the analysis that shows that the stimulus spending impacted on the economy in a positive way, in which case we could probably put the argument to rest or, better still, let the Parliamentary Budget Officer look at it. Of course, that is not too likely since the Parliamentary Budget Officer is used to being attacked by the finance minister.

*Government Orders*

The Parliamentary Budget Officer certainly did not get any kudos from the finance minister on March 11 when he said that the plan lacked detailed information and that he disapproved of the overall characterization of the economy and would not characterize the government's methods as a prudent basis for fiscal planning. His most significant point on March 11 was that he lacked the detailed information and data that the government was using to make its projections which found their way into the budget and which subsequently found their way into the legislation that is on the floor of the House.

It is not as if the Parliamentary Budget Officer disagrees with private sector economists. He generally accepts their propositions. What he does not agree with, because he does not get the co-operation from the Minister of Finance, is how the Conservatives got from there to here. What it produces is the stuff that the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Budget Officer agree on and the product that the finance minister produces for his budget. The Parliamentary Budget Officer is rightly asking how they got from here to there and they answer by saying that they cannot tell him. That is pretty useless because if they cannot tell him, how can there be a reasoned debate as to whether the projections are correct?

We have the Fraser Institute arguing on the far right that whatever money has been spent has had a negligible impact, a speech writer saying the same thing, Mr. Krugman saying that there is no real economic model and then we have the Parliamentary Budget Officer being frozen out of the data or the modelling that would take him from the agreed upon point, which is the consensus data put forward by the private sector economists, to the product we see in the budget.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has been an irritation to the government and the Minister of Finance for quite a while now. In 2008 and 2009 he consistently and accurately projected shortfalls and/or surpluses earlier than the Minister of Finance. Even when the Prime Minister was predicting a surplus in 2008, which just happened to coincide with the election, by the way, the Parliamentary Budget Officer said that there would be a deficit.

What are we supposed to do with this sort of thing? In 2008 the Prime Minister said that there would not be a recession in Canada and that we would be fine so long as we did not do stupid things, such as running a deficit. Then he suggested in October that there were good buying opportunities for Canadians. In November 2008, his failed economic statement promised a surplus for the next five years. Twelve days later he was contradicted by the Bank of Canada and announced that we were in fact in a recession. In December he had run up a deficit of \$20 billion to \$30 billion.

From September to December, a space of 90 days, we went from a surplus prediction by the Prime Minister/Minister of Finance to a \$30 billion deficit. In January it was up to \$40 billion, by the summer it was up to \$56 billion and I think in this budget it settles itself down to about \$54 billion.

● (1045)

The credibility of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance in terms of predicting surpluses and deficits has been shot. They will not share with the Parliamentary Budget Officer the reason for their "optimism". The Fraser Institute seems to indicate that whatever moneys have been spent are having a negligible impact.

Their own view, their own ideological base, is quite upset with them because they have squandered \$165 billion in accumulated deficits. The response on the part of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister is to launch vicious ad hominem attacks, which is of course a pattern we have seen for quite a while.

I want to contrast that with the handling of the monetary policy by Bank of Canada governor Carney. Mr. Carney's handling of the monetary policy during the same period was, in my view, a masterful job. When we are dealing with an economy, we have the monetary on one side and the fiscal on the other side. The fiscal is what the Minister of Finance controls and the monetary is what the governor of the Bank of Canada controls.

He had a judicious eye on the economy and manipulated the interest rate to maximize the benefit to the economy. Keeping an eye on inflation and the interest rate, he intervened in the market from time to time to buy up stranded debt and to improve liquidity. At all times, he did it in a respectful manner. At all times, he came before various parliamentary committees to tell them what he was doing, how he was doing it and the result he expected.

He did not at any time attack those who disagreed with him. There were those who did disagree with him. There were those who thought his analysis of the economy was somewhat rosy at one point. Others thought he was a touch too pessimistic. Others thought it was going to go up, then it was going to go down and then it was going to go up again. I do not know how it all turns out. In all instances, the governor of the Bank of Canada kept his cool and responded respectfully to inquiries. Even when there was disagreement as to whether or not he was being too optimistic, he kept the dialogue thoughtful and respectful.

Contrast that with what we get in this place. It is kind of a scorched earth policy that comes true when we are having dialogue about what is arguably the most significant responsibility of government, which is the management of the economy. What we get here is the first and ultimately most disrespectful thing: the prorogation of Parliament. If I am the Prime Minister and I do not like what Parliament is saying about whatever it is, why not just shut down Parliament? We saw the result of that. I dare say the Prime Minister will be pretty loathe to shut down Parliament again anytime in the near future.

We get the disrespect of shutting down Canada's chief nuclear officer, Linda Keen. We get the disrespect for Peter Tinsley, the military ombudsman who brought unwelcome news about various things. We get Paul Kennedy, who was engaged in a pretty significant study with respect to the RCMP, being fired summarily. We get disrespect for Canada's diplomatic corps and Richard Colvin, who said things that were "off message". We see the disrespect for KAIROS. These folks were engaged in human rights activities that the government thinks they should not be involved in, so they were fired at midnight after 35 years of hard work.

The list goes on and on. We saw Scott Clark, the former deputy finance minister. We saw Ed Clark, formerly an official in the Department of Finance, who had the temerity to say that we should possibly be having an adult conversation about what revenues the government actually needs to do what it needs to do.

*Government Orders*

What do they all have in common? They have the courage to say what they think. As a consequence of their courage in saying what they think, there have been malicious, ad hominem attacks.

This is a democracy chill. It is a free speech chill. Frankly, it is no way to run a country.

•(1050)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the ongoing commentary of many people who have commented on the budget, and quite frankly, I found it very negative. I am surprised the hon. member is so negative today, because ordinarily I feel he is a fairly positive contributor to the discussion.

I am sure the hon. member is aware that Statistics Canada announced yesterday that, for the fifth straight month, our GDP in Canada has grown. In fact, in January we experienced the largest increase in our GDP growth since December 2006, and we know that was a really strong growth period.

Also this week, the global accounting firm KPMG ranked Canada as the most competitive industrialized country for job creation.

I have two questions for my colleague. First, could he name one G7 country that has fared better in this global economic recession than Canada?

Second, will he support the measures in the budget, such as ensuring fairness for Canadian taxpayers by closing tax loopholes and freezing parliamentarians' allowances and the salaries for parliamentarians?

•(1055)

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, it is as if I just spent the last 20 minutes talking to a wall, because the hon. member has missed the point.

The point is not that Canada is or is not doing well in its GDP. We are doing relatively well relative to the G7. The point is that you had nothing to do with it, and these are your best friends who are saying —

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** I would remind the hon. member to direct his comments to the Chair.

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, the government had nothing to do with the economic recovery. Contrary to the federal government's claim, the analysis shows that government spending and investment in infrastructure simply did not contribute to the improvement in economic growth. That is from their friends, not from our side. That is from their best friends.

What we have at this point for sure is \$165 billion in new debt. What we have for sure is that Canadians should not count on their government to bail them out anytime soon, because these guys do not know what they are doing.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member, who spoke so courageously. He emphasized the courage of those who must talk to this government, and that is what he did. I commend his courage and the support he

has shown the Parliamentary Budget Officer, who is also very courageous.

A great deal could be said about this budget. My colleague from the official opposition will have so much to present that I must ask myself why, when they know they must be an alternative, they vote against the budget when they support it and vote for the budget when they oppose it. I am rather shocked to hear so many good, critical comments so courageously made by our colleagues to the political right.

It is worth noting that the member stood up to vote against the budget. But how can he explain the lack of courage shown by so many members of his caucus?

[*English*]

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to say that the Liberal Party, which is the official opposition, will not be creating political instability based upon this budget. As a consequence we will, somewhat reluctantly of course, be required to make sure the government wins its vote. How we do that is a matter of our own discretion.

I want to point out that in our view the incompetence of the government is manifest. The recovery that is taking place and the green shoots that are growing have nothing to do with the management of this economy on the fiscal side. On the monetary side, the governor of the Bank of Canada has been brilliant. He has managed things very well. Unlike my hon. friend, who does not have to worry about things such as Canadian political instability, we do have to take the more responsible course.

•(1100)

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Madam Speaker, that last comment reminds me of an old CCF description of a Liberal as someone who sits on the fence with both ears on the ground. I think that has been proved true today.

The value of any budget is measured fundamentally by whether it helps people. The people of British Columbia are measuring this budget based on whether or not it creates well-paying jobs for their families, whether it helps them to educate their children and to take care of their parents, whether it makes their pensions more secure and whether it improves the development of Canada's industrial economy.

With respect to the measures I see in the budget, although there are some positive elements in it and I think the government ought to be congratulated for that, there are aspects in the budget that fail to meet the requirements of ordinary Canadians.

I think it is best expressed by the phrase, "We will be out of this recession when Canadians have jobs".

My question for my hon. friend is this. How does he feel the budget does in relation to helping Canadian families and, specifically, creating jobs, it being called a job budget by the members opposite?

**Hon. John McKay:** Aside from the preamble, Madam Speaker, the question was quite good.

*Government Orders*

There is an active conversation, particularly on the business pages but throughout the rest of the newspapers, as to a jobless recovery. We are still hovering around 8.5% to 9% in some places, and actually some are more inflated than that because many people have just given up looking for jobs.

While there are economic indicators that look good, while there is recovery in GDP on a quarterly basis and things of that nature, while exports are up, while the dollar is strong and a number of other economic indicators, which are good for our nation, there does seem to be a lag between Bay Street and Main Street.

It is one thing to keep Bay Street happy. It is another thing altogether to make sure Canadians are participating entirely in this economic recovery. I would hope that would follow. I frankly see little or nothing in the budget or the bill before us with respect to that.

I take note of the observation of the Fraser Institute, which says that as the stimulus money now gets into the economy too late, it will actually compete with the private sector and therefore ratchet up the cost of the projects and also create some difficulty.

There are some ironies of not putting in the stimulus in a timely and effective fashion, which is what we argued this time last year.

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I wish I had more time to try to make some common sense out of what the hon. member is suggesting, using one singular quote.

I have stacks and stacks of quotes from all across the country that say that indeed our stimulus spending was effective in creating jobs, was effective in helping the rebound in the economy.

However, because my time is very limited, let me read one from Peter Dungan who is a business economics professor at the Rotman School of Management. He said, "Private investment largely came from housing, which was stimulated by the home renovation tax credit". I hope the hon. member utilized it, unlike his colleague. "Exports were driven by the automotive sector and without the government bailout that wouldn't have happened".

To say stimulus spending had no effect is not true. Does the member categorically—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood has 40 seconds to respond.

**Hon. John McKay:** Madam Speaker, I am amused by the hon. member's ability to pat himself on the back and talk at the same time.

If he wants to get into duelling quotes, we will get into duelling quotes, the simple point being that he is representing the Minister of Finance in the House. If he is convinced that the government's activities on the stimulus side actually produced economic activity, which led to GDP growth, which hopefully will lead to jobs, then he should put it on the floor.

• (1105)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Order, please. The hon. member for Laval on a point of order.

[Translation]

**INVISIBLE WORK DAY**

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That this House highlight the importance of the so-called "invisible" unpaid work done by parents and caregivers on behalf of their children and aging family members by creating "Invisible Work Day";

That the first Tuesday in April be designated "Invisible Work Day" in recognition of the important role this type of work plays in society;

That, following the example of UN member nations at the international conference in Beijing in 1995, this annual event be a time to emphasize the extent of unpaid work in Canada.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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**JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT**

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on the adoption of her motion.

Allow me to begin my speech by focusing on three excerpts from speeches by our learned colleagues who spoke just ahead of me.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance praised previous budget speeches saying that the automotive sector received special treatment and it paid off. According to him, the automotive sector did fairly well.

However, he did not say a word about the forestry industry; not one word. Why is that? Because there was absolutely nothing for the forestry industry. I agree with what he said about the automotive sector, but there was nothing for the forestry sector, which is a key sector in Quebec.

The second excerpt I agree with is from the speech by my hon. Liberal colleague. He said that the government before us is extremely incompetent. The Bloc and I agree with that statement.

The third excerpt is the one where he said he did not want to trigger an election because he did not want to create instability with the election of the Liberal Party. At least, that is what I understood. We agree: the election of the Liberal Party would create instability in Canada.

*Government Orders*

This budget speech was very disappointing. Let us get back to the budget implementation bill; unfortunately, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against it. We voted against the budget and will vote against the budget implementation bill quite simply because this budget is all about sparing the rich. It does everything possible to save business from contributing. It does everything possible to avoid fixing the problem of tax havens. It will even allow certain corporations not registered in Canada to avoid paying taxes in Canada on their transactions. The budget also meddled with telecommunications firms, as if it did not matter whether or not Quebec and Canada lose control of their telecommunications companies. The Conservatives do not care. Furthermore, the budget contains a certain number of items, such as the partial privatization of Canada Post, that will come about eventually.

We do not agree with some of the measures that have been proposed and now made official in this budget implementation bill.

We also do not agree because we have consulted Quebecers. We have suggested that they seize the opportunity. We toured extensively throughout Quebec and met with people who were very pleased to talk to us. Everywhere we went, we received a warm welcome from many people. They agreed that those who have more should be asked to contribute more. It is a simple principle: clearly, those who have more can contribute more.

Thus, we made a number of suggestions. We proposed that Canadian taxpayers who had taxable income last year of more than \$150,000—after basic deductions—should pay 2% more. An additional 2% for those earning \$150,000 amounts to \$3,000. We also suggested that those with taxable income of more than \$250,000—one quarter of a million dollars, that is not peanuts—should pay a 3% surtax.

● (1110)

And \$7,500 is a lot of money, but not for someone with a taxable income of more than \$250,000—a quarter of a million dollars—a year. We asked them to make this wartime effort, if we can call it that. But it was not even mentioned. The government did not implement any of these socially-useful measures.

We also proposed that tax havens be eliminated, particularly those used by the chartered banks. We did the research to back up our proposal. Canadian chartered banks have to publish an annual report each year, and their fiscal year ends on October 31.

We now have all the information. On page 121 of Royal Bank's annual report, page 149 of CIBC's, page 152 of BMO's, page 129 of Toronto-Dominion's, page 133 of Scotia Bank's and page 144 of National Bank's, we see that all of these chartered banks comply with the Minister of Finance's directive and indicate the tax amounts saved by using tax havens. If these amounts had not been placed in tax havens, these institutions would have been paying money into the treasury of Canada.

Any of these amounts can vary from year to year, ranging from \$1.6 billion to \$2 billion to \$2.5 billion. It depends on profits and how they are used. Why does the Minister of Finance not take from the rich what he is asking of the poor?

During the National Bank of Canada's annual meeting yesterday in Montreal, president Louis Vachon said that the financial sector,

and the banks in particular, have been very vocal about the need to fix public finances.

He was referring to the Quebec government's finances as much as the Government of Canada's finances.

He added that everyone clearly has to do their part, including the banks. He is not the only one to say that. Jacques Ménard, whom everyone in Montreal, Quebec and Canada knows, is the chairman of BMO Nesbitt Burns and president of the Bank of Montreal or BMO Financial Group in Quebec. He is well respected. He said the banks have a responsibility as economic players and also as citizens.

Jacques Ménard, president of the Bank of Montreal in Quebec, is prepared to pay out of his own pocket. I imagine his taxable income is greater than \$250,000. As the head of a bank he is telling the government he is prepared to make an effort.

There is nothing of the kind in the budget implementation bill.

What is more, we have noticed that non-residents are getting a free ride. In a number of cases, they will no longer be charged the withholding tax.

● (1115)

It will be possible for Canadian corporations using tax havens such as Barbados to make transactions through corporations in Canada without having to pay withholding tax. At the end of the day, by using off-book accounts and financial entries, these corporations could go all over the world with one, two or three foreign subsidiaries in tax havens and, presto, they no longer have to pay any tax. This government is making that possible and legal.

We did our tour, after which I submitted a document to the Minister of Finance himself during a meeting that was pleasant, I must say. The parliamentary secretary was there. We discussed the document. They told me they would look at it. They must not have been wearing their glasses because they did not look at it the way they should have.

Since there clearly are problems in the way pension funds are managed, the budget implementation bill will allow overcapitalization to go from 110% to 125%. That is good. We have indicated that we agree with the Department of Finance and the Government of Canada's overture, but why stop at 125%? And why change the five year standard when this again favours businesses? Why only allow the unfunded liabilities to be covered and go up to 100% after being on the brink of underfunded pensions?

If it happened once, it could happen again. We made the following suggestion: instead of just covering the deficit, why not go higher, up to 100%, 105%, 110% or 120% of the capitalization needed to fund the pensions? There is nothing in here about that except the possibility of going from 110% to 125%, which we commend.

*Government Orders*

Another item raised a number of questions in the House. I will not use the coarse language the hon. member for Outremont used, even though he was right. His question followed those of the leader of the Bloc and my own on the government's treatment of Quebec in all this, not just when it comes to equalization, but transfer payments as well.

This government, with the former Ontario finance minister in charge of public finances, is doing everything in its power to strangle Quebec's finances. That was obvious from the answers to our questions, and it is also obvious in this budget in which there is practically nothing about the transfers we would like to see increased for Quebec. On the contrary, in the fall of 2008, during the Quebec election campaign, this government introduced a drastic change without telling anyone. For the current year, this change will cost the Government of Quebec—this was mentioned in the Quebec finance minister's budget speech two days ago—\$350 million, while at the same time providing Ontario with up to \$600 million more.

What can we call this pillaging of the EI fund? We have made outstanding proposals. Some of my colleagues from the Bloc have suggested improvements to the employment insurance system. Of course, this comes at a price, but at the same time we suggested ways to fund these improved EI programs.

• (1120)

As we can see in this weighty budget implementation bill, the Minister of Finance, in his wisdom, noted that it was in fact \$57,170,356,000 that was plundered under the previous government. They are boasting about how terrible what the Liberal government did was, saying that it should be ashamed to have snatched funds from the EI account.

They are right. From 1996-97 to 2008-09, the Liberal Party literally siphoned off \$57 billion, and that time period includes the first few years that the Conservative government was in office. Time and interest aside, if we divide \$57 billion by the number of years during which this plundering took place, we get an average amount of \$4,764,196,333 per year. That is how much the Liberal Party stole from employers and employees, from the EI fund, when it was in office.

How will the Conservative government manage this program? The Conservatives say that they now have a commission. I understand; all the money comes from employers and workers. The government does not contribute a cent. None of this money comes from taxes.

The government puts the premiums under revenues and the benefits under expenditures. The difference between the two for the next four years is \$19.2 billion. In four years, the government will steal \$19.2 billion from Canadian employers and workers. If we divide that amount by four, that is \$4.8 billion per year. The plundering of \$4.8 billion every year by the Conservatives is right up there with the \$4.764 billion the Liberals took when they were in power.

This is another example of what we mean when we say two faces, one reality. Successive Canadian governments have literally stolen from employers and workers because not a single cent comes from Canadian taxes. These are contributions to an insurance plan. If this

insurance plan were run by a private company and the company were taking money like this, its managers would be in jail. Who is doing this plundering now? I will let my colleagues guess.

This bill has some 800 pages and several parts. It is a huge bill, and that is not uncommon. Anyone who works in finance is used to this kind of beast.

Part 17 on financial cooperatives is worrisome, since cooperatives can or could be regulated by the Bank Act and the federal government. We will examine this issue more closely with the heads of Mouvement Desjardins in Quebec, in order to determine whether the cooperative movement in Canada, and particularly in Quebec, got what it was asking for from the Government of Canada.

If not, the federal government will once again have control over the cooperative financial sector in Quebec, an exceptional sector that is recognized worldwide.

• (1125)

[English]

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I certainly will not have time to address all of the misinformation that was in the member's speech, but early in his speech, he made a comment that we have helped the auto sector but have neglected the forestry sector.

I want to remind him and all Canadians that our economic action plan was clear in providing a total of \$170 million over two years to help in the support of market diversification and innovation initiatives for the forestry sector. There was also \$1 billion to help the pulp and paper green transformation program. This is helping the industry to become a leader in the production of renewal energy from biomass and it creates and sustains jobs.

In addition to the economic action plan, budget 2010 builds on those important investments by providing \$100 million over the next four years to support clean energy generation in Canada's forestry sector. On top of that, the Business Development Bank of Canada has provided \$300 million in loans to Canadian forestry companies since 2008.

I have two questions for the member. Did the member read the budget? If he did, why is he opposed to these measures that will clearly help the forestry sector? In fact, these measures were suggested by his party in the prebudget consultations.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Madam Speaker, I most certainly have read the budget. In fact, I have read it more than once.

What he said about help for forestry is so true that it should be right there. On page 259, where it says "Supporting Industries and Communities", that is where it should be.

*Government Orders*

According to the table on page 259, the auto industry gets \$9.718 billion. The number is right there. Under “Forestry marketing and innovation”, it says that the sector got \$68 million last year and may receive \$108 this year. That is a total of \$176 million, while the auto sector gets \$9.718 billion. It that is not what it means to compare the numbers, then I am not sure what is. It is right there in his budget.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Madam Speaker, clearly, the government is looking for a way to get itself defeated and cause an election. We have an omnibus bill here, an 880-page bill that was dropped on our desks a couple of days ago. There are provisions in this bill that really have nothing to do with the budget.

For example, the government has taken the issue of post office remailers, which was before the House last year under two other bill numbers, and it has put it in this bill. It has also cut the heart out of the federal environmental assessment act, basically an oil company's dream.

Those are the types of measures the government has put into this document. It is trying to hide in this bill measures that it cannot get passed through the House on their own. To me it is nothing more than putting poison pills in this bill so the government can ensure there is an election and the Conservatives can say that they were not the ones who caused it, when in fact, it would be the Conservatives who caused it.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Madam Speaker, that does indeed take a lot of nerve.

We read the document—all 800 and some pages of it. I agree with my NDP colleague. Indeed, I am sure that my NDP colleagues also took the time to read the whole thing so that they could discuss it in detail during parliamentary committee meetings. What a great idea to throw a brick like this out there. In light of this morning's tabling of Afghanistan documents, it is clear that the government is trying to hide needles in haystacks.

My NDP colleague knows that he can count on the Bloc members to work hard with the support of the NDP to find all of the needles in the Conservative government's haystack.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Madam Speaker, the disturbing part, parallel to the budget announced yesterday, was that the home energy retrofit program had abruptly ended.

I will read a very short sentence from the *Globe and Mail*, which states:

The federal budget released on March 4 promoted the program. “Due to unprecedented demand under the ecoENERGY Retrofit—Homes program, the government is allocating a further \$80-million to support additional retrofits by Canadian homeowners...”

It sounded nice, yet if people did not get their applications in by yesterday, abruptly, with no notice, no warning, all of a sudden they were out of luck. In theory the program goes for an additional year from now, but in reality it is done.

At a time when most people and most scientists in the world recognize the most important investments we can make are in energy retrofits and energy conservation, the Conservatives, for some bizarre reason, even by their own standards, have suspended this precipitously.

Would the hon. member care to comment on the value of this program and whether this makes any sense?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Madam Speaker, the government unfortunately does this sort of thing all the time. In 2008, for example, while an election campaign was under way in Quebec, the government changed the equalization rules with no warning. Now, it has put an end to this program; people had to get their applications in by yesterday. It is like the infrastructure program. On November 1, all the municipalities in Quebec were in the midst of an election campaign. This meant that the municipal councils could not meet, yet in order to take advantage of the infrastructure program, they had to fill out reams of paperwork by early January, which was a huge task. In addition, all the infrastructure projects will have to be completed by March 31, less than a year from now, 364 days to be exact. That makes no sense.

This government sends up balloons, but then shoots them down before they can float back to earth.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Madam Speaker, I found it very mysterious that the government dropped the home renovation tax credit program, a program that was advertised a lot last year. It said that the program was one of the huge successes of the government. Finally, just after the first year of success, it simply dropped it from the program.

Will we see that program announced in the upcoming election campaign?

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé:** Madam Speaker, I have a slightly different opinion than my NDP colleague, who says that this government had a good idea. It was not the Conservatives' idea, but the Bloc's. The Bloc suggested this to the Conservatives last year.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I am glad to speak to Bill C-9, which gives effect to the budget announced by the Conservatives. Some of what the bill contains was in the budget and some was in the throne speech. The bill also includes provisions that have been mentioned in various forums in recent months.

Since I have only 20 minutes or so, I will not be able to go over all 800 pages of the bill. I am going to focus on certain items that fuel substantive debates in the House and illustrate members' different views on ideology and governance.



*Government Orders*

I would like to start by talking about the tax cuts for Canada's most profitable corporations. The Liberal Party and its leader are recent converts to the idea that we need to start handing tax cuts to major corporations more slowly. Last weekend, at a conference in Montreal, the Liberal leader discovered the merits of what the NDP has been talking about for the past three months.

I would like to give a little background to those listening to us, to help them understand the whole picture.

The Liberals were relegated to the opposition benches at the beginning of January 2006, which means we are beginning our fifth year of a minority Conservative government. There was a leadership race within the Liberal Party, and the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville was elected party leader.

In a now infamous speech he gave before the Economic Club of Toronto, the new leader was intent on finding an angle. The Liberals, who consider themselves the “natural governing party” and are used to being in power, were searching for ways to understand what went wrong during the election. They told themselves that perhaps the Conservatives were getting a little too friendly with their usual Bay Street base. So they decided to accuse the Conservatives of not acting quickly enough on tax cuts.

Last weekend, the same Liberal Party wondered why corporate taxes were being cut. The leader at the time—the Liberals have had five leaders in five years—the hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, went before the Economic Club of Toronto and slammed the Conservatives for not cutting corporate taxes quickly enough. That was enough for the Conservative finance minister—the same one as today—to rise in this House with a smirk on his face and announce that without this push from the Liberals he would never have had the temerity to move so quickly on corporate tax cuts.

The resulting financial woes will affect Canada's public finances for generations to come. They created \$60 billion worth of tax room by refusing to give back what the Liberals pilfered from the employment insurance fund.

The Liberals now admit it and the Conservatives criticize them endlessly. For the last three days in question period, the Minister of Finance pointed at the Liberals, saying that they were the ones who pilfered, who stole, \$60 billion from the employment insurance fund. The problem is that Bill C-9 only finishes the job started by the Liberals. The government is going to slam the door shut and finish off the pilfering that it admonishes the Liberals for.

Some may wonder what difference it makes that the \$60 billion that the Liberals called a “notional” amount was transferred. It is just obfuscation, as though the \$60 billion could be anything else. They said that this notional amount was transferred from the EI fund to the consolidated fund, the government's general revenue fund.

However, there is a fundamental difference between the employment insurance fund and the government's consolidated revenue fund.

• (1140)

In fact, all Canadian companies and their employees have contributed to the employment insurance fund. If a company

recorded a loss, it did not matter; it still had to contribute to the employment insurance fund. However, only a company with enough profits to pay tax was required to fork over corporate taxes into the general revenue fund.

In other words, the same companies—primarily the forestry and manufacturing industries, which suffered greatly because of the high dollar—that had not turned a profit and that did not have to pay tax could not benefit from the \$60 billion in tax cuts given to the most profitable companies. And yet, each and every one of these companies paid for every single one of their employees, and every employee contributed to the EI fund. It is somewhat like what happens in China where those to be executed are forced to pay for the bullet. The manufacturing and forestry companies that were already suffering believed their contributions would be used for a very specific, precise and dedicated purpose. They were robbed and pillaged by the Liberals, with the benediction of the Conservatives, to provide the tax room to give tax breaks to more profitable companies.

This means that those who paid, who suffered because of the high dollar, supported the rich, particularly those in the oil industry in western Canada. Some companies, like EnCana in Alberta, received hundreds of millions of dollars, like money falling from the sky, in rebates it did not ask for because it was already making huge profits.

This is what happened with the money from the manufacturing companies in Beauce, which have since had to close their doors. The sawmills in the lower North Shore, the companies in northern Ontario and the forestry companies in British Columbia saw their money being used to help the oil industry in the west and the banks, which turned around and used that money to generate their highest profits ever. In the fourth quarter of 2009, the last three months of 2009, Canadian companies saw their profits increase dramatically, except productivity in Canada is still in a major slump.

The first thing that comes to mind when we talk about a slump in productivity is to think we are suggesting that Canadian workers are not working hard enough. No, we are not talking about the individual productivity of Canadian workers, who are among the most productive in the world. That is not what we are talking about. We are talking about the productivity of the company. What kind of equipment or machinery has it purchased? What has it done to make itself more competitive? Canadian companies held onto the cash they received in the form of tax cuts, because that is what it means to lack vision, to not believe in the government's role in the economy.

Since the second world war, Canada has built a very balanced economy, from coast to coast to coast. We are the only country in the world that borders three oceans. We are making serious mistakes in Canada right now, because the Conservatives, despite their minority status—having just over 30% of the vote—are being kept on life support by the Liberals, who, once again, made a nice speech against the budget today. However, they will hide just enough of their members, their cowards, behind the curtains so that the budget will pass. The same budget that they have not stopped criticizing.

*Government Orders*

Because the oil sector does not factor in the environmental costs of production, it is bringing an artificially inflated number of U.S. dollars into Canada. This has the pernicious effect of increasing the value of the Canadian dollar, which is now at or very near parity with the U.S. dollar. The high Canadian dollar is once again limiting our manufacturing and forestry companies' export opportunities.

● (1145)

The higher the Canadian dollar, the harder it is for other countries to buy it because it is more expensive.

But the Conservatives will not be swayed. They are completing a series of pipelines to the United States. They plan to ship crude from the oil sands through pipelines called Keystone, Alberta Clipper, Southern Lights and Enbridge.

Here in Quebec, the Trailbreaker project would have—yes, “would have”, because we are now joining together to put a stop to it—reversed the flow of a pipeline linking Montreal to Portland, Maine. There are plans in the works to build a massive pumping station in Dunham, in the Eastern Townships. Because the substance is tarry and sticky, it will not flow unless it is under more pressure, which means that the pressure in this 60-year-old pipeline will have to be increased considerably. The last time they increased the pressure, sections several kilometres long around Sutton burst. Ecosystems in the area are very large.

These pipelines are located near and beneath several watercourses that must be protected. The Conservatives, aided and abetted by the Liberals, made this choice because they are determined to export oil as quickly as possible. Their choice would also have led to the closure of the Shell refinery in Montreal, which would have resulted in the automatic loss of 800 direct jobs and 3,500 indirect jobs, as well as the death of a significant portion of the petrochemical sector in Montreal, leaving thousands of families jobless. Many of them would have been forced to leave the area. That would have been a major blow to Montreal's petrochemical sector. Everyone—except for the Conservatives, of course—is banding together to try to save the Shell refinery in Montreal.

In light of everything the Conservatives have done, it is clear that the government's vision is flawed. It plundered the employment insurance fund and used that money to give the most profitable companies tax breaks. These choices are aggravating a vicious cycle in which the high Canadian dollar is making things harder and harder for our exporters.

But the Conservatives will keep acting that same way, just like when we used to export untreated logs to the United States and it came back to us as furniture manufactured there. In doing that, value was added there, as were jobs. Among the pipelines that I mentioned earlier, Keystone alone represents 18,000 Canadian jobs lost. That is not our statistic, it comes from an independent external study.

But they are determined to start exporting. My colleagues know as well as I do that under the so-called proportionality clause in the North American Free Trade Agreement, once the flow has started, it cannot be stopped, not even a little bit, without the same restriction being enforced on us. We are currently playing with Canada's energy future, but they do not care about that either. Their one and only

focus is quick development. That is why they are not acknowledging the costs.

If I took my colleagues to visit a factory where a certain product was made, if I told them it was being made cheaper here and if I convinced them to buy it, saying that it sells well but they noticed that all of the factory waste was dumped in the river behind the factory, they would say that the price of the product was not the true price, that the price did not take into account the fact that waste was being put into the river instead of being disposed of safely, at a cost. Everyone is capable of understanding that environmental costs need to be included in the price of a product. Everyone, that is, except the Conservative Party.

Not only are the Conservatives passing on to future generations a fiscal debt of \$50 billion this year—instead of building something that will last and is sustainable, something related to green, renewable energy—but they are also leaving a gross debt. They are building arenas and cutting ribbons; they are putting doorknobs in churches and cutting ribbons; they are rebuilding parks and cutting ribbons. But none of that will last, none of it is long term.

● (1150)

Their priority is clear. The NDP's priority is also clear: have government play a constructive, objective, positive role in corporate governance in order to restore the economic balance that was destroyed by the Conservatives, with the Liberals' complicity.

Environmental assessment is another aspect of Bill C-9 that I want to focus on, in keeping with our concerns about the oil sands.

Eighteen months ago, not long after the fall 2008 election, the Conservatives came out with their infamous draft economic and fiscal update. When they denied women the right to equal pay for work of equal value and gutted the Navigable Waters Protection Act, the Liberals supported them.

We voted against both these measures, even though that might have triggered another election. The Liberals kowtowed to the Conservatives as usual and voted with them. About 18 months ago, the Liberals joined with their partners, the Conservatives, to gut the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which had been in place for 100 years so that we could leave something for future generations. They completely scrapped that law.

This year, they are trying to finish what they started by doing away with environmental assessments for most projects that receive federal funding. Several provinces have rather weak legislation and no way to conduct real inspections and assessments. The Navigable Waters Protection Act was the only way some provinces could have an assessment done. Quebec solved this problem with the federal government a long time ago. A federal assessor sits at the table with the BAPE, and this arrangement works very well.

I signed an agreement with David Anderson, who was the last Liberal who cared about the environment. He was succeeded by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, and the rest is history.

*Government Orders*

I cannot believe we are seeing the Liberals make the same mistake. I would like to remind the House of a salient fact in the history of the Liberal Party. It is worth noting, since we saw Eddie Goldenberg at the thinkers' conference last weekend in Montreal. Eddie Goldenberg, former chief of staff to Jean Chrétien, said in a speech before the London Chamber of Commerce, in Ontario in the spring of 2007, that the Liberals had signed the Kyoto protocol "to galvanize public opinion".

He admitted that the Liberal government of the day signed that protocol as a public relations exercise. It persisted and signed. He said the Liberals had no intention of meeting the targets set out in the Kyoto protocol.

Last weekend in Montreal, we saw Eddie Goldenberg pontificate on the Liberal Party's destiny. There is only one thing the Liberals want: to come back to power.

The Liberals in the first and second rows are waking up with a start and asking themselves: am I a minister yet? Then they realize that they are still in opposition and that they have only 75 seats. They go back to sleep, hoping that next time they wake up, their dream will have come true.

There is no renewal, there are no new ideas, no substance, no worthwhile ideas. They are here simply to support the Conservatives, waiting until it is their turn to take over.

We have the Liberal leader saying: "people are looking for an alternative", having forgotten that he is supposed to be just that. There is only one alternative progressive voice in Canada: the New Democratic Party.

• (1155)

[English]

**Mr. Ted Menzies (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened with great intent to my hon. colleague who sits on the finance committee with us. He is a good contributor to the debate at that table. However, I remind him that the majority of his speech was totally irrelevant to the debate on Bill C-9. He spent a great deal of his time talking about how much he hated the oil sands and how much he seemed to hate my great province of Alberta for its contribution to this entire economy.

I might remind the hon. member that 23 billion litres of gasoline every year is consumed by Ontario and his province of Quebec. It has to come from somewhere. Is it not better that it comes from a Canadian company that has high environmental standards and, I would argue, the highest environmental standards in the world? I remind him that his own home city of Montreal, as much as he chastised Alberta for its environmental record, dumps raw sewage to the amount of three billion cubic metres every year into the St. Lawrence River. We do not do that in Alberta. We have two of the cleanest cities in Alberta.

We have also noted lately that the largest investment of the Caisse de dépôt, and I am sure the hon. member's former pension is tied up in that, is in the oil sands in Alberta.

The member talked a lot about taxes, but he forgot to mention that we cut 100 different taxes since we came to power. We cut \$3 billion off personal income tax. This is not the big bad corporations to

which the hon. member keeps referring. This is the personal income taxes of the people who voted for that hon. member.

Could the hon. member comment on the remark by his colleague from Thunder Bay, "There are elements in our party that have not been adequately concerned about the health and growth of businesses?"

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, I remind my colleague that all of my remarks were directly related to Bill C-9, which deals with employment insurance. He should know that, but obviously he has not had a chance to read it yet, which is surprising since he is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. This is the subject on which I spent most of my time making my remarks. The bill also deals with the scrapping of environmental assessment in Canada.

He is alone in believing that the tar sands are a good example of environmental management. Whether it is *National Geographic*, which I do not think is an NDP publication, or whether it is major environmental groups around the world, everyone who has taken a look at the largest and longest sands in the world are holding back the worst pollution ever created on the planet, and nothing is being done to treat it.

Maybe his argument is that the ducks do not really die, that they are decoys just floating upside down in the water, but future generations will pay for that. His children and his grandchildren will pay cash on the barrel to clean up that mess because he does not have the political courage to include in the cost of a barrel of oil from Alberta the cost of cleaning up the environment, and that is cheating. It is cheating the Canadian economy because it pushes the Canadian dollar ever higher.

He is also cheating his own province because people in his province are getting sick. The only answer they have ever had is to prosecute the medical doctor who had the courage to describe and denounce the rare forms of cancer that were starting to appear, especially among the first nations population at Fort Chip. That is one of the most grotesque examples of the distinction that exists between the Conservatives' discourse on future generations and their actual behaviour. They all love to—

• (1200)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie):** Questions and comments, the hon. member for Hochelaga.

[Translation]

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Madam Speaker, yesterday during this debate, I had the opportunity to ask a question of the hon. member for Macleod, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

I asked him what he thought of the bill introduced by his Minister of Finance, Ontario's former finance minister, to abolish corporate law and financial advisor positions, among others, and eliminate any future career prospects for many students in faculties of commerce both in Quebec and Alberta. Obviously, I did not get a response. My colleague for Outremont is more accustomed than I am to asking questions and not getting answers.

*Government Orders*

With all due respect to our kind colleague from Macleod, I wonder whether I should ask my colleague from Outremont the following question. What is the opinion of the NDP and my colleague from Outremont on this shameful decision by the Conservative federal government to literally shut down securities trading in Quebec and in Alberta, the home province of the Prime Minister and the parliamentary secretary? I would like the NDP's opinion on this and on the fact that financial markets fall exclusively under Quebec's jurisdiction.

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Madam Speaker, my colleague from Hochelaga raised an issue that shows the hypocrisy of the Conservatives. It would, of course, take much more than 800 pages to back that up.

Let us recall the private jet chartered to travel to a Tim Hortons to preach about government spending. We all remember that. Let us also recall that, when they were Reformers, the Conservatives decided to opt out of a federal pension, but now that they have become Conservatives, they all want in. However, they are doing nothing to help the workers at Nortel or AbitibiBowater, ordinary people, who are losing their pensions.

Securities are another example of the hypocrisy of the Conservatives, who, we will recall, brought to this House the recognition of the Quebec nation, but have been making sure ever since that any real recognition is undermined. The only thing they are doing with respect to the Quebec nation is vote against having bilingual judges at the Supreme Court, which they did just yesterday, vote against the recognition of the Quebec culture by the CRTC, vote against any aspect of the Quebec reality and scrap the securities industry in Quebec. That is disgraceful.

Today, we have another example, with this attempt to reduce Quebec's representation in Parliament without any substantive discussion, without proper analysis and without providing any opportunity to explain what the community of interest concept, as developed by the Supreme Court of Canada, is all about.

It is indeed a long, sad chapter in the history of this Parliament when we look at the incredible and self-righteous hypocrisy of the Conservatives.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I came here after the last election so I am new to the House, and the dysfunctionality around this place still boggles my mind.

The budget is huge. I have read most of the estimates which was quite the task.

I could ask the honourable and eloquent member for Outremont about jobs, infrastructure, the environment, natural resources, energy, women, child care, pensions, seniors, et cetera, but I would like to ask him to help me to understand the big picture.

Maybe I do not understand what is going on, but when I look at the budget, I see over the next several years an increase of \$50 billion in revenues coming from the average citizen in Canada and an increase of only \$10 billion in projected revenues coming from big corporations. I see 9.4% of revenues coming from personal income taxes and only 1.7% coming from corporate income taxes.

Could the hon. member explain to this newbie if this is ideological stupidity or if it is more nefarious than that?

•(1205)

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair:** Mr. Speaker, this budget implementation bill sees the Conservatives, with the culpable complicity of the Liberals, completing the theft of \$60 billion from the employment insurance fund. It is that which gave them the fiscal room to provide the \$60 billion in corporate tax reductions. It is no coincidence that we also have a \$60 billion debt that we are leaving to future generations. That is short-sightedness and incompetence.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was just catching up on my reading of the Speech from the Throne and the budget just to make sure that my comments will be accurate and statistically correct.

The Conservatives call Bill C-9 the jobs and economic growth act. As my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood said earlier, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River and others are what we call the Scarborough team. We have been exchanging our views about what we have been hearing from our constituents and what happened at the forum the other day. At the University of Toronto Scarborough campus we hosted a meeting with respect to Canada at 150 to get input from all Canadians. Not to get off track, but the session I hosted had to do with health care. As I have said in previous presentations, health care seems always to be the number one concern for Canadians, and so it was again.

Getting back to the jobs and economic growth act, the Conservatives could have given the bill a different title. One could ask what jobs and economic growth we are talking about. What in the world is the government referring to? All people have to do is listen to the news and commentaries, read the statistics, see the types of jobs being created, see why we are losing jobs and why we are not being competitive for the jobs of the future and the will understand why I am being a little, one might say, cynical about the bill's title.

There is no real job growth. There is no real economic growth. The government pulled up a statistic. All one has to do is tune in to the news to hear the sentiments of Canadians. They do not see anything. They are not confident for today or for the future. They do not see any positive impact on their lives. I will point out why they feel that way.

Canadians are not optimistic for the future and our overall economy because they have no confidence not just in what is happening but they have no confidence in the Prime Minister and, as a result, no confidence in the government. When people are asked why, they say it is simply because there is no trust. They say that the government says one thing and does the other.

For example, the government talks about investing in the jobs of the future and the green economy. In reality, it has not invested in the jobs of the future. If anything, it has cut back on the jobs of the future.

*Government Orders*

Researchers have asked over and over again for support. I have data here and I want to be accurate. They have asked for support and unfortunately, the support is not there.

The government talks about creating jobs. The Minister of Finance has said in the past that EI premiums, or EI taxes, as they are often referred to, are increasing and are an impediment to creating jobs. We agree with him wholeheartedly. Employers have told us repeatedly to lower the rates and they will invest in creating jobs, retooling, modernizing, new equipment, et cetera.

Unfortunately, in the budget the government will be increasing EI premiums to the tune of almost \$13 billion. That is almost a 35% tax hike. That is going to cost the average individual almost \$900. At the same time, it is going to have a negative impact on companies, to the tune of anywhere between \$9,000 to \$10,000 per employee. That is a lot of money. That is not reducing taxes.

There is a graph in the budget on page 52, above which the government states, "Freeze in EI premium rate leaves money in the hands of employers and employees". The columns in this graph start at the year 2000 and level off in years 2006 and 2007, which is when the Conservative government took over. During that period employment insurance premiums were being reduced year in and year out. When the Conservative government came into office, it simply did not decrease them, it left them as they were.

•(1210)

All of a sudden, as I pointed out earlier, the Conservatives plan a 35% hike in employment insurance premiums which, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, is going to cost 200,000 jobs. Yes, there were some jobs created and no one is disputing that, even though they were not high quality jobs, but a job is a job. But this tax increase is going to cost jobs because employers are going to hesitate, if anything refrain, from hiring people. That graph points that out exactly.

When the government stands and says that we have not done anything, its own graphs, and the proof is in the pudding as they say, indicate how a Liberal government between 1993 and 2006 was continuously reducing EI premiums. The GST reduction which the Conservatives provided to Canadians, they are now taking back in another manner.

There is another graph on page 86. I am pointing this out to prove to Canadians the discrepancy in the Conservatives' figures. The Conservatives say that Canada invests more directly in public R and D than does any other G7 country. That is a wonderful statement, but this is old data. They say this data is from 2007 which is the latest year for which data are available for the G7 countries. That is data from the Liberal administration. We would like to see the Conservatives' current data, which in essence shows a decline.

The graph clearly shows that up to 2007, and 2006 and 2005 were the latest years where this data was accumulated, Canada was leading countries such as Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and the United States. Thank God that was under a Liberal administration. That is why at that time we were able to not just invest in the new knowledge-based economy, but to retain our best and brightest and to attract others.

At that time I was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of industry, Brian Tobin. We were at York University providing funding for research chairs. I remember a young couple. The husband had been offered a job in Germany. His wife was a researcher. She made an about-face. She decided to stay in Canada. When I asked her why she said that Canada was indeed investing properly and it was worth her time to stay. Not only did we retain our best and brightest, but we offered opportunities for the jobs of the future.

I encourage Canadians to pick up the budget book, look at page 86 and they will see exactly what I am talking about.

With respect to the new economy, I am very concerned. There are certain technologies in Canada in which we pride ourselves. The news about AECL in the last couple of days really concerns me. I happened to see an advertisement for the movie on the Avro Arrow technology. It reminded me that it was a Conservative government that sold out that Canadian technology and now another Conservative government is about to sell out a unique industry, Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, where we provide the Candu technology which is not only well recognized, but well respected for its security.

The concern is that the government is moving forward through the budget to allow foreign companies to come in, maybe to buy AECL outright, maybe to buy a share. However, the moment that occurs, the government will have no say. It will have no oversight of what happens. What am I driving at?

•(1215)

This is what the Conservatives did with the income trusts situation because everything ties together. At the time, there were rules that Canadian companies could borrow money, like other foreign companies, and invest. There was an interest deductibility factor built into this equation. By reneging on the promise that they were not going to touch income trusts, it took that equal playing field for all companies and removed the ability for Canadian companies to compete on equal footing, simply because they could no longer use the income deductibility factor when they chose to acquire, purchase or expand. In other words, Canadian companies are at a disadvantage today.

That means, to simplify it for everybody, that company A from country B could come in, borrow money, buy ACL and write off the interest of the moneys it borrowed, but a Canadian company cannot do this. That is a great disadvantage to Canadian companies.

I am bringing it up again only so that the government, if it believes in what it says about making Canadian companies competitive, would change that. I hope it thinks about that very seriously.

We talk about taxes. There are so many hidden taxes, it is unbelievable. Let me talk about the air travel security tax. Nobody talks about it.

*Government Orders*

The reason I am bringing these up one at a time is because if somebody had the opportunity to read a publication from the Canadian Press today, it says that the government is doing this in a sneaky way, “by sneaking in new rules in budget legislation”. It is the word “sneaking” that this budget is all about, because all of a sudden, as we go to another paragraph or turn another page, we see something in there to our surprise. Of course, we cannot analyze the budget in one day, but every day that goes by, every paragraph that we read, every segment we get into, all of a sudden there is another surprise.

There is going to be an increase of billions of dollars by taxing people who are travelling. Why? Is it for new scanners? I recall years ago, we invested billions of dollars to buy new scanning equipment for our airports. Has something occurred to say that those scanners no longer work? I will let Canadians judge that for themselves. It is the word “sneaking” that is upsetting to me. It clearly points out exactly what is going on here.

My colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood earlier today referred to the Fraser Institute and its comment. I would like to repeat that as well:

The Vancouver-based Fraser Institute concludes that the turnaround in the economy had nothing to do with stimulus.

The Conservatives stand up and use coated words such as “we have allocated”, “we have committed”, “we will assign”, but when we go out there and ask if the money has actually been delivered, the answer is no. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities complained as well, “They promised us”.

It reminds me of the commercial on television with the two young kids, and the gentleman comes in and gives one child a cardboard pony but gives the other one a real pony, because, as he says, “You did not ask”. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities is asking. It wants its infrastructure fixed. It is a source of revenue for this country and it deserves its share of the pie.

I have a comment on revenue, if I may, because it is my understanding, and we all know, that the banks are talking about increasing their mortgage rates. I just want to take this opportunity because they are part of this budget as well.

Right now everybody is trying to do whatever they can to get the economy rolling, to get confidence into the nation. I say to the banks, directly, that it is wrong at this time to increase rates, when young men and women are trying to get a roof over their heads, trying to buy their first condominium, or whatever they are trying to invest in. What the banks are saying here is:

The increase does not stem directly from moves by the Bank of Canada, but rather anticipated central bank rate hikes.

• (1220)

I have talked to many of my constituents, and I say, “Shame on the banks” if they decide to increase their rates prematurely and without any justifiable cause.

I want to speak a little bit about health care, if I may, because that is very important. In this budget, once again, there is zero for health care. Taking us back, in the 2004-05 budget there was an committed allocation of \$56 billion for health care. That was as a result of the

recommendations from the Romanow report. That was a 10-year commitment by the federal government to the provinces.

Now the provinces are saying, because 2014 is the due date, they want to commence a dialogue. They want to get the discussions going, get around a table, and see where we are going post-2014.

The federal government is refusing to sit around the table. When asked what has been done with health, the response is that it will continue the funding. What funding is that? The funding was Liberal funding under the Paul Martin government. That was Liberal funding as a result of the Romanow report. We all know about that report.

I am very concerned. We are now seeing a little bit more about what the health issue in the United States is all about. It has everything to do with insurance and nothing to do with the delivery of health services. Today, we are seeing advertisements on television that say “Purchase health insurance”. I am concerned for the future and where this is taking us.

The Prime Minister is on record, and I have quoted him in the past but to save time I am not going to pull up the quote, stating, with no ambiguity, that he supports private health care. The Minister of Immigration has stated very clearly that he supports private health care.

No wonder my constituent, Mr. Frandsen, who came to my office, said, and I have used this quote in the past, “If [the Prime Minister] can behave and do what he is doing while having a minority government, can you imagine what he will do if he had a majority?”

It is scary. Health care is something that separates us as Canadians from the rest of the world. I think we have a moral and ethical obligation to ensure it is something we maintain. In order to do that, we need to have a country positioned properly with its finances.

In order for us to understand where we are today and where we are going to be tomorrow, I want to take just a few moments to take us all back to 1993 when Canada was an unofficially bankrupt country with high unemployment, high debts and deficits, and we were paying tremendous amounts, billions of dollars, in interest on our debt.

We turned that around with the help and co-operation of Canadians. Then we delivered seven or eight consecutive balanced budgets and surpluses, such as our country had never experienced before. The last surplus we left the government was \$13.2 billion.

As a result of the Liberals bringing down the debt continuously, our debt to GDP ratio kept going down. We were saving an average of \$3 billion a year, which we were putting back into programs that Canadians asked us to support, whether it was housing, environment, infrastructure, urban transit, health or whatever it was. According to the input we were receiving, we were providing that support.

*Government Orders*

On one of the government's graphs, it talks about the accumulated federal debt. Yes, it is showing us a graph of the debt to GDP ratio that in 2008-09 had dipped downwards. It did dip downwards, and yet again it is going up. Then we have the debt, and I will admit it was reduced by some \$30-some odd billion. The Liberals reduced it by \$60-some odd billion. Then all of sudden, by 2014, from \$460 billion it is going to \$622 billion. That is a \$130-some odd billion debt.

Never mind saving the \$3 billion we were saving. We are going to be paying much more. We are not getting anywhere. If anything, we are going downhill.

I would be glad to answer any questions. In this short period of time, it is difficult to get into a lot, but in closing one thing I am concerned about is the recreational infrastructure program that has been very kind in supporting various community centres. I support it myself.

I come from the Greek community of Toronto, and it has asked for funding for the first Greek cultural community centre. I believe the government is treating it in a biased and discriminatory way. It has turned its back on the Greek community and I will ensure that my community knows this.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the speech by my hon. colleague from Scarborough Centre was very passionate. I hope he keeps that up when it comes time to vote.

He spoke about the isotopes produced by the CANDU reactor and accused the other government, the government opposite, of wanting to sell its CANDU reactor. He said that everyone agrees CANDU is a respectable and safe reactor.

How can he not know that the CANDU reactor is not safe, and that it leaks plutonium and heavy water? Heavy water was even recently found in the Ottawa River behind Parliament. Heavy water is very harmful to our health, and it could cause cancer if ingested.

Furthermore, my colleague blamed the other government. But this CANDU reactor, which is not safe, was developed when the Liberals were in power.

And my colleague did not mention this, but the Liberals could have developed the MAPLE nuclear reactor project.

Why did they not develop the MAPLE nuclear reactors? I would like to know. I think it is because the top brains, the scientific brains, left the country and headed to Sweden and the United States. That is why we had to drop the MAPLE nuclear reactor project, which only had a cooldown problem.

[*English*]

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to voting for the budget, one thing I will guarantee this gentleman and one thing I will guarantee Canadians is that I will not use emotion to vote for this budget, but I will use logic.

I will vote against this budget and my party will vote against it in a responsible way because the last thing our country today needs is to be put into election chaos. The last thing we need to do is blow

another \$600 million or \$700 million, if not \$1 billion, for the sake of what?

Canadians today have told us very clearly, without any ambiguity, they do not want an election. So, it is incumbent upon us to be responsible and ensure that we keep the current government to account and we point out its problems, its shortcomings, and try to correct them. We do not want an election for the sake of wanting an election.

With respect to CANDU, I have the greatest of respect. I am glad at least it is in Canadian hands and not in other countries. Are there mistakes? There is no perfection out there. The point is, let us identify those problems and let us move toward correcting them.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the one point I will agree with the member on is that we certainly do not need, nor do we want, a majority Conservative government in this country because of what will more than likely happen if one ever comes about.

The corporate tax issue and the Liberals' position on it is certainly one that I am a bit confused about. Canada's corporate taxes were around 40% in the past. They dropped down to 18%. They are going to go down to 15% by 2012. That is about 12% lower than the American corporate taxes. It is totally unnecessary to be that low.

In fact, we are really not sure that it is that effective in producing economic growth. For example, business spending on machinery and equipment has declined as a share of GDP and total business investment spending has declined as a percentage of corporate cash flow. Statistics Canada and Finance Canada say that IT use by Canadian businesses is only half of that of the United States and despite Canadian corporate tax rates that are well below those of the United States, productivity growth is actually worse. There is the proof that these corporate tax reductions are not having the effect that they are supposed to have.

In addition, ordinary Canadians are going to be paying four times more in personal income tax than corporations will pay in corporate tax. I seem to recall maybe 20 years ago that those amounts were roughly equal in this country. So, now, ordinary Canadians will be paying four times more than corporations. Because his leader, this past weekend, seemed to change his position on the whole area of corporate taxes, I want to ask him, where is his leader and his party on this issue today?

• (1230)

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, I think our leader was very clear that we were going to just freeze it. He could not have made it any clearer. I know there is direction from the Conservative government to keep reducing from 18, as he pointed out, down to 15. That is not what our leader said. He said that we will leave it at that level. We will provide the opportunity for economic growth and stimulus.

*Government Orders*

All Canadians, and I personally, believe that companies must be in a healthy state. They need to generate revenue. That is how they hire people. That is how they reinvest in new equipment, retooling and expansion. They need to generate revenue. If they do not generate revenue, they will simply close their doors and lay people off and people will be unemployed. My parents raised me to go out there and work for a living, not to work for employment insurance.

In order for me and my generation to continue doing that, we need to have healthy corporate status out there. That is my view.

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the reply by the hon. member. I am wondering if he is aware of the work by an organization called NESCAUM, the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management. Based on its empirical studies, it has shown that the one key trigger for investment in clean technology is not lower taxes. It is not voluntary initiatives or market measures. It is regulation.

I would question the member on whether he has actual analysis that lowering corporate taxes actually causes greater investment. In fact, the Economic Council of Canada is telling us that is not the result. I would like to hear his comment on that. Surely if we are going to be giving increasingly lower tax rates to corporations, they should have to give something in return. Why not ante up reducing the greenhouse gases?

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, the question allows me to go back and remind Canadians that there was a formula between 1993 and 2006 that worked for Canadians. There was job growth and economic prosperity. We eliminated the deficits and lowered the debts. We somehow found a balance.

As we were generating those surpluses, we were doing it in a balanced way. The Conservatives are using our words, “balanced way”. We were saying one-third for personal tax reduction, one-third for corporate tax reduction and one-third in the programs that Canadians want us to invest in, such as health care, housing, the environment and our international obligations.

If we use that type of methodology or approach, we really cannot go wrong. That is what I believe and what my party is advocating.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen some pretty brash behaviour on the part of the government last year and this year too. It introduced huge omnibus bills, 800-page bills, including things that really have nothing to do with the budget.

We have the issue of the post office remailers that was introduced last year under Bill C-44 and Bill C-14. When it could not get these bills through the House over two or three successive years, it simply repackaged it and stuck it in this particular bill, Bill C-9.

What is going through the government's mind? What is its motivation to put in objectionable bills that it could not get through any other way, sticking them into the budget implementation process and giving us no choice but to vote for them or have an election?

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks earlier, it is sneaking in new rules in the budget legislation. Those are not my words. Those are words printed by the pundits and the media. In essence, this is a tactic or strategy of the government. It is always sneaking things in.

That is why two out of three Canadians in two elections did not vote for those people. First, they are scared. Second, they do not trust them. That is why they are not giving them a mandate. It has turned out once again, by some of the tactics that the hon. gentleman referred to, that they are sneaking things in like the airport tax, for example, just out of the blue.

Simply put, Canadians do not trust the Prime Minister or the government. That is why the Conservatives cannot get a mandate.

●(1235)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Members know that the Bloc Québécois has already voted against the Conservative government's budget because, once again, it does not meet the economic, social, environmental and financial needs of Quebec.

No matter the sector—forestry, aerospace, the environment or culture—Quebeckers' priorities have been completely ignored in this budget.

By presenting an empty budget that is so unfair to Quebec, the Conservative government is proving once again that federalism is of no benefit to Quebec.

The Conservatives have shown once more that, as far as Canada is concerned, it is as though Quebec does not exist.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government's constant refusal to meet Quebec's needs has consequences.

In the Quebec government's budget presented on Tuesday, \$4.3 billion must be raised from taxpayers—\$3.5 billion from individuals—through different taxes. There will be a 2% increase in the sales tax.

This budget has already given rise to an avalanche of criticism by civil society groups who fear the impoverishment of low- and middle-income households. In the next four years, Quebeckers will have to face increases in Quebec sales tax, fuel taxes and electricity rates, in addition to paying a new annual premium to fund the health system.



*Government Orders*

In its budget suggestions of February 24, the Bloc Québécois clearly identified the financial needs of Quebec, which Ottawa must address fairly. The Bloc identified \$7 billion in needs: changes to be made to the equalization formula, increased funding for education and social programs, as well as compensation for harmonizing the sales tax. In my mind, the harmonization of the sales tax is the most pathetic issue. On March 31, 2009, exactly one year ago, Quebec's National Assembly adopted a unanimous motion asking the federal government to treat Quebec justly and equitably, by granting compensation comparable to that offered to Ontario for the harmonization of its sales tax with the GST.

In the days that followed the adoption of this motion, and in response to questions posed in the House by the Bloc Québécois, the government stated that it did not wish to conduct negotiations in the public arena.

Despite repeated requests by the Government of Quebec and numerous attempts by the Bloc Québécois to correct this injustice, the Conservative government has again responded negatively to Quebec's requests at such a crucial time in the preparation of its budget.

To make sure that the Conservative government is well aware of the situation, I will read an excerpt from the speech made by the Quebec minister last Tuesday:

Furthermore, we are determined to recover the \$2.2 billion we have been claiming from the federal government for harmonizing the QST with the GST. We are entitled to expect fair treatment from the federal government, which recently granted compensation to Ontario and British Columbia following harmonization of their sales taxes with the GST.

I will remind members that the Government of Quebec cannot be accused of being sovereignist and that it has always had the support of the opposition in requesting compensation for harmonizing its sales tax with the GST.

In fact, a new motion was passed unanimously by all members of the Quebec National Assembly last Tuesday. I will read it so it is properly recorded in the *Debates of the House of Commons* in both official languages, as it should:

THAT the National Assembly denounces the refusal by the federal Government to offer Québec compensation comparable to that received by British Columbia and Ontario in 2009 for the harmonization of their sales tax with the Goods and Services Tax;

● (1240)

THAT it recalls that Québec was the first province to harmonize its tax with the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) at the beginning of the 1990s and has still received no compensation in this area, even though five provinces have been compensated for their harmonization after that of Québec;

THAT the Assembly also denounces the fact that for one year, notwithstanding a similar official request, the federal Government has continued to refuse to treat Quebecers with justice and equity.

The federal government has already signed an agreement worth \$6.86 billion with five other provinces to harmonize their sales tax. Quebec, which was the first province to harmonize its tax in 1992, has not yet received the \$2.2 billion compensation that it has been demanding for a year.

In his budget on Tuesday, Quebec's finance minister also pointed out that the federal government administers the harmonized sales tax without any cost to the affected provinces, whereas Quebec pays its

share of the GST and QST administration costs, under an agreement signed in the early 1990s, almost 20 years ago.

The Conservative government amended its original requirements in 2009 in order to provide Ontario and British Columbia with compensation. Why can it not come to an understanding with Quebec when it was able to do so with five other provinces on the same issue?

How is it possible that, after a year of intense negotiations, the Conservative government still does not understand the importance of providing compensation to Quebec for harmonizing its tax in anticipation of its budget?

The Government of Quebec stated that it needed that compensation to reduce the tax burden on the people. Society's poorest and the middle class will not forget this injustice perpetrated against Quebec.

In addition to not responding to Quebecers' needs and desires, the government is once again expressing its intention to encroach on Quebec's jurisdiction over securities despite another unanimous vote in Quebec's National Assembly calling on the federal government to back away from plans to implement a Canada-wide securities commission.

I want to remind the government that securities regulation is under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and that the current passport system does a very good job of making a coordinated law enforcement approach possible.

I also want to remind the government that Quebec's *Autorité des marchés financiers* is the last bastion protecting exchange activities in Montreal.

For all of these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will have to oppose Bill C-9.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to question the member. I listened to his speech with great interest.

One of the enactments in this 800-page bill is to enact a new payment card network, to regulate national payment card networks and give broader oversight powers to the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada. The increasing oversight is certainly welcome, but in the whole area of the credit card business, the government is simply trying to rely on the free market.

The Conservatives say they will adopt a voluntary code of rules that credit card companies will use to be fair to the public, but we know that credit card companies are not fair to the public. We get constant complaints about how credit card companies abuse the consumers of this country.

The question is how we can trust a government that is fundamentally not on the side of consumers in this country. Could the hon. member name me one consumer issue where the government has ever been on the side of the consumers? I think we can conclude that it is pro big business and against consumers. I ask the member if he would like to elaborate further on that point.

*Government Orders*

• (1245)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

The Standing Committee on Finance has already looked at the problem of credit card companies. Over the coming weeks and months, the committee is expecting to make a recommendation based on its study.

In Quebec, however, the consumer protection agency provides significant protection when it comes to credit card issuing and related fees.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Alfred-Pellan on his excellent speech.

He touched on the most important points in the budget, including the issue of low-income households, which is of particular interest to me.

The government is concentrating more and more wealth in the hands of a few. The number of low-income families is constantly increasing. I have a question for my colleague.

Does the budget contain any measure to support social housing for low-income people? Those who have to pay more than 30% of their income for housing are in dire straits. Is the government doing anything for them?

**Mr. Robert Carrier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question regarding the federal government's commitment to social housing.

It is precisely one of the shortcomings I mentioned in my speech on the budget. The Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation has a surplus of about \$8 billion. However, there is no commitment on the part of the government to build new social housing units after reaching agreements with the various provinces. In Quebec, the Société d'habitation du Québec could certainly build more social housing units with money transferred from the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation.

Too many poor families do not have access to housing with multiple bedrooms; housing units are too small. Having a government policy on social housing would help meet those needs.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to participate in this debate on Bill C-9 to implement the budget tabled in the House a few weeks ago.

First, I will address the title of the bill. I have been in this House for 13 years, and this kind of bill is usually called a budget implementation bill. All of a sudden, the government decided to call it something else, the jobs and economic growth bill.

That is somewhat odd and ironic. It is as if the federal government was running an advertising and promotional campaign about the budget. The fact is that this is a bill to implement a budget, and not one to create jobs and promote economic growth. This growth will be done on the backs of the less privileged and at the detriment of the

environment. It will also be done at the expense of the safety net that needs to be put in place.

The bill before us today is somewhat odd in that this is not a jobs and economic growth bill, but a budget implementation bill. I wanted to make that clear from the outset.

We are especially disappointed with this budget as far as the initiatives or measures it contains to protect the environment, natural resources as well as ecosystems and biodiversity are concerned. This is one of the least substantial budgets I have had the opportunity to read and analyze in recent years in terms of the environment.

There is nothing in there to improve environmental protection and nothing for Quebec. Yet, the budget provides \$16 million over two years for the Great Lakes action plan.

Yesterday, the government announced the signing of an agreement with Ontario to extend the Great Lakes action plan. Yet, at the same time, on March 31, the St. Lawrence plan, designed to develop a vision and an integrated management system for one of the largest waterways in America, expired without any announcement by the government regarding its extension.

For the government, the St. Lawrence—Great Lakes system is limited to the Great Lakes. We do not think there is a direct relationship, in terms of economic activity, with the protection of ecosystems in the Great Lakes, but the St. Lawrence requires integrated protection and management. We are a little disappointed.

The budget provides \$16 million over two years for the Great Lakes action plan, but nothing for the St. Lawrence, nothing in terms of strategy, nothing in terms of vision beyond 2010.

The budget is also lacking an initiative to promote renewable energies. However, in the 2009 budget, the government announced \$350 million for the nuclear industry. There is considerable funding for this industry again this year, but not enough funding for developing renewable energies.

This shows that the government has not made the green shift. It has not made the commitment to “decarbonize” its economy. Therefore, there is no money for energy efficiency. As a matter of fact, we just learned this morning that the ecoENERGY program has been cancelled. The budget does nothing to promote energy efficiency and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the source, but it gives a lot of money to one particular economic sector, namely, oil companies.

• (1250)

The Conservatives continue giving tax breaks to an industry that produces and extracts oil from the tar sands with impunity and pollutes our environment, without paying for the pollution it is causing. For those who believe that a price should be put on carbon and that there should be costs associated with polluting, this is disappointing.

Ultimately, when the government announces regulations to fight climate change, who will pay? Businesses that have already made the effort will have to compensate financially for the efforts not being made by the oil industry in western Canada.

*Government Orders*

One might have hoped this budget would include some sort of recognition program, whether it is called a credit for early action or compensation program. Yet there is nothing to compensate Quebec's economic activity sectors, particularly the manufacturing industry in Quebec, which has cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 24%.

There is nothing. Yet the Bloc Québécois had made some proposals. What did we propose? We proposed \$500 million a year for five years as incentives for converting oil heating systems. We proposed \$500 million a year for five years for a green energy fund. We also called for a plan to promote electric cars to help us move towards using more electricity in our transportation, not only in public transit, but also in individual transportation, and to put money into research. That is how Quebec will be able to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions: by targeting this sector of activity in Quebec, that is, the transportation sector. The budget contains nothing for electric cars. The government ignored the recommendation and the plan we proposed.

There is nothing for shoreline erosion. As I was just saying, there is nothing for the St. Lawrence and nothing to help those living along the river, who are the first victims of climate change. Higher temperatures and extreme weather events will affect the St. Lawrence shoreline more than any other place. People living along the St. Lawrence are losing waterfront land and thus are losing an important asset. There is no help for them, even though my Bloc Québécois colleague from Matane had proposed a bill to establish a compensation fund to offset the costs of adapting to climate change. There is absolutely nothing.

They are not proposing tax credits for companies that promote the use of bicycles as an alternate form of transportation. We proposed \$20 million. There is no incentive for citizens to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles, such as hybrid vehicles. A few years ago, we had the ecoAuto program. Why not reintroduce this program, which would provide tax credits for the purchase of electric or hybrid vehicles? For example, Montreal taxi drivers could benefit. But, no.

This is a budget without a vision, a budget that has failed to make the green shift required for us to move to a carbon-free economy.

●(1255)

[English]

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is well known for his expertise on the environment and I would like him to comment on the following.

If I understand it correctly, Natural Resources Canada and Environment Canada will be cut by over \$150 million over three years. The Conservatives have decided not to fund the \$80 million for the eco-energy retrofit homes. They apparently never intended to renew the renewable power or renewable heat programs for eco-energy. They are moving the environmental assessments for energy projects away from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and gutting environmental action projects in general with virtually no action for climate change.

Would the knowledgeable member, who is professor-like in his knowledge, give the Conservatives a grade of A, B, C, D or F on their environmental action in this budget?

●(1300)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is essentially asking me to write a report card for the government. He already knows what grade I would give if I were the professor: “F” for total Failure.

This government does not understand that in order to respect our international commitments, we have to focus on two things: reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the source and promoting energy efficiency. My colleague is right. After coming to power, the government reviewed the programs.

What have been the consequences? When a Conservative government announces program reviews, it is announcing cuts. That is the reality. The government cut funding to the ecoEnergy program, among others. That is not good for the environment nor for our economy.

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie on his excellent speech. And I quite like the name of his riding.

He raised a very key point: electric and hybrid cars. An announcement was made today that we will reach an agreement with the U.S. on the number of litres per 100 km that cars can consume a few years from now.

Are we not taking a very big step backward that we will not be able to recover from? We are not investing in what we should be investing in, in other words, research and development of hybrid or electric cars or super performance cars like the ones in Europe. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right. If we want an industry to be competitive, we have to promote innovation, research and development. This is true in all areas of business activity, and even more so in the automotive industry.

The future no longer belongs to big muscle cars. Unless Canada moves toward more energy and fuel efficient cars, it will inevitably be overtaken and passed by Asian countries.

Nowadays, big cars are no longer an ideal purchase; small ones are. Quebec has understood that. It is in Quebec that the cars with the lowest fuel consumption are bought. That is what will enable the automotive industry to be competitive.

That is why standards have to be stricter, perhaps even as strict as in California. Stricter vehicle manufacturing standards would allow our automotive industry to compete with the other manufacturers in the industry, especially the Asian ones.

*Government Orders**[English]*

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here to debate Bill C-9, what we would normally call the budget implementation act. In this particular case, however, we are looking at the jobs and economic growth act.

For the next 20 minutes, I will analyze some of the material in the budget that is deficient and some that may be construed as being positive. Dare I go that far, sitting in the opposition? I will just to be fair-minded. I also want to touch on some of the major issues that have come up in the last little while in my riding and in my province in some of the more traditional industries that are facing a crisis, to say the least.

Particularly today, there is a crisis in the fisheries in Newfoundland and Labrador for those who depend on the crab fishery, with the season opening and very few boats out on the water able to make a living. I will get to that a little later.

I would like to talk about the genesis of the economic action plan as described in the budget, titled "Leading the Way on Jobs and Growth". I would not say that the economic action plan is leading the way. I do believe the sheer gist of our talented workforce, the education levels, our ability to innovate and the capacity by which we can get to the level to survive all economic crises certainly is leading the way but it is incumbent upon the individual to lead the way out of this.

However, there are areas in which there are weaknesses in our society and socio-economic factors that are at play, areas that the government needs to take action on. We need to play a role in the lives of people who have fallen through the cracks, people who are most vulnerable in situations, whether they live in Ontario, Nunavut or Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of them are going through a similar crisis when it comes to education, rates of literacy and certainly when it comes to matching the skills with a particular place or industry they want to be in.

I would like to suggest something for the House to consider and it is something I have talked about quite a bit over the past little while. We are seeing something taking place in the workforce. I will use my riding as strong example because of the talent and skills that people have developed over the past little while. A lot of work is transient in nature. Let us take the example of a particular individual with a skills set in the oil and gas industry. If people are thinking about Newfoundland and Labrador, they must be thinking that they work offshore. That is not the case. In my particular neck of the woods, a lot of people are transients from Newfoundland and Labrador who go to the oil fields of Alberta.

They work in some of the major plants, upgraders I think the term is, that go from one form of petroleum to the final product that is ready for market with regard to natural gas and oil but also for major infrastructure projects happening in Alberta because of the proliferation of the industry. I say that because even though oil prices dipped dramatically over last year, the infrastructure is in place, the people who work the industry are also in place and many of them travel back and forth. They spend perhaps three or four weeks in Alberta at the work site and travel thousands of kilometres

to return home for two or three weeks. That is becoming the nature of many of the workers and jobs available at this point.

There was a dip in the demand for work simply because of the low price of oil. I say the low price of oil meaning relative to what it was two years ago when it was in some cases above \$150 a barrel. Now it is at \$83 a barrel and, therefore, workers have kind of slipped into a comfortable place when it comes to achieving work for those who are skilled in that industry.

How does that change the dynamic? It does in many ways. People are now taking advantage of skills training, whether it is federal or provincial, and that is a good thing. What is lacking is the ability of small, medium and large enterprises to match the work that is available. What I would implore the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development to consider is a national program similar to what we would call a skills inventory database.

● (1305)

Let us assume for a moment that I possess a skill in pipefitting and I live in Newfoundland and Labrador. Where can I go to achieve work that allows me to stay at home but yet travel to find work elsewhere?

People need to put their skill sets into a national database, to go beyond their own backyards, in order to allow other companies to see that they exist. I know that sounds like a strange concept but work is now becoming so quick to attain. Industries are now transitioning from the old traditional style. Even the traditional industries of oil and gas and forestry are now transitioning. The forestry industry is going from not just pulp and paper or newsprint. It is transforming into furniture making, pellets for heating energy, whether it is at the home or at the business.

In the fishing industry, many of the smaller boats are now becoming larger vessels and they are fishing in areas further off shore.

Therefore, because these companies, whether they be small or big, are transitioning to a new type of work and a new type of business model, which means new types of revenue streams, it becomes problematic to find the workers who have the particular skills. The companies end up spending a lot of money, resources and time just to find those people.

However, we, as a government, can make that transition easier by providing that particular database of information so that it puts the worker, as well as the employer, into that same sphere and allows people to communicate.

There is another side of doing that which would be beneficial, and I humbly put this forward to the House as a token of debate. I will give members a good example. In Port Union in my riding, over 1,000 people used to work at the local shrimp plant, which at the time was owned by Fishery Products International, now owned by OCI. The plant went from a workforce of over 1,000 people down to about 100 or 200 people on a good day. It was highly seasonal work with somewhere between 15 to 20 weeks of work for the average employee.

*Government Orders*

Now, across the harbour there is an old plant that existed many years ago, the early part of the last century, and then was shut down. It was the focal point of a fishing industry when there were a lot more people involved in the fishery. It was owned by William Coaker, incidentally. The government is now investing into giving the place a facelift, let us say, making it more user friendly, not just for tourists but also for business. A company such as Iceberg is now going to produce bottled water. Bottled water from icebergs. My goodness. I remember a gentleman telling me one time that in his day, icebergs were the biggest nuisance around. Now icebergs have become a lifeline for bottled water and other products.

How do we go from transitioning from what was all fishery to now partially fishery and partially icebergs harvesting? We do that in the way that we spoke about, by trying to find the talented individuals who are able to work. The skill set needs to be there in order for them to set up. If a database exists, a company that wants to set up an operation, such as Iceberg or a water bottling plant, it can get a good idea about who in that community is available to work. Whether they have moved away recently or not, they can still be involved in that database by simply indicating where they come from. That would make it much easier for a company to find the workers it needs.

Mining is another example. A huge mine opened up outside of a town called Millertown and it is owned by Teck. It mines mostly for copper, nickel and zinc, but it is now mining for gold. By doing that the company needs the particular individuals talented enough to work in those mines. That is where the government could play a role.

● (1310)

I would like the government to consider this in its next budget or even as a policy over the summer or in the fall. If we get serious about having a talented workforce, promoting it and ensuring it is able to mesh with anybody that wants to hire them, whether it be small, medium or large business, we need to have the playing field by which they can come together.

Let me return to the budget implementation bill and what was written in the book provided to us when the budget was released. The economic action plan promised a great deal of money for infrastructure and it promised a great deal on the back end for tertiary activity.

Intentions are paved with gold, if I may use the vernacular. The problem with that is the function of it has diminished in the past little while. Here are some of the problems we need to consider when this type of crisis happens again.

With respect to unspent monies, let me give the House a list of what was unspent in this situation. In the supplementary estimates (C), which were brought to the House, \$1.4 billion worth of infrastructure funding were not spent in 2009-10. There were \$870 million unspent out of the \$2 billion for the infrastructure stimulus fund. There were \$186 million unspent out of \$200 million for the green infrastructure fund. There were \$240 million unspent out of \$495 million for the provincial-territorial base funding. Finally, for the building Canada communities federal component, there were \$135 million unspent out of \$250 million.

Let me illustrate to the House a point that I saw in particular where this money gets unspent. Cost-sharing is a large element of it. The government spends money to increase the infrastructure and improve the infrastructure for a particular community. I will use the town of New West Valley as an example. It wants to take advantage of a particular stimulus fund to upgrade its park for reasons of tourism and for its residents who take advantage of it for fitness, health and the like.

The problem with it is this. In a small town the municipal tax base is not as large as a medium or larger community. The business tax is not where it used to be. That puts it in a vulnerable position where it has to come up with its one-third share, which it cannot do.

The federal government needs to consider putting in flexibilities so smaller communities can avail the funding. Right now provinces do their part by allowing up to 90% available so the communities can up with 10%, and kudos to them for doing so.

I understand the rules and regulations of Treasury Board and all things financial, the regulations and accounting principles. However, the compassion has been taken out of this when the government insists on doing things such as major announcements, handing out cheques and the like. This is kind of a misnomer because cheques are not really handed out any more. Maybe they are, but I cannot get that straight.

Nonetheless, let me just go back to the situation we have on infrastructure. One of the other elements about this funding when it comes recreation. One-third of the spending is hard enough to come up with, but we have a program called RInC, which is recreational infrastructure.

In 1967 there was a rash of spending regarding stadiums, gymnasiums, swimming pools and municipal council buildings. Many smaller communities took advantage of the Centennial fund to build their town halls or stadiums and so on and so forth. A lot of remains. I will not say intact, because that goes too far. However, it is still there and through a patchwork of funding, not a lot from the federal government, it remains, barely in some cases.

What we proposed, and I say we meaning the colour red of Liberal, in the last election was that we have an incentive to put money back into these communities in the infrastructure we invested in 1967. I do not know if anyone has noticed a calendar, but 1967 certainly was not yesterday. We got the idea about these crumbling buildings and we were able to do that.

*Government Orders*

●(1315)

The Conservatives decided this, and maybe this was a good idea, but the problem was they instituted a program that was not just one-third, it was fifty-fifty. If people are to spend \$200,000 to fix a stadium, and that is a meagre sum for a stadium that seats over 1,000 in a town of only 3,000 or 4,000 people, they have to come up with \$100,000.

There are stipulations where they can go to the province, but that puts it on the hook too. The government said it would not clawback funds, but in a way that is a clawback. It says it believes in a stadium and gives the town the money. For example, Bishop's Falls will be, after the weekend, Hockeyville, Canada. I am somewhat biased. It will get \$100,000 for winning Hockeyville. Only one stadium on the whole country, whether it is the other towns or Bishop's Falls, gets that money. It is pretty bad that for that one stadium, the major contributor to its infrastructure, on a federal level, is the Kraft corporation.

We should think about that one for a moment. Maybe we should look at this in the sense of giving these communities a fair shot at the funding they so need. They are told that they are getting \$100,000 for their stadiums, then they pause and the cameras click and they get on the six o'clock news. Then when all that settles down, the lights dim and the news is over, those towns realize they have come up with \$100,000 too. It is unfortunate the cameras are not around then.

I bring that up as an illustration only because I honestly think this is fixable. I would compel the government to consider these options as we go forward, whether it is a renewed program as such. It talks about program renewals. If the program where I could fix my home and get a tax credit for it were so good, so powerful and so wonderful, where is it now? Perhaps someone can find it because I know where it is.

If an evaluation is to take place and if we have to consider all the programs, let us start from scratch. Let us go right to the core of the issue here. Let us go to the spending needed for programs that are needed. What ends up happening is when program evaluators review a program review, they only look at the numbers. The faces, the stories and the communities get lost in the mix. The government program evaluators become simply black and white numbers, and all of us have to stop doing that.

I will give an example. It seems like the only time we listen to people and their stories of how good these programs are is when the programs are in trouble. Why should a program have to fight for its life when it is so good and so, in the end, salvageable? Let me give the best example I can, being a rural member of Parliament, and that is the community access program, the CAP.

I am not sure if the government wanted to cut it or not. Quite frankly, I do not think it is sure either. Let us go beyond that argument of who said what, where, when and why and what news release was correct and what bureaucrat got it wrong, whether minister or bureaucrat. Let us set that aside for one moment.

●(1320)

The Conservatives said that they would continue the funding for this program for another year. However, what they are doing is

putting money into the other pile of money, which is all about infrastructure spending. They make it sound like it is the bottom line of just the digital world, when in fact it is a social program. It allows people with lower incomes to be on the Internet, to be engaged in the world that they endorsed.

Finally, I will talk about the fisheries very quickly. We have a situation—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member will not have time to get to the fisheries as his time has expired. Perhaps if someone asks him a question or comment, he will have the chance.

We will have 10 minutes worth of questions and comments now.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member's presentation on this big omnibus bill, Bill C-9, was very down-to-earth.

He talks about the difficulties that small communities have to raise matching federal funds for buildings and infrastructure. That is certainly an issue not only in Newfoundland, but right across the country.

He also talked about the home renovation program, which was very popular. The Conservatives advertised it extensively. They touted it a success of their government and then they cancelled it. If the member wonders why that was done and why it has not been introduced again, he simply has to stay tuned. When the next election occurs, it will be one of the election promises of the government.

I want to ask the member a question about another aspect of this bill. In the area of environmental assessment, there are some changes that would allow the Minister of the Environment to dictate the scope of environmental assessments. It also weakens the public participation and enables the removal of assessments of energy projects from the Environmental Assessment Agency, the National Energy Board and the Nuclear Safety Commission.

This is an oil company's dream. This is all part of the overall plan of the Conservative government to deregulate the economy and industries and give corporations what they want.

Would the member like to comment on that? Certainly he could get back to the missed part of his speech on the fisheries.

●(1325)

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the compliment on me being down-to-earth. I suppose when one is 5 foot 4, one does not have much of a choice. I appreciate the compliment nonetheless.

*Government Orders*

When it comes to the environmental assessments, some of it is buried in red tape, especially when it comes to things like small craft harbours and the like, so I get the gist of the complaints initially. However, we saw this in places such as the new Fisheries Act, which I think preceded his existence here in the House. A good point was brought up by his party and mine about how this would make it much easier for mining companies and others to destroy habitat. He has a valid point. We need to look at this with a fine tooth comb, because it is a little overreaching.

As I said, I understand the principle that the government was looking to cut the red tape, but it is overreaching in several aspects.

I mentioned the small craft harbours so I will mention the fisheries. The fisheries open on April 1. Knowing very few boats are fishing, it will be a devastating situation for those who work in the plants. I think we are being held hostage by larger processors that want to become that much larger. I would implore the government to look at this immediately and get involved. This will be a grave situation that it will have to handle, come the fall of the year and throughout the summer.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member wants to talk about fisheries, and we are on opposite ends of the country. The east coast has slightly different issues than the west coast around fisheries, but we have a common interest in preserving our fisheries.

The member will be well aware of the fact that on the west coast the Fraser River Sockeye run this year was absolutely decimated. The member for Sackville—Eastern Shore has consistently called for investments in conservation, in enforcements and in habitat restoration.

Could the member talk a bit about what he sees as being aspects of protecting our fisheries, both on the east and west, that were absent from the budget implementation act?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing up the issue.

One of the elements that was being used, I think successfully in some cases as long as there was buy-in, was the marine protected areas. In B.C. there are a couple of good models. PNCIMA I think is the northwest area for ocean management that does a really good job with that.

I came here in 2004, and I think it was 2004-05 when we did the study on the sockeye salmon around the Fraser. What a devastating situation. We have fluctuations in stocks on the east coast, in crab, lobster and shrimp. The declines in the stock for British Columbia is absolutely stunning when we look at the numbers. Where do they go? Where do they come from?

Some of the models that I think work out well are the international models between the United States and Canada, where they are looking at doing this.

I would love to have more time on this question, but the final point is that there has to be a conversation between the bureaucrats of DFO and the local fishers of British Columbia and also the native groups as well. That is a big problem out there. I think there is a lack of discussion and an incredible lack of understanding. Granted I am

from the east coast. It is an observation of mine. It might be naive, but I would implore all members of Parliament from British Columbia, despite their colour of party, to get involved in facilitating a discussion among those levels, the government, the native groups and the local fishers and their groups, whether it is recreational or commercial. It is a conversation that has to be fulsome and has to take a great deal of time.

• (1330)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague's opinion and get his comments on the lack of vision, the shortsightedness, within the budgetary document and in recent announcements that cutbacks have been made to ACAP, the Atlantic coastal action program. ACAP is a not-for-profit agency that funds and operates a number of different environmental projects throughout Atlantic Canada. I know the member's home province of Newfoundland and Labrador has a similar agency.

In my community, ACAP has provided an opportunity for homeowners to have an eco-energy audit done on their homes and thus be able to apply for an energy retrofit, and there was funding assistance for the energy retrofit program. That program is one that has ceased. It will not be funded going forward. It is one that has brought a great deal of benefit to our community, to about 3,500 homes within our area alone. It has had a tremendously positive impact on the environment and provided cost savings for those who need cost savings, when we look at the high energy costs in our province.

I would like to ask my colleague, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, what type of impact he is hearing from the people back home on these cutbacks and how this is going to impact on the operation of the ACAP facility in Newfoundland.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, over the past two years I think this ACAP situation has been ongoing, whether it was below the radar or not. To say I am not shocked by this goes to the heart of the matter. It has been talked about for the past couple of years, but yet the justification has been very limited.

What ACAP does is that it provides us with the information in an era where there is a lack of science, not just for the fishery but also for the oil and gas industry. There is an organization in Newfoundland called One Ocean that does fantastic work.

However a lot of the groundwork by these organizations is done by government-funded organizations like ACAP. What we have to look at certainly on this side of the House is support for this organization that provides the information that enables other groups, whether it be private or public or government-owned, to do their jobs.

The member did bring up at the beginning a lack of vision. When it comes to our regional economic development agency, I speak of ACOA. We always call it ACOA but for the benefit of the House it is Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, similarly based on other economic development boards across the country, organizations such as those in the west and in Quebec and FedNor in northern Ontario.

*Government Orders*

What used to take place were five-year plans regarding economic development and stimulus for the smallest communities. So communities would get funding for a five-year period and once that lapsed they would get funding for another five-year period.

What we are seeing right now is a year-over-year funding renewal that really does not give these organizations a place to seriously invest in long-term achievements, and that becomes a problem.

Therefore I thank the hon. member from Cape Breton for his question.

• (1335)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-9, the jobs and economic growth act. As the member for Outremont, our finance critic, has indicated, the New Democrats will be voting against this particular piece of legislation.

When pieces of legislation come before the House, we have responsibilities as members of Parliament to give them full consideration. Although we do support pieces of this legislation, there are other pieces of it that we are fundamentally opposed to. The Conservative government has decided to jam into this piece of legislation things that should properly be considered by other parliamentary standing committees and should have stand-alone legislation.

We have items around Canada Post and the environment that should be stand-alone pieces of legislation. The appropriate committees could deal with those in depth, call the appropriate witnesses and give them the kind of study and due diligence that we have a responsibility to do as members of Parliament. Based on that fact alone, because there are aspects around the environment that we simply could not support, New Democrats are in a position where we have to say no to this piece of legislation.

There are particular aspects of Bill C-9 that are very troubling for my constituents of Nanaimo—Cowichan. I want to touch on a couple of them. One is that there are more changes around softwood lumber. We know that the softwood lumber agreement has had a devastating impact on different parts of the country. Certainly in British Columbia, our forestry sector has undergone a number of changes over the past several years.

The softwood lumber agreement, as it was agreed to by the Conservatives, has eroded the resource industry and forestry industry in Nanaimo—Cowichan and other parts of British Columbia. I would strongly urge members of the House to very carefully review that part of the budget implementation act to see what kinds of effects it would have on their communities.

I know other members have talked about the employment insurance aspect of this piece of legislation, but this is going to take the roughly \$57 billion of surplus and wind up that employment insurance account. We know that, in many parts of this country including Nanaimo—Cowichan, there are many workers who have exhausted their employment insurance.

I talked a little bit earlier about forestry workers. We know that forestry workers in my riding, throughout British Columbia and in other parts of Canada have been hit hard. Some of them have either

exhausted their employment insurance or were not eligible for some of those provisions that were supposed to protect workers.

If we were going to try to jam employment insurance into this budget implementation act, we would have liked to have seen some of the initiatives that other members, such as the member for Acadie—Bathurst, the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, have called for. We would like to see an elimination of the two-week waiting period. We want to see a reduction in the number of weeks that are required to qualify. We want to see an adequate length of time that actually allows people that safety net that many of them have paid into their whole lives. We want to see an increase in the benefit rate.

Studies by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Labour Congress have indicated that if we want to talk about economic stimulus, we should provide that social safety net so people have money to spend in their own communities, so they can support their local restaurants and stores. If we ensured people had that safety net through employment insurance, we would make sure our economy stayed more stable.

Another aspect of it is that, as people exhaust their employment insurance benefits, they end up becoming the responsibility of the province. Once the workers have exhausted their employment insurance and then depleted their savings, they then end up going on income assistance. It seems to me that this is another example of the federal government shoving its responsibilities onto the provincial governments, particularly in light of the fact that there was a \$57 billion surplus in the EI account, paid for by workers and their employers.

It is very difficult to support a budget that says the government will take the money that workers paid for and make sure it stays in the consolidated revenue fund, with no access to it by workers or their employers.

• (1340)

There are many, many parts of the bill that are simply anathema to New Democrats, but I want to talk very briefly about the environmental assessment part of this legislation. It exempts through legislation rather than regulations certain federally funded infrastructure projects from environmental assessment. This goes well beyond the efforts by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to streamline the environmental assessment process, which was to be the object of a review in 2010. At the outset of my speech, I referenced the fact that parts of this Bill C-9 legislation are taking the responsibility away from standing committees where it appropriately belongs.



*Government Orders*

Our environment critic, the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, is here intently listening and I know she has raised the issues around the fact that there was a process that was going to be under way and this legislation attempts to usurp the authority of the environment committee to do its work. It allows the Minister of the Environment to dictate the scope of the environmental assessment of any project to be reviewed and it allows for, rather than requires, the National Energy Board and the Nuclear Safety Commission to pay for public participations and reviews that they choose to undertake. That is in line with the budget speech, which outlined the plan to remove assessment of energy projects from the Environmental Assessment Agency and give it to the NEB and the NSC.

In British Columbia, we recently had a Supreme Court of Canada ruling where MiningWatch Canada raised an issue. The Supreme Court said that the federal regulators erred when they failed to subject the Red Chris project to a full review under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act following its review and approval by the B.C. government. The question this raises is that there are dozens of projects under federal review including mines, highways and pipelines. The court said the so-called responsible authorities including the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada must undertake comprehensive reviews of all projects that qualify for CEAA scrutiny.

So the question then becomes, with what is in Bill C-9, what happens to that court ruling. What happens to that responsibility under CEAA to put that kind of assessment review process in place? It is very worrying that the federal government seems to be distancing itself from its responsibility as a federal regulator to oversee these kinds of processes.

In my riding we have a very difficult situation with the Chemainus River and the Halalt First Nation. The Halalt is asking for a judicial review of a water project undertaken by the District of North Cowichan. There had previously been some action by the community because they were so frustrated by their inability to have the District of North Cowichan, the provincial or the federal governments pay attention to their very legitimate concerns.

As Chief James Thomas has said a number of times, their attempt to raise the issue around the Chemainus River aquifer was not just about Halalt First Nation. It was about protecting that aquifer for all of the residents of Chemainus. They had been passionately pleading with all levels of government to come to the table with them as full partners at the table to make sure the aquifer would be protected not only for this generation but for future generations. So they have been forced into the courts. They have a petition asking the courts to order a judicial review of the \$3.6 million water project, which has been approved under both the federal and provincial environmental review processes.

Grand Chief Phillip has also commented on this and he has said:

As Indigenous Peoples, we are increasingly alarmed when third party interests are granted access to the resources of our territories, especially fresh water, government and the courts protect those corporate interests at the expense of our Aboriginal Title and Rights and of the environmental values that many British Columbians hold dear.

When we speak about the environmental values, many of us in the House keep in mind that we are not just talking about today. First nations will talk about seven generations into the future and that is

what we need to be talking about when we are looking at protecting those valuable environmental assets.

• (1345)

I want to touch on a couple of other items.

I want to speak very briefly about Canada Post. Bill C-9 removes Canada Post's legal monopoly on outgoing international letters. The bill includes some provisions from previous bills, Bill C-14 and Bill C-44. I want to acknowledge the work done by the member for Hamilton Centre in raising concerns around this issue.

I live in a rural community. It is essential that we protect the ability of Canada Post to deliver cost-effective services to all residents in Canada. One way is to continue Canada Post's exclusive privilege to collect, transmit and deliver letters, including international letters, which is what is referenced in this piece of legislation. This would allow Canada Post to maintain its universal obligation. In many communities Canada Post is the lifeline. It is the mechanism by which people receive and send their correspondence at an affordable rate.

The member for Hamilton Mountain identified that where deregulation of that kind has happened in other countries, the costs have gone up and many postal workers have lost their jobs. Surely a piece of legislation called the jobs and economic growth act should look at protecting jobs, and not include measures that would do away with jobs.

Other New Democrats have mentioned that we will not be out of the recession until we have full job recovery. Many communities do not have full job recovery. The kinds of initiatives the government has proposed with respect to Canada Post will see job loss, not job recovery.

I want to touch on a couple of things that are particular to first nations, Métis and Inuit. This week the House had an emergency debate on the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Bill C-9 does not provide any continuation of the funding for it. On Tuesday night, over the several hours we debated this matter, there were passionate pleas for an extension of this funding.

I remind the House once again that the evaluation done on behalf of Indian and Northern Affairs talked about the program's effectiveness. It said that there was almost unanimous agreement among those canvassed that the AHF has been very successful at achieving its objectives in governance and fiscal management. Just to be clear, not only did it achieve its objectives but it has been fiscally responsible.

*Government Orders*

Every member who spoke on Tuesday night talked about the effectiveness of the AHF. Members mentioned that it is a grassroots community-driven organization and that it is culturally appropriate. Conservative members, without exception, talked about its effectiveness. A member asked me why the Conservative government would cancel a program that it agrees is effective. There simply is no answer to that.

It is very disappointing that the budget does not acknowledge the good work the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has done. The funding should be reinstated so the program can continue until residential school survivors have received the healing they need to become healthy, active, participating members of their communities, socially, culturally and economically. It is an outrage that it was not included in the budget.

With regard to violence against aboriginal women, we know that \$10 million was earmarked in the throne speech, but we would like to see a commitment to continue the funding for the Native Women's Association of Canada. The Native Women's Association of Canada has done a Sisters in Spirit follow-up report, which laid out a number of factors that should be included.

At this juncture, we have no confidence that the Native Women's Association of Canada will continue to be funded, included in the action plan and the implementation of it. It needs to be at the table as a full partner in developing the action plan and implementing it.

The association has made a number of recommendations. In my short 20 minutes I will not have time to go through all of them, but I want to touch on a couple.

• (1350)

One is with respect to the reduction of violence against aboriginal women and girls, which results in their disappearance and death.

The association is recommending that the association and all levels of government work collaboratively to review and consolidate existing recommendations from all of the commissions and inquiries that have occurred.

The Native Women's Association needs to participate as a full member in developing a work plan to identify outstanding recommendations and priorities for action. The Native Women's Association, governments and police need to collaborate to develop policies and procedures that address the issues of prostitution, trafficking and sexual exploitation of children by focusing on the perpetrators, preventing the abuse and ensuring that the victims are not penalized, criminalized or had their personal autonomy restricted.

There needs to be a reduction of poverty experienced by aboriginal women and girls that will increase their safety and security, and a reduction in homelessness and an increased ability of aboriginal women to access safe, secure and affordable housing which meets minimum standards of cleanliness and repair. Finally, there needs to be improved access to justice for aboriginal women and girls and their families. There is a whole list of recommendations that fall under that subject.

I want to specifically address the Canada Council on Learning and First Nations University. A letter from the Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development to the Prime Minister indicated:

The research, analysis and reporting capacity of an organisation such as CCL represents an important asset in a knowledge-driven economy. At the OECD, we have watched CCL's rapid evolution with interest. I have been impressed with the above-mentioned Composite Learning Index, which integrates robust measures across varied dimensions of learning and enables individuals and communities to assess the impact of learning on social and economic outcomes.

As we know, investing in a knowledge economy not only supports economic resilience and fuels economic growth, but also improves health levels, strengthens community, and heightens employment prospects.

In light of that letter from the OECD, one would think that the Canada Council on Learning's funding had been extended. Sadly, its funding has been cut. An organization that has raised issues, has monitored, has reported and has evaluated is losing its funding.

Its recent report, "Taking Stock: Lifelong Learning in Canada 2005–2010", is a very good overview. It indicates that our country has a fundamental data gap in post-secondary education. It states:

Canada has the greatest deficiencies in acquisition and use of data on learning after high school of any OECD country. This renders the country capable of: matching labour market demand to supply; providing adequate information on which students can base study and career decisions; establishing accountability for resources expended and determining how much and what progress is being made.

Another report indicates that the discrepancy in post-secondary education attainment for first nations can be attributed to the university level. Only 8% of aboriginal people age 25 to 64 had completed a university degree compared to 23% of non-aboriginal Canadians.

The CCL has excellent information. One would probably suspect that because the CCL has raised some very troubling issues its funding was cut. Because it has raised some issues around aboriginal people, I want to touch on the report, "Walk In Our Moccasins, A Comprehensive Study of Aboriginal Education Counsellors in Ontario".

The CCL outlines a number of factors that are essential for aboriginal learners to complete post-secondary and K-12 learning. It talks about a culturally enhanced and supported curriculum taught by caring educators, teaching strategies and assessments that are culturally reinforcing and diverse, and adequate economic well-being.

That leads me to First Nations University of Canada. We know that the provincial and federal governments cut its funding. The provincial government has reinstated it, but the federal government has only reinstated a portion of the funding. The former grand chief of Prince Albert Grand Council, Gary Merasty, wrote a very good op-ed saying that FNUC has turned the corner. He pointed out that in Saskatchewan 50% of the population will be first nations by 2045, and that First Nations University is an essential factor in terms of the economic health and well-being of that province.

Any economy that is going to thrive and grow needs an educated and trained workforce. First Nations University has a vital role to play in that.

For all of the reasons I have outlined, New Democrats will be opposing this budget implementation bill.

*Statements by Members*

●(1355)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech. I would say that I am disappointed but not surprised that the NDP will be voting against jobs and economic growth for Canadians.

However, I will give the NDP some credit. It has become a liberal think-tank, after all. Principles that are put forward by the NDP within a few short months become Liberal policy. I point to the NDP's platform on EI. Philosophically I did not agree with it, but the Liberal Party saw fit to adapt it this weekend.

After the thinkers' conference, the leader of the Liberal Party came back and endorsed the NDP's corporate tax plan, which would cost Canada jobs and economic growth. In fact, if we consider the KPMG report that was issued this week on competitiveness and we see that Canada has now climbed to second overall in competitiveness, it demonstrates the success of advantage Canada as a plan for Canada to continue down this path of being a jobs and economic growth leader.

We know that Canada is leading all of its trading partners in economic growth and job creation, and obviously the prospects of the Canadian economy are much better than the prospects of our trading partners. If being in first place is not good enough to support the government's economic agenda, in which place would the member like to see us?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, we can refer to any different set of numbers to argue our position on any kind of matter. I would say that there are many parts where we are falling dismally behind.

With respect to first nations, Métis and Inuit, we have some of the highest rates of tuberculosis in the western world, in Nunavut it is 185 times the average rate. When we look at the wellness indexes and we take into consideration housing, water and education, first nations are something like 67th or 87th when looking at the composite numbers.

Some parts of our country may be doing very well, but there are many places in Canada where the unemployment rates are still unacceptably high. We will not have a full recovery until we have that job recovery. Many of us want to see that kind of job recovery before we are willing to jump on that number one bandwagon.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her interventions, particularly on First Nations University.

The budget does not really address jobs, veterans, families, climate change, culture, clean energy and first nations to name a few. The list goes on and on.

The member will also know that the government had promised to create 190,000 new jobs, but now it is some 135,000. At the bottom of the recession, we are looking at over 300,000 people having lost their jobs since October 2008.

I would ask the member whether or not she believes that the government in fact put us into a recession even before the global economic recession, and put itself in a position where it cannot address the priorities of this nation.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, clearly this country has not had a full job recovery. What those job numbers actually cloak is the fact that often those jobs are seasonal, part-time, contract work. They are not the kinds of full-time, full-year jobs that people in this country need in order for families to have that kind of economic security. Until we have that kind of job recovery, we do not have a recovery.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member will have six minutes to conclude the questions and comments period after oral questions.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of the House an important milestone in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country. The Okanagan Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of maestro Rosemary Thomson, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

I had an opportunity, with my wife, to attend its performance on Friday night. It was just spectacular. This is marking its place as a cornerstone of the arts community in the Okanagan.

Our Conservative government is supporting the symphony and other arts organizations in our riding, through the endowment incentives component of the Canada cultural investment fund, which matches donations from individuals, companies and community groups, and ensures a long-term future for the arts across Canada.

Congratulations to the Okanagan Symphony Orchestra on reaching this milestone and congratulations to the many donors, volunteers and patrons in Kelowna—Lake Country who continue to support and nurture an appreciation for the arts in our community.

\* \* \*

●(1400)

**WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to bring to the attention of this House that tomorrow, April 2, is World Autism Awareness Day.

Autism is a pervasive disorder which affects one person in 110, and millions of people around the world, including thousands of Canadians.

We need a national strategy in this country to help those who are living with autism and their families, a strategy to address the challenges brought on by autism, with child, adolescent and adult supports. We know this will not solve autism. However, if we can make people aware of the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention, maybe we can make lives a little easier.

The importance of World Autism Awareness Day is to give a voice to all those undiagnosed, misunderstood and looking for help. Children and persons with autism must be given the opportunity to lead full and meaningful lives.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**INSTITUT NAZARETH ET LOUIS-BRAILLE**

**Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for 150 years, the Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille has been the sole rehabilitation centre specializing in vision loss in Quebec.

It provides services to children, youth, adults and seniors. Seniors have access to a program that helps them adapt and readjust to an active lifestyle at home and within society. The program has two multidisciplinary teams, partly made up of volunteers, whose work is very important in the provision of services at the institute.

My father, Paul Guay, lost 80% of his vision a few years ago. As a result, he also lost his driver's licence, and, most importantly, his pride in being independent. Thanks to the seniors' program, he is keeping up with his volunteer work, at the age of 80, and remains active and healthy.

The institute's work helps people like my father maintain their dignity and be proud of actively contributing to society.

\* \* \*

[English]

**UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for Edmonton—Strathcona, I am privileged to have three university campuses in my constituency: the University of Alberta main campus, Campus Saint-Jean, and King's University.

Faculty, students and their families have shared their concerns that advanced education is becoming increasingly unaffordable.

At the U of A, on top of rising tuition fees, students must pay new fees, and faculty must take 8 to 13 days of unpaid leave.

Market modifiers, or higher tuition fees, have been imposed for professional faculties, assuming they will earn more after graduation. This hurts those least able to pay, and increases an already high debt burden. Few law graduates can consider a public interest career.

This week, I met with U of A medical students concerned that as medical fees increase, access will be denied to many at a time when we have a need for more doctors.

There is no better investment than the education of young Canadians and to ensure accessibility for more than the privileged few. I am sure members will agree with Dr. Paul Capon, that education and learning are at the heart of a democratic society.

Should our federal government not be contributing more?

\* \* \*

**ROYAL REGIMENT OF CANADIAN ARTILLERY**

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 18th Battery of the 10th Field Regiment, RRCA Saskatchewan.

First activated in Regina as the 26th Field Battery, 100 years ago today, this is the longest continuously serving Canadian artillery unit in the province of Saskatchewan.

In 1920 the independent 26th Field Battery became the 10th Field Brigade, a part of which was the 18th Field Battery. After World War II, they grew to become known as the 10th Field Regiment.

Gunners of the 18th Battery, 10th Field Regiment, have served us bravely for a century, in two great wars, in Korea, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and they continue to serve us today.

I ask all members to rise with me to salute these men and women. These dedicated regular and reserve volunteers have placed themselves in harm's way, so that we in Canada might never feel the pain of war in our own country.

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[Translation]

**DAFFODIL MONTH**

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the great honour to rise today to mark the start of Daffodil Month. This month, volunteers across Canada will spread awareness and raise money to fight cancer.

● (1405)

[English]

Based on current incidence rates, two in five Canadians will develop some form of cancer in their lifetime. Few will be untouched by this disease. However, an ounce of prevention, primary prevention, is worth a pound of cure. We are saddened that the government has denied funding to environmental and occupational cancer prevention projects.

We implore the government to implement a PET imaging strategy that would provide earlier diagnosis and more appropriate treatment. Many cancers are being found too late.

It is time for the government to do more. We need better data, better research, and better tools to implement preventative measures, find it earlier and provide better care for Canadians with cancer and their families.

\* \* \*

**WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY**

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is the third World Autism Awareness Day. Twelve years ago today, my son Jaden was diagnosed with autism. For the last two years on this day, I have shared Jaden's story, but this time I want to focus on his 10-year-old sister, Jenae.

As with many siblings of people with autism, our family's attention often seems to be on someone else and yet Jenae never complains. She sees the good in her brother, often pointing out, for example, that Jaden never fights with her like her friends' brothers do. When she was five, she described their relationship this way: "I'm Jaden's little sister, but sometimes I'm like his big sister".

She is Jaden's guardian, his helper, his teacher and his friend. Jenae's name is Hebrew for "God has replied" and there are countless others all across this country just like her: people like Josh Bortolotti, Jeanette Holden and the member for Sydney—Victoria.

They are answers to prayers both spoken and unspoken. We thank God for them today on behalf of those who may not be able to say it themselves.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### DAFFODIL MONTH

**Mr. Nicolas Dufour (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, April is the month that brings good weather, but it is also the month when we are reminded that we must never give up in our fight against cancer.

Daffodil Month begins today, and that is why I invite everyone to support the volunteers who will be spending the coming month raising money and making their community aware of the fight against this terrible disease, which affects two in five people.

The money raised by the sale of daffodils, which symbolize hope and courage, will be used to fund research projects, distribute information about cancer and provide support for people who have been or will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime.

I would also like to invite all my colleagues to wear a daffodil for the month of April to show their support for all those touched by cancer.

\* \* \*

[English]

### DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

**Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform tabled Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Constitution Act, 1867, our government's commitment to restore the democratic principle of representation by population right here in the House of Commons.

This legislation will update the current formula that was designed in 1985 and will restore fair representation in the House to all Canadians, regardless of the province in which they live. That is because we believe that each Canadian's vote should carry equal weight.

Over time, representation of Canadians from the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia was underrepresented. Our government has taken a principled approach that strikes a balance between restoring fair representation for faster-growing provinces while protecting the seat counts of slower-growth provinces.

We believe that all Canadians deserve to be represented in the people's House, this House of Commons. This bill is about giving

### Statements by Members

the new Canada a new voice for the millions of new Canadians who have entered these three new provinces.

\* \* \*

### MIDGET AAA HOCKEY

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, March 21, the Charlottetown OK Tire Abbies won the Atlantic provinces midget AAA hockey championship. Teams from Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island participated in this Atlantic tournament. The Abbies went undefeated during the tournament and won the championship for the second straight year.

The Abbies defeated their hosts, the Summerside Hemphill GM Capitals, in a 5 to 3 victory in the championship game. Their victory on Sunday marks the end of a very successful season. The team dominated the Atlantic midget AAA hockey circuit, winning the Monctonian, the Sherwood-Parkdale Early Bird, the Charlottetown Spud and the Prince Edward Island midget AAA tournaments. The Abbies were capably coached by Mark White, Mike White and Steve Ramsay, and were managed by Jerry MacKenna and Kevin Ramsay.

I would like all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Charlottetown AAA midget Abbies for their tournament win and their very successful season. Every member of this team has every reason to be proud and I do want to wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as part of Canada's economic action plan, our government is making unprecedented investments in infrastructure projects. To date, almost 16,000 projects are completed or under way in every corner of this country. Roads and bridges, college and university campuses, arenas and recreation centres, and water treatment facilities are being built, upgraded and renewed, thanks to our investments.

These stimulus projects are creating jobs and hope in the largest cities and smallest towns from coast to coast to coast. According to the Conference Board of Canada, infrastructure spending provides a larger stimulus to the economy during a recession, and "provides a bigger bang for the buck".

The Conference Board of Canada finds that every dollar spent on infrastructure increases real gross domestic product by as much as \$1.20, and with Statistics Canada reporting yesterday that Canada's economy grew for the fifth straight month, it is clear that Canada's economic action plan is working.

Jobs and economy remain our government's top priority.

*Statements by Members***MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, workers in Hamilton are still reeling after the abrupt announcement by Siemens that it will be closing its doors, putting 550 people out of work.

The province lost a “competitive process” to Charlotte, North Carolina, a state that will not only get our current jobs but a \$130 million expansion as well.

It is disgraceful, but at least the province was at the table. Where was the federal government in this process? Apparently AWOL again. When we asked about the Siemens closure in this House, the Minister of Industry replied that what he was doing for Hamilton was bringing new jobs in the health service field to our community. Say what?

Clearly, the Conservative government has no industrial strategy for creating and protecting manufacturing jobs, and no green energy strategy that could support the Siemens plant here. We cannot win a fight if we are not even in it.

This issue is about the future of Canada's manufacturing sector and the future of family sustaining jobs, without which the government will not have the money to make more health care announcements.

When will the government start to care about more than big banks and the oil patch? The Siemens plant is not closing until July of next year. There is still time to act, but the clock is ticking and the time to act is now.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recently learned, and were surprised to learn, that murderers sentenced to life imprisonment receive a monthly old age security pension. It was even more surprising to hear the leader of the Bloc publicly defending criminals' rights and demanding that a killer who savagely murdered 11 children still receive his old age pension.

Although this notorious criminal is serving a life sentence for horrible crimes against children and adolescents, the Bloc leader thinks that he should still receive his federal government pension to help his rehabilitation. This is a slap in the face to any family who has had a loved one murdered. I am outraged.

The Bloc should stop blocking Conservative government initiatives to fight crime and rehabilitate their victims. The leader of the Bloc claims to stand up for Quebec, but it seems he is actually standing up for criminals.

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**ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today is a dark day for thousands of aboriginals in Quebec and Canada. Because of funding cuts to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, 134 community services will no longer be available to them.

One of the victims, the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, lost one-third of its budget. This morning, three women stayed home because they no longer have jobs. The shelter, which helps over 200 aboriginal women and their children every year, no longer has the means to offer workshops on such topics as violence, surviving rape and self-esteem. It has also lost the services of a psychologist.

This government is simply not aware of the negative impact of its decisions on aboriginal peoples. In the 2010 budget speech, the government said that it would continue to offer a helping hand to those who need it. This is not a helping hand. This is yet another slap in the face for aboriginal peoples.

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[English]

**CRIME**

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute to the greatest crime solvers in our nation. Police admit it is not themselves, but families and communities.

On February 26 hard-working and transplanted Newfoundlander, Donna O'Reilly, was abducted without trace outside her place of work in Moncton. The family offered a \$25,000 reward and spread word in the community. The RCMP worked the file hard, St. Bernards held vigils, and a whole community took note.

Then 27 days later, she escaped her captor. On March 24 a Purolator truck driver, made aware by the campaigns, recognized her running up St. George Boulevard and took her to police. The police then picked up the captor, who has been remanded.

Donna O'Reilly, husband Harold and daughters Amy and Karen are the heroes we all want to be. We should all remember that saving society is not up to government and police alone, but also families and communities like the O'Reilly's in Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

It was through a strong woman's will, a vibrant community's vigilance, and a tight family's love that Donna O'Reilly is alive today.

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● (1415)

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal leader thinks his tax and spend approach will create jobs and economic growth. He is wrong. These are failed Liberal policies from a generation ago. They did not work then and they will not work now.

We know this because yesterday Statistics Canada reported that for the fifth consecutive month Canada's economy grew. In five of the past seven months, Canada has seen job gains and since July almost 160,000 new jobs have been created. Lower taxes are helping fuel Canada's recovery.

Our government believes that families, businesses and individuals deserve to keep more of their hard-earned money. We are the only party in this House that believes this and we are proud of our government's record on reducing taxes. Yet the Liberal leader would throw Canada's advantage away by recklessly establishing a job-killing business tax, raising the GST and imposing a carbon tax.

Simply put, the Liberal leader's tax and spend agenda would hurt families and set Canada back.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### STATUS OF WOMEN

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister wrote to his ministers and ministers of state when they assumed office. In his statement on ministerial responsibility and accountability, he stated that it was the responsibility of ministers:

...to uphold the highest standards of probity and ethical conduct in recognition of the fact that it is a privilege and a trust to participate in the process through which Canadians govern themselves.

I wonder if the Prime Minister could please tell us how the standards, which he himself set out so clearly in the letter he wrote to all ministers, are compatible with the behaviour of the minister of state for women.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister of state for women has answered all questions on the matters that have been raised.

The minister of state continues to do good work for Canadian women. I note, for example, the tabling of the matrimonial property rights bill, and the support we have received on that from the Native Women's Association of Canada. I note the strong job growth and the strong economic growth figures we had yesterday which indicates that not just the minister of state for women but that all ministers of this government continue to do good work on things that matter.

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we now know that this document, which the Prime Minister released with such fanfare when his cabinet was appointed, actually means nothing.

We have a minister who clearly was in breach of transport regulations because of her behaviour at an airport. We have a minister who told the House that there was only one assistant who wrote four letters. We now know there were five assistants who wrote at least ten letters.

How is that behaviour in any way compatible with the standards that the Prime Minister set out in his own guidelines? He is in breach of his own guidelines.

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is a great deal of misinformation in the member's question and I have in fact addressed those issues.

However, I will take the opportunity to use this time to highlight today one of the great projects that we just finalized, working with Madame Jeannette Corbiere Lavell of the Native Women's

### Oral Questions

Association of Canada. As members know, Sisters in Spirit and the incredible research they did came to a close yesterday, but today we finalized the first of a series of projects over the next five years to help address the very serious issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's behaviour is no longer the issue; the issue is the Prime Minister's standards. That is the issue. This question is for the Prime Minister, not the minister.

What does it mean when the Prime Minister's document says that ministers will be held to a certain standard of personal conduct, yet clearly the message is that the minister can get away with anything? This is the Prime Minister's scandal now.

• (1420)

[English]

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Minister of State (Status of Women), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have addressed this issue a number of times. However, I will tell the member opposite that I, along with our government, have done a significant number of things to benefit Canadian women, including the positive change that we have made at Status of Women Canada, where we have an action plan for women which is focused on three pillars: women's economic security, ending violence against women, and seeing more women in leadership and democracy across the country.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's resistance to accept his responsibility and fire the Minister of State for the Status of Women is really beyond belief. Canadians are registering their disgust by saying, "I'm a Conservative. I'm not a fan of her. I won't vote for her again. I think she should be asked to step down". Those are just the people in the minister's own constituency.

Why is the Prime Minister the only person left who thinks the minister should remain in cabinet?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has spoken to the issues that have been raised by the member for Malpeque on a good number of occasions.

What we should be focusing on are the priorities of Canadians. We are beginning to see a fragile economic recovery take hold in this country. We have seen more than a quarter million net new jobs be created across Canada these past six months. We saw in January alone the economy in Canada grow by 0.6%. That is more jobs, more hope and more opportunity.

Let us focus on the Canadian people's business.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, has there already been a trip to Rideau Hall? The usually bombastic Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities seems to be now the meek and mild minister for public apology.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Malpeque has the floor.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** The minister is well-known for dispatching her own employees. She has reportedly gone through five chiefs of staff, five communication directors and seven drivers as minister.

When will the Prime Minister say that enough is enough, accept his responsibility, apply the ministerial code and fire his minister?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know about that long rant by the member for Malpeque but I do thank him for his comments on my performance.

Let us look at the Conference Board of Canada. It released a report just yesterday that said:

Increased infrastructure spending is estimated to have contributed about 0.4 per cent to overall economic growth in Canada in 2009. And...this year, another 0.5% ... GDP growth....

That is great news. We are seeing a fragile economic recovery take hold. We are pleased with the economic news we have seen so far but we are not satisfied. We will remain focused on jobs and the economy.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, by way of explaining why he had voted against eliminating the waiting period, the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup said that there had to be a minimum period for analysis, to ensure that people were really entitled to EI. The time for analysis has nothing to do with the waiting period. What is more, the member is implying that the unemployed are out to defraud the system.

Instead of coming up with bogus, insulting excuses for refusing to eliminate the waiting period, will the Prime Minister abide by the will of the House and give royal recommendation to the Bloc Québécois bill?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the Bloc that should explain its position. This government has created many measures to help the unemployed during this global recession, but the Bloc has voted against those measures.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I invite him to debate with me in front of any group of unemployed workers anywhere in Quebec or Canada.

Incredibly, seven months before he was elected, this member signed a petition calling for the waiting period to be eliminated. As mayor of La Pocatière, he was in favour of eliminating the waiting period; during his campaign, he was in favour of eliminating it; but once he got here, he became a yes-man, just like his fellow yes-men, the token Quebecers.

Will this Prime Minister take a stand and give Quebec something else?

● (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc asked for an additional two weeks of benefits for the unemployed, and our government gave them an additional five weeks of benefits, as well as measures for long-tenured workers.

The Bloc voted against that, because what it really wants is for the federal government never to do anything. That is the real position of a separatist party, but the people of Quebec want a government that acts on behalf of Quebecers.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government maintains that employment insurance premiums are set by an independent body. However, in the budget, it clearly announces that it will rake in a \$19.2 billion surplus between 2011 and 2015.

How can the government claim that it does not have control over the employment insurance fund when it is already announcing that the fund will generate inordinate surpluses?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when we presented measures to help the unemployed, I noticed that the Bloc voted against every single one of them. I also want to share this new reality with the Bloc MPs. When we presented our economic action plan, they voted against it. We just got our report card from Statistics Canada.

For the fifth month in a row, Canada's gross domestic product has increased by 0.6%. That means we made the right decisions, which they voted against.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister does not have the courage to answer the question.

The reality is that the employment insurance fund is controlled by the government. Like the Liberals before them, the government will continue to set overly high premiums and try to pay out the least amount of benefits possible in order to generate huge surpluses for paying down the deficit.

Why does the government not acknowledge that, just like the Liberals, it will continue to gouge the unemployed?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when we froze premiums for two years at \$1.73 per \$100 of earnings, the Bloc again stood up and voted against that measure at a time when the unemployed needed it the most: during the global economic crisis.

I want to remind the hon. member that if we had accepted the Bloc's proposal, a person receiving the full amount of employment insurance would have received \$914. Our additional five weeks gave \$2,285 to the unemployed, or \$1,371 more than what the Bloc proposed.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Prime Minister why he refused to pay back the \$60 billion the Liberals stole from the employment insurance fund. He said he could not change history; he could not change the past.



The government has apologized for residential schools. It has compensated Chinese immigrants for the head tax. But when the time comes to atone for a blatant theft, why is he abandoning the unemployed?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very sorry that money was stolen from the EI fund 10 years ago by another government. That \$60 billion is gone; that is the sad reality. We have established a system that will prevent anything like that from ever happening again, which is to the benefit of unemployed Canadians.

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is happening here simply is not right. Here is what the former EI fund chief actuary, Mr. Michel Bédard, had to say, “The Budget Implementation Act...is now formally and finally wiping out the accumulated EI surpluses worth \$57.2 billion”, \$7 billion of that under the Conservative government.

The Prime Minister told the House that “every dollar in EI premiums should be used for the benefit of workers”. Why is the Prime Minister legalizing this Liberal theft?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Let me go back, Mr. Speaker. As everybody knows, that money, some 10 years ago, was taken by the previous government and used for other priorities. That is the reality. The \$60 billion no longer exists. It has been spent.

We are instituting a system that will protect workers' premiums in the future and ensure they are used for the programs. That is our commitment and that is what we have done. I am sorry the leader of the NDP and his party have chosen not to support that.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is going to make the workers and small businesses pay a second time for the money that was stolen.

Here is what the member for York—Simcoe, speaking for his party right before it took power, said:

The Conservative Party believes that the government needs to be held accountable for the cumulative balance in the Employment Insurance account...We believe that the slate must not be wiped clean.

The Conservative Party believes that this surplus is the property of those who have made the contributions to Employment Insurance—the workers and employers of Canada.

The Prime Minister's cabinet colleague had it right. Is he wrong today?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP knows full well that this money has been spent. It was spent years ago by the previous government. That is the reality.

As I said before, we cannot change the past. We can set up a better system for the future. When we do so, I wish the NDP would join us and actually support these things.

What matters is not crying about the past. What matters is doing something now to help the unemployed and the workers of the country. That is what this government is doing.

### Oral Questions

#### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence says that he never received any face-to-face warnings about the risk of torture. However, senior diplomat, Cory Anderson, says that he met the minister five times on the ground in Kandahar when he was a political adviser. They discussed torture in Afghan jails as a mission killer. The minister did not listen to Anderson, did not listen to Colvin and denied ever being warned.

The minister has been misleading the Canadian public and the House. Why?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, virtually everything my colleague has said is incorrect. Nothing new was introduced when he spoke to committee yesterday. There were no specific allegations of any abuse. In fact, Mr. Anderson stated, quite clearly, that the rigid monitoring regime that was put in place by this government had been effective and that there was not a problem.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Anderson spent 20 months on the ground in Kandahar. He testified that the NDS was not a viable partner then, is not a viable partner now and that a real risk of torture still exists.

Having met with Cory Anderson, having met with Colvin, having been warned by Colvin and by a series of national and international reports, when will the minister own up to his responsibility for ignoring warnings of torture and, as General Laroche said and wrote, for putting our troops in a difficult position?

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, that is a complete mischaracterization of what Mr. Anderson testified yesterday at committee. In fact, he said, “In my experience and in the interviews...that I took at the NDS, we never uncovered a specific allegation of abuse”. There are no specific allegations. He made no specific allegations.

\* \* \*

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has a very simple choice to make. It can continue to cut corporate taxes, which cost \$6 billion a year, while the deficit sits at more than \$50 billion, or it can invest in Canadians. Lower corporate taxes is fine as a goal to work toward, but that alone will not build a strong competitive Canadian economy. We also need to invest in the brain power of young Canadians and world-class innovations.

Why do the Conservatives choose more corporate tax cuts instead of science and education?

*Oral Questions*

●(1435)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not only the federal government, but most of the provinces have chosen to follow the path of reducing business taxes. This is to give Canada a competitive advantage. This is the competitive advantage that KPMG talked about earlier this week when it confirmed Canada was the most competitive industrialized country for job creators. It also encouraged Canada and the provinces not to rest on our laurels, but to stay the course to create jobs for Canadians.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a KPMG study, in the largest study of its kind, shows that Canada is already among the most competitive countries in the world in terms of the cost of doing business. Corporate taxes have been reduced—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl has the floor. We will have some order, please.

**Ms. Siobhan Coady:** Mr. Speaker, that is thanks to successive Liberal governments. Corporate taxes have been reduced by almost one-third since 2000, giving us a rate that is 25% better than the rate in the United States.

Will the government redirect the money from extra corporate tax cuts to reinvest in education and ensure we fix the skills shortages we face in Canada?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, surely the member opposite is not suggesting that she would compare Canada's economic performance with that of the United States. We are doing a lot better than our competitors. Part of that is because we have been reducing taxes in Canada, reducing taxes of all kind, reducing the GST, reducing personal income taxes, reducing business taxes.

Unlike the self-description of the Leader of the Opposition as a "tax and spend Liberal", we will not raise the GST, we will not raise income taxes, we will not raise business taxes as the member's party proposes.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after recognizing the Quebec nation, this government is calling for representation by population to diminish the political weight of Quebec. At the time of the Act of Union, it was not a good idea because it favoured Quebec, whose population was greater than that of Ontario. Today, it is being considered because it is not to Quebec's advantage.

Can this government explain why it always finds good reasons for weakening the political weight of Quebec and going against the unanimous will of the National Assembly?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is completely untrue.

My colleague knows as well as I do that there are 75 seats in Quebec even though the population is not growing as quickly as that

of other provinces. If the Bloc achieved its goal, Quebec would have no seats. It would have no seats here, in the House of Commons.

The real political setback here was caused by the Bloc, which has isolated Quebec and kept it in the opposition for the past 20 years. That does not make for a strong voice.

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are 47 Bloc Québécois members here and they were chosen by Quebecers. They did not choose the Conservatives and there are good reasons for that.

The real reason for adding 30 seats west of Quebec was revealed by the Prime Minister's former adviser, Tom Flanagan. Since the Bloc Québécois has had six majorities in Quebec and the Conservatives are incapable of obtaining a single majority government, the only means they have identified is increasing the number of seats west of Quebec.

This reform is nothing more than a partisan manoeuvre that is detrimental to the Quebec nation.

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is ridiculous. Six majorities and they have accomplished nothing. I can see that this is shameful. We have done a great deal more in four years than they have in 20 years. That is because they have isolated Quebec in the opposition. Let me be clear: the Bloc Québécois logic is so twisted that, to create division, it sets aside its fine principle of fairness. That is shameful and is not an honest argument.

\* \* \*

●(1440)

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since April 1, 2005, the government has started taking \$2.4 billion worth of protection money from Quebec, at a rate of \$238 million per year until 2016.

Seven provinces, however, got preferential treatment in the form of \$1.9 billion in complete debt forgiveness. Quebec has asked that the issue be revisited, but the federal government did not act on this request. There is a double standard.

How can the government financially strangle Quebec to the tune of \$2.4 billion while at the same time telling other Canadian provinces not to worry because the government will forgive their debt?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, transfers to Quebec will not be reduced. Equalization currently accounts for 17.4% of provincial revenues in Quebec. They stood at a mere 8.6% under the Liberal government in 2005-06.

\* \* \*

**TAX HARMONIZATION**

**Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance would be well advised to check page E26 of the Quebec budget speech. He would find it instructive.

The minister is very imaginative when it comes to helping the other Canadian provinces, but his unyielding attitude toward Quebec is legendary. This goes for protection money as well as for the GST.

He changed the equalization scheme for Ontario and British Columbia, but dismissed Quebec, telling it to go fry an egg, or better yet a dozen eggs.

How can the Minister of Finance be so accommodating for the other provinces and so hard on Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of nerve to stand in the House and say that Quebec is being shortchanged by the federation. In fact, 17.4% of the Quebec budget comes from the revenues of Canada, the equalization transfers to Quebec. The minister of finance in his budget, the first statement he made about federal transfers, thanked the Government of Canada for not balancing the budget on the backs of the provinces by cutting transfers, like the Liberal government did.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Conservative government has shown its lack of good faith and its contempt for Quebec. The principles of predictability and tax fairness among provinces are fundamental principles of any federation, but the Conservatives have decided to play politics at the expense of Quebec.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he has completely disregarded Quebec and that he has no intention of coming to an agreement with the Government of Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the question is on the subject of harmonization, the member opposite should know, since his government was in power when the initial agreements were made with some of the provinces in Atlantic Canada, that the government is open to discussions, as we confirmed in budget 2010, with any province that wants to truly harmonize its sales taxes with the GST.

We are having those discussions with the Government of Quebec now. Those discussions continue, as the Minister of Finance of Quebec confirmed earlier this week at the time of his budget.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives refuse to negotiate openly and in good faith with Quebec for purely partisan reasons. Their excuses change from day to day, and their position is as twisted and unpredictable as their position on maternal health. The Conservatives' behaviour is not what we would expect from a federal government. No province should be faced with this kind of intimidation.

Why does the Prime Minister not understand that it is unacceptable to force his own interests on the taxpayers of Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member opposite knows or ought to know that there are certain principles with respect to harmonization. One of them is that one actually has to harmonize the tax. This is key. I will come back to that. One has to harmonize the tax.

We are prepared to continue that discussion with the Government of Quebec, as we had previously with the Government of Ontario

and the Government of British Columbia, and with other provinces that may be interested.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shell-shocked this morning to learn of the government's late-night decision to kill the ecoEnergy retrofit program for homeowners. Up until yesterday, the government was training energy auditors and even announced more money for the program in its budget.

Hundreds of small energy efficiency companies are now scrambling in the face of inevitable layoffs. At a time when we should be enhancing these programs, why are these Reform-Conservatives punishing Canadians who want to do the right thing and putting thousands of clean energy jobs at risk?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, ensuring the program operates within its existing budget demonstrates the prudent fiscal management Canadians have come to expect from this government. This government's commitment to energy efficiency is clear. After launching the program in 2007, we expanded its budget under the EEP, allowing thousands more Canadians to take part.

While we are reviewing the program, Canadians will continue to undertake renovations and benefit from a grant, generating a further decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.

[Translation]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a desperate attempt to find the money it needs to make up for the waste of the past 50 months, the Conservatives are cutting Canada's top energy efficiency program.

Will they tell us that the Minister of the Environment took the money for his own projects, like last time? How can the regressive Conservative regime punish the citizens who want to do what is right? How can they be willing to sacrifice thousands of jobs in green industry?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this program has seen unprecedented demand. It has been successful. A lot of money will continue to be invested over the next year. It is very ironic that a Liberal would talk here about waste. If he really wants to talk about waste, there was a spenders' conference in Montreal this past weekend. I would focus on that if I were him.

\* \* \*

[English]

## DEMOCRATIC REFORM

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government believes that, to the greatest extent possible, each Canadian's vote should carry equal weight. Unfortunately, the current formula has penalized the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and my home province of British Columbia. These three provinces do not have the number of seats in the House of Commons that they deserve.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Minister of State for Democratic Reform tell the Liberal leader, wherever he is, what our government is doing to address this under-representation?

**Hon. Steven Fletcher (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I introduced a democratic representation bill. This bill demonstrates our government's commitment to ensure fairness for faster growing provinces while protecting the seat counts of the other provinces. Our government's bill would ensure that Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario are closer to representation by population, as promised in our 2010 throne speech.

This is very good for Canada.

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**GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps we could try this a third time. The government announced in its budget 80 million new dollars to continue the popular ecoEnergy home energy retrofit program. Yet today, day one of the budget year, we learn that the government is set to pull the plug on billions of dollars worth of job creation, retrofit expenditures and energy savings for home retrofits. The result: higher energy costs, increased pollution and greenhouse gases.

Billions of dollars have been given to subsidize coal-fired power and tar sands but nothing for homeowners. Is this the government's concept of a green energy future?

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if she is so happy about the \$80 million in the last budget, I wonder why she voted against it. Her party always voted against that program.

Fortunately, a lot of money will be flowing for Canadians in the next coming year, and it is certainly not thanks to the NDP.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, sea lice is a serious problem for west coast salmon. Around the world, fish farms have been identified as a major source of sea lice infestations.

The government has launched an inquiry but by the time the recommendations come out it may be too late to protect our wild salmon.

Will the minister admit that there is a problem, do the right thing and start addressing the sea lice problem immediately, or will she allow the Pacific west coast salmon to go the way of the Atlantic cod?

• (1450)

**Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government supports a sustainable aquaculture industry. This industry contributes over a billion dollars a year to our economy and employs over 15,000 people.

We are also concerned about our wild fishery. That is why our Prime Minister appointed Justice Cohen to investigate the declines in

sockeye salmon. Justice Cohen will investigate all potential reasons for the decline, including the effects of aquaculture.

I look forward to receiving this report and I am sure the hon. member does too.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to a senior Canadian official, Afghanistan's national security directorate, the agency responsible for managing detainees, is riddled with structural problems. In other words, even though the protocol for the transfer of detainees that was amended in 2007 is still in place, the Afghan partner to which detainees are being transferred is not to be trusted.

Does the government realize that by continuing to transfer detainees, it is systematically violating Geneva conventions?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the question is an empty one. As Mr. Anderson stated yesterday before committee, the rigid monitoring scheme put in place by this government has been effective and there is not a problem today. Our troops and our officials have been doing an exceptional job under very difficult circumstances in Afghanistan and they should be praised, not tainted.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my interpretation of Mr. Anderson's testimony differs from that of the parliamentary secretary. Mr. Anderson revealed that the Afghan agency to which the army is handing over detainees is not trustworthy. That is the first thing he said. The organization responds to tribal pressure and is rife with secrecy and corruption.

Do these new revelations not prove that the government must turn over uncensored versions of all of the documents to the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan, as requested several times over the past few months, not the 6,000 pages of censored documents that it tabled this morning, so that we can find out the truth?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, here is what the witness actually said yesterday, "The 2007 arrangement I think would be recognized across the board by most officials as a vast improvement over the original transfer arrangement". He went on to talk about there not being a problem right now as far as transferring detainees, because we have a much more rigid oversight mechanism in place.

Brigadier General Denis Thompson went on to talk about the valuable information that was received from the NDS in the fight against terrorism.

So, we are making improvements. These are vast improvements over the situation we saw when we went there in 2006.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday at the environment committee, Dr. David Schindler, Canada's foremost water scientist, again provided incontrovertible evidence that oil sands operations are polluting the Athabasca River.

Why was it necessary for a lone scientist to spearhead this research that was so clearly in the public interest and therefore the government's responsibility? Where was Environment Canada?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would not agree that the allegations were incontrovertible but they certainly were serious allegations.

I can assure the hon. member that the Government of Canada and Environment Canada rigorously administer all of our environmental laws relative to regulations relating to the oil sands.

Let us be perfectly clear. We continue to support development of the oil sands in an environmentally responsible manner. We will continue to work with the Alberta government to ensure that it is developed in a responsible manner and that we live up to our objective to be a clean energy superpower.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has had time to look at Dr. Schindler's work.

Dr. Schindler presented his findings to the committee last May. How does the minister reconcile Dr. Schindler's findings with section 36 of the Fisheries Act, which prohibits dumping toxic substances into Canadian waterways?

Will the minister live up to his responsibilities for once and press charges under section 36?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have read and examined Mr. Schindler's report with some care. I have had discussions with our officials about it and we will continue to pursue it.

With respect to the Fisheries Act, Environment Canada, along with the regulatory agencies of the Government of Alberta, continue to ensure that the highest possible environmental standards are pursued relative to emissions relative to the Athabasca River.

I did not take Mr. Schindler's allegations to relate to emissions but rather to airborne emissions as opposed to Fisheries Act issues.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

**CANADA POST**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government chose to have military trucks procured out of Texas, throwing hundreds of workers out of jobs in Chatham, Ontario.

Now we hear that Canada Post is planning to buy thousands of vehicles from Turkey rather than the Windsor made minivans because it says that it is obliged to under NAFTA and WTO.

The problem with that excuse is that it is not true. In fact, in the midst of an economic recession when Canadian-made alternatives are available, it is unacceptable, short-sighted and inappropriate to use taxpayer money this way.

Will the minister insist that Canada Post procure Canadian-made vehicles? Taxpayers cannot afford to subsidize—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of State.

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Minister of State (Transport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague might be interested in the facts. The facts are that these are Ford Motor Company vehicles that will be maintained, retrofitted and serviced in Canada.

It is a great news story for the Ford dealers right across the country as they are purchased through those Ford dealers.

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**HIBERNIA PROJECT**

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Atlantic accord promised that Newfoundland and Labrador, not the federal government, would be the principal beneficiary of offshore oil and gas development, including the Hibernia project.

Canada took an 8.5% share in Hibernia to help kickstart the project while Newfoundland and Labrador gave tax and royalty concessions. Now the federal government has more than recouped its investment, plus over \$1 billion in dividends and, until recently, received 80% of all government revenues from Hibernia.

To redress this imbalance, will the Prime Minister negotiate the transfer of the federal stake in Hibernia to Newfoundland and Labrador as it has requested?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a matter that can be discussed as we go forward with respect to the disposition of assets. It is an issue and, as we have said in budgets, the government is looking at various assets owned by the government as to whether they still serve the purpose that was felt was needed or that they suited at the time they were acquired.

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**INTERNATIONAL AID**

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the world was shocked by the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti this past January.

In one of the most tragic events, we witnessed one nation move with lightening speed to answer the call, and that was Canada. The Canadian government was one of the first countries to respond with an immediate influx of \$5 million. We quickly followed that up with an additional \$80 million to the UN and Red Cross.

Could the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs comment on Canada's latest contribution to the effort in Haiti?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), CPC):** Indeed I can, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleague for an excellent question.

I am pleased to inform the House that Canada has indeed answered the call. Our initial contribution provided urgently needed medical services, relief supplies, food, water and shelter.

Yesterday in New York, the Minister of International Cooperation announced additional funding. The new pledge will help support the Haiti action plan and provide funding towards the priorities of the Haitian government.

As well, the minister reminded Canadians that our government will match the \$220 million so generously donated by all Canadians.

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**CORRECTIONS**

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from correctional officials, deans of law and police to former inmates, evidence that prison farms work is overwhelming.

Working with living things builds empathy and is restorative, and working on a farm builds work and life skills that are critical.

Yet the government is killing the program, killing it with no information, no proof it will save a cent. It insults farming, calling it a dead industry, and ignores rehabilitation and job skills used in other sectors.

Will the minister do the right thing? Will he visit the farms, look at how these farms transform these men's lives and save our prison farms?

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the critic is asking questions about the rights of prisoners to farm. Over the last five years, less than 1% of offenders released into the community found work in the agriculture sector. This just shows how out of touch the Liberal Party is with Canadian farmers.

Our goal with the prison system is, first, to protect the Canadian public, and second, to rehabilitate prisoners by providing them with marketable skills.

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● (1500)

[Translation]

**ST. LAWRENCE ACTION PLAN**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the St. Lawrence action plan ended on Wednesday, leaving one of the largest rivers in America without a plan or strategic vision for sustainable development. Meanwhile, the federal government announced the temporary renewal of the Canada-Ontario agreement respecting the Great Lakes basin.

By providing funding for the Ontario section of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence system and abandoning the St. Lawrence, is the government not confirming once again that, as far as it is concerned, Quebec does not exist?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, revitalizing the St. Lawrence is a priority of our

government. That is why we have invested \$75 million in it over the past five years. We are proud of the results and proud of having decontaminated sector 103 of the Montreal harbour. The time has now come to set new priorities for the next five years. I hope I can count on the support of the Bloc Québécois.

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[English]

**ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today, after the cutting of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the government has left Canada's aboriginal peoples, residential schools survivors and their communities in the cold.

During the emergency debate on the AHF, we heard that Health Canada had some kind of plan, a plan no one has seen.

Why is the government ignoring first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples? Why is it ignoring their voices that say that the AHF works for them? Why is it letting Canada's aboriginal peoples down by refusing to save the Aboriginal Healing Foundation?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians and Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course, we had a very good debate on this the other night which debate went on until midnight. We heard all sides to the issue.

However, what we heard consistently is that all survivors of Indian residential schools, wherever they are in the country, whether they live on reserve, off reserve, in self-government situations or wherever they are, every single one of them qualifies for help on everything from emotional care, cultural support, professional care, paraprofessional organizations.

We want to make sure those survivors are well looked after, and we have a plan to do that.

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**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Candice Hoepfner (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the unfortunate misnaming of H1N1 influenza last year had the potential to severely affect pork producers in my riding and across Canada.

The Canadian Pork Council president recently thanked the government, saying the ministers of agriculture and international trade acted quickly on behalf of the industry by effectively coordinating department actions to minimize market disruptions and quickly resolve issues that did occur.

Can the minister please tell the House how the government is continuing to work on behalf of Canadian pork producers?

*Points of Order*

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague from Portage—Lisgar for the great work she has done on this file.

Certainly it was my pleasure, on behalf of the agricultural department, this government as a whole and of course our new market access secretariat, to accept that award on their behalf for the great work that was done.

As members know, Canada's pork industry is world class and it exports to over 110 countries. That is why we have invested \$17 million to help better market Canadian pork around the world and keep proving that Canadian pork is safe.

I know if the leader of the Liberals were here today, he would agree with that.

**The Speaker:** I think the minister knows that referring to the absence of hon. members is not proper and he would not want to repeat that error.

\* \* \*

• (1505)

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts: Robert Davidson, André Forcier, Rita Letendre, Tom Sherman, Gabor Szilasi, Claude Tousignant, Terry Ryan and Ione Thorkelsson.

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

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with the House about to adjourn for the Easter weekend and with next week being scheduled as a constituency week for members of Parliament, I wonder if the government House leader could indicate how he intends to occupy the rest of this day and the week following the constituency week with the government's agenda.

**Hon. Jay Hill (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we will be continuing with Bill C-9, the jobs and economic growth act.

Next week, as my hon. colleague indicated, is a constituency work week.

When the House returns the week of April 12, we will hopefully be able to conclude the debate at second reading of Bill C-9 and see the jobs and economic growth act move off to committee.

Wednesday, April 14, shall be an allotted day.

While I am on my feet, I would like to wish everyone a happy Easter. As we wind down this five-week sitting, I would like to take the opportunity to recognize and thank the opposition for its cooperation and at times patience as we worked together on the people's business over the last five weeks. With the possible exception from time to time of some partisan issues in question period, we have worked very well.

I would like to extend the same sentiments of appreciation, Mr. Speaker, through you, to the House staff, who always try to serve our needs so well.

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[*Translation*]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, who just rose, stated his understanding of a French term I used yesterday. As I mentioned in my response to him yesterday, this term was correctly translated, in the context, as double-crosser.

However, since the French term, which I used correctly, can have another meaning and some people may not be sure of my meaning, I will retract it.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member. Perhaps I mentioned that, a few years ago, I decided that this expression was not acceptable in the House. I forgot this when the hon. member used it yesterday,

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie on a point of order.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during member's statements, the member for Beauport—Limoilou falsely stated that I was defending criminals, such as Mr. Olson, saying that they should receive their pension, which is completely untrue. I said the same thing as the Prime Minister said: that I understand that people are shocked by the situation and that I am as well, that the law needs to be reviewed, but that there is no simple solution. I do not have a solution and the government does not have one, given that it has not introduced a bill either.

It is appalling that people, such as the member for Beauport—Limoilou or Senator Boisvenu, would take part in such grandstanding and deceit. Yet, it does not surprise me because I know that the Conservatives have established a pattern of lying.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the point raised by the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie is regarding a problem he has with another member's comments. He has now responded. This is not a point of order; it is a matter of the facts. I consider this matter closed for now.

There are others rising on a point of order.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in response to the recent intervention by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, at least on translation, the words came across accusing the government of lying, lies and untruths.

I wonder if the member could confirm that is what he said, and if so, would he withdraw his remarks immediately.

*Speaker's Ruling*

● (1510)

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I never claimed that the government had lied. I said that the Conservatives had established a pattern of lying. That is quite different.

The Speaker already confirmed to the House that we may talk about reaching the heights of hypocrisy. That was one of your rulings, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the Bloc leader, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, is wasting the time of the House on his debating points.

Mr. Speaker, I urge you to ask the Bloc leader to retract his statements, which are unparliamentary. He was throwing out insults during question period. He does not seem to do anything but insult the Quebec members who sit in this House and who were elected democratically.

Speaking of hypocrisy, I would love to hear whether he has sold his shares in the oil sands, or whether he is waiting for the Easter break to do so.

I hope he will retract his statements, because they are insulting to all members in this House and to the Quebeckers, both men and women, who are working here for Quebec. I demand an apology from the Bloc leader.

**The Speaker:** I will look at what has been said in the House when the *Hansard* is available. If need be, I will come back to the House with a ruling in due course.

[English]

REFERENCES TO MEMBERS OR MINISTERS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on March 24, 2010, by the hon. member for Joliette, concerning comments made on the social networking site Twitter by the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans regarding the presence or absence of members in the House.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the member for Joliette for having raised this matter and the member for Ottawa—Orléans for his comments on March 29, 2010.

In raising his point of order the member for Joliette informed the House that the member for Ottawa—Orléans on March 11, 12, 18 and 19, 2010, using the Twitter site, posted the exact number of members of each party present in the House, as well as the names of some members who were absent or present.

Noting the longstanding practices that a member is not allowed to make comments on the presence or absence of members in the House and that members cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly, he contended that these rules should also apply to members using new technologies.

[English]

Intervening on March 29, 2010, the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans asserted that the Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside the House, citing *House of Commons*

*Procedure and Practice*, second edition, at page 614. He stated that not only is the social networking site Twitter outside the House, but that the House leader for the Bloc Québécois had presented no evidence that the public information shared via Twitter was initiated from the floor of the House or from the galleries.

[Translation]

Furthermore, he noted that, contrary to the claim of the member for Joliette, the information posted was not privileged but, in fact, very public. He concluded by reiterating that members have an obligation to respect privileged information, but should not have fewer rights than any other citizen in disseminating public information.

[English]

*House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, contains a number of references to the prohibition against reflecting on the presence or absence of members in the House, including the one referred to by both members at page 614, and others at pages 126, 127 and 213.

In particular, I would like to draw to the attention of members the passage on page 213 which states:

One of the Member's primary duties is to attend the sittings of the House when it is in session, unless the Member has other parliamentary or official commitments, such as committee meetings, constituency work or parliamentary exchanges. This obligation is enshrined in Standing Order 15: "Every Member, being cognizant of the provisions of the Parliament of Canada Act, is bound to attend the sittings of the House, unless otherwise occupied with parliamentary activities and functions or on public or official business". The Speaker has traditionally discouraged Members from signalling the absence of another Member from the House because "there are many places that Members have to be in order to carry out all of the obligations that go with their office".

● (1515)

[Translation]

As members are repeatedly cautioned, it is clearly unparliamentary to make reference in debate to the presence or absence of other members. The case before us is somewhat novel and, while I accept the viewpoint of the hon. member for Joliette, I also appreciate the argument made by the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans. It is clearly impossible for the Chair to police the use of personal digital devices by members, for example, by trying to distinguish whether certain texting has originated from the Chamber or not. Nor would the Chair want to change its longstanding practice of refraining from comment on statements made outside the House. That said, however, it seems to me that statements like the ones complained of are—at the very least—unfortunate and I would strongly advise all members to refrain from such behaviour in the future as you undoubtedly understand the possible repercussions on colleagues and on the reputation of the House itself.

[English]

All the same, I want to take this opportunity to address the broader issue of the ways in which these new technologies and tools challenge our historic practices and procedures. While they are extremely useful in reaching out to colleagues, constituents and the public, these technologies need to be used judiciously, not least because of the speed with which messages and images can be distributed once they are on the Internet.



On various occasions over the past months, members have raised concerns over their use in conjunction with House and committee proceedings. In fact, the very use of the social networking site Twitter has been raised as an issue in this House several times, including the case before us. For example, on October 20 and 27, and again on November 17, 2009, postings on Twitter resulted in members apologizing to this House.

[Translation]

More recently, a posting on Facebook gave rise to concern for the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt when a photograph of the member, and a statement related thereto, were posted on the popular networking site.

[English]

The House and the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs have already dealt with some of the issues related to new technologies. For example, in response to concerns about the re-use of parliamentary webcasts on March 5, 2009, the House concurred in the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This allowed us to strengthen and broaden the Speaker's permission that appears on the back page of *Debates*, concerning the reproduction and use of webcasts of House and committee proceedings.

[Translation]

Given the increasing frequency of incidents involving social networking technologies, I believe it would be helpful if the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs would consider the issues related to these technologies and their impact on House and committee proceedings.

[English]

I thank hon. members for their attention.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-9, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 4, 2010 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise here today to speak to Bill C-9. I will begin by saying that we will be voting against this bill.

I have been a member in this House for over four years. Twice now the people of Ahuntsic have given me the privilege of defending their interests and Quebec's interests with my Bloc Québécois colleagues.

My duties here have allowed me to witness first-hand the Conservative government's failure to act, and above all, its political grandstanding. In fact, even the name of the bill, the Jobs and Economic Growth Act, rather than the budget implementation bill, is

### Government Orders

itself an example of this smoke and mirrors act, as they try to convince the country that they are taking care of people.

In my speech on the budget implementation act, I will demonstrate that the government is trying to impose its right wing ideology to the detriment of women, children and even the victims it claims so loudly to defend.

First of all, consider the firearms registry. The underlying message of this budget is that the government wants to save all the pennies it can, putting the lives of our citizens in danger, particularly the lives of women and children, and even police officers. To save less than \$3 million—the undisputed number from the RCMP—the government is supporting a bill that will exempt long guns from the current firearms registry, and 90% of all guns are long guns. And they are the weapons that kill the most women and children.

Before the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on March 18, 2010, the Senior Deputy Commissioner of the RCMP, Bill Sweeney, expressed his support for maintaining the full gun registry and pointed out that there is ample evidence proving that the registry contributes to the safety of police officers and the public. He said:

I believe that there is compelling evidence that the registry promotes officer and public safety...I believe that there will be an opportunity for the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police to present to a cabinet committee that evidence.

It is clear that the gun registry not only allows for better coordination of law enforcement interventions, but also for the prevention of domestic tragedies by facilitating the seizure of weapons. It also makes it more difficult to steal firearms and easier to conduct and conclude police investigations, and that allows police to arrest criminals more quickly. The registry is consulted more than 12,000 times a day by more than 80% of police officers across Canada.

On the issue of the gun registry, the government has achieved an exceptional level of absurdity. For \$3 million in so-called savings, the government, which has more than \$242.2 million in expenditures in this budget, wants to compromise the safety of the public and law enforcement officers.

For the government, public safety is just another prop in their show. All the government ever does is put on shows and make the same old announcements. I have some examples. By the way, the shows are not very good.

The Minister of Public Safety made a major announcement on the sex offender registry by saying that the government will tighten its grip on pedophiles. We were told that \$14 million was being allocated over two years for DNA analysis. It was a big show.

In fact, we were addressing this issue before the government prorogued the House and the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security had produced a report on the sex offender registry. Furthermore, in April 2009 our committee met with the directors of two major labs, one in Quebec and the other in Ontario. There are three major laboratories in Canada: those two and the third one, run by the RCMP, which does analyses.

*Government Orders*

We received Mr. Prime from the Centre of Forensic Sciences, and Mr. Dufour from the Laboratoire de sciences judiciaires et de médecine légale. These two labs do roughly 70% of all the tests. What did these directors say in April 2009? That not only was there no agreement with the federal government, but they also had to do a tremendous amount of tests—nearly 70% of the tests—with very little money.

• (1520)

This means that it can take up to a year to get the results of these tests.

On March 18, at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security, I questioned the minister about the funding for these laboratories. I was told that there still was no agreement in place and that Quebec still had not signed the agreement for the current year. So there is no agreement.

I asked how the \$7 million a year would be split among these laboratories, and I got no answer. They do not know how they are going to divide up the money. Currently, each lab gets just over \$2 million, so they will likely get exactly the same amount, with no increase. Once again, the government is making a great show of things, but in reality there is nothing new. Even worse, nothing is being done.

I want to tell my colleagues about something that is completely absurd. They say they want to crack down on pedophiles. No problem. Yet for the past three years—during which time there have been three public safety ministers—I have been warning the government and calling on the Conservatives to stop transferring pedophiles to Correctional Services halfway houses, also known as community correctional centres, near schools and daycare centres.

The Montreal school board has also been calling for this. It passed a resolution to that effect, but nothing was done. This does not require any investment of money—it does not cost a cent—and it does not even require that a law be passed. All it requires is a simple directive at Correctional Services. Did they agree? No. Three years later, they still have not done anything. What are they waiting for? I do not know. I hope with all my heart that they will not wait for a tragedy to occur before they do something, which is what usually happens.

I will give another example. For four years, this government has been saying that it is very concerned about victims of crime. So it makes a big deal about a paltry \$6.6 million over two years to improve the federal victims strategy by making it easier for relatives of crime victims, specifically murder victims, to receive EI sickness benefits.

There is even a spokesperson who spouts all manner of falsehoods. I say “falsehoods” because I do not want to use unparliamentary language. I would use another word if I were not here in the House, but that is another story.

Why did they take four years to come up with a paltry \$6.6 million? After putting on a show for four years, claiming to be there for the victims and feeling sorry for them, they did something, providing \$6.6 million over two years. Why? On closer scrutiny, what do we find?

We know that the member for Compton—Stanstead introduced—more than once—Bill C-343 respecting the families of victims of crime. This bill would provide assistance in the form of employment insurance benefits not only to the families of murder victims, but also the families faced with the death of their minor child or the suicide of a spouse, common-law partner or child, and to parents whose minor child suffered a serious physical injury during the commission of a criminal offence. It would mean that any member of these families affected by tragedy could receive up to 52 weeks of benefits and maintain their employment relationship for up to two years.

What is the government proposing? It is proposing \$3.3 million per year only for the families of murder victims, which boils down to approximately 15 weeks of benefits. We are asking for 52 weeks for a larger number of individuals. That is what I call really helping the victims of crime.

• (1525)

They are so frantic that, on March 19, Senator Boisvenu, their spokesperson, was still telling and writing falsehoods, not to use unparliamentary language, about Bill C-343. He attempted to defend the indefensible. We will see how absurd that was. He said that budget 2010 included an additional commitment of \$52 million to help victims of crime and \$6.6 million to support the parents of a murdered child through the EI program.

That is not true. There is no \$52 million in the budget for the victims of crime. The Conservatives just love putting on smoke and mirrors shows. They are world champions at it. Unfortunately, these are not very good shows. I would not recommend them, because the shows are more pitiful than anything else.

I would like to speak about an issue that is important to me—crime prevention. We will see that they have a rather poor record. Crime prevention is not in their vocabulary. For the Conservatives, crime prevention is an obscure concept, one that they do not even understand. If they did, they would have thrown money at it since coming to power. I would say that previous governments did not do much more. However, the Conservatives claim that they are concerned about crime. Crime prevention is fundamental if we do not want people to become criminals. If we want to save our youth, we have to have prevention.

What if we are wrong? Well, I will prove that we are not wrong. We are not the only ones saying it.

There is nothing in the budget for prevention, there is nothing for the national crime prevention strategy. However, the National Crime Prevention Centre web site talks about providing communities tools, knowledge and support to undertake crime prevention initiatives in communities large and small across Canada. It is great to read that. It is encouraging.

*Government Orders*

This year, no new money has been allocated. Consequently, for over a year—and this may continue next year—the National Crime Prevention Centre, Quebec section, has been telling agencies in my riding, and they have told me as well, to not submit applications for new projects until further notice because it does not have any money and allocated amounts have already been disbursed.

I asked the minister about it when he came before the committee. It seems that no one could provide an answer. We will receive one in writing at some point, at least we hope so. I have dealt with a fair number of departments. It is fairly difficult to obtain information and a response from the department responsible for the NCPC. I will not go into that.

What are the Conservatives doing? They are doing the easiest thing, what they are paid to do and what they were sent here to do: they are making laws. Making laws is the easiest thing to do, unbelievably easy. However, making intelligent laws is not as easy, I can assure you. And when the time comes to put money into implementing those laws, it is a different story. Furthermore, there is always that narrow vision that would have us believe that putting more people in jail is in some way fighting crime. Let us just put people in jail and throw away the key and everything will be just fine. I am sorry, but no matter how many and how long the jail terms are, those individuals will be freed one day and once back on the streets they will be even more prone to crime and more dangerous.

Last Tuesday—as life and destiny sometimes take us to some cities at the right time—I was in Winnipeg where I replaced my colleague from Marc-Aurèle-Fortin at the justice and human rights committee, which was studying organized crime and street gangs. I must say that I was moved and touched by what I saw in Winnipeg, particularly by the condition of aboriginal children. All the witnesses we heard told us that more money was needed for prevention.

• (1530)

I met outstanding aboriginal women who work tirelessly for organizations in terrible neighbourhoods to save aboriginal children, to get them off the streets and to prevent them from being recruited by street gangs or organized crime groups.

I want to take this opportunity to talk about Mr. Wiebe, a man who stood out to me, although all of the testimonies were touching. Mr. Wiebe's 20-year-old son was murdered on January 5, 2003. It was a very violent murder planned out by young men aged 17 to 20.

This man was suffering a lot. Despite the fact that he and his wife were still suffering, he said that he had read that the Canadian government wanted to increase the budget for prisons by 27%, by \$3.1 billion. He encouraged the committee to press the government to take 100% of this increase and re-allocate every cent into human rights and prevention. He said that we needed to save these kids before they became criminals. He said that his son would perhaps still be alive if his murderers had gotten some help.

What I saw and heard in Winnipeg regarding the situation with aboriginal children made it clear why these young people join street gangs.

Why, between 2005 and 2007, did Winnipeg police report more than 8,000 car thefts per year committed by members of street gangs, by 11- or 12-year old kids? These kids are living with poverty,

unsanitary housing—I saw it myself—violence, drug use, high drop-out rates, parental abandonment, sexual violence, despair and lack of love. And nothing in this budget will meet these desperate needs.

What aboriginal children need is good food, decent housing, the opportunity to go to school, homes free from violence and drugs, and parents who are proud of their culture and their history. They do not need prison.

Aboriginals are already over-represented in federal penitentiaries in the prairie provinces as well as in juvenile facilities in the region. Like all children in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Saskatoon, these children need greater solidarity. They need help to keep them from being recruited, used or killed by criminal gangs.

In my riding, in Quebec and in Winnipeg, I have seen compassionate, loving people who scrounge pennies every day to help children escape misery and to prevent them from being recruited by street gangs. They know that is the way to fight crime.

I get emotional about this because I care so deeply. This is part of my mission as a politician and as a human being.

I hope that the government will listen to Mr. Wiebe. I hope that it will quit showboating and realize that we cannot play games with people's lives. I also hope it will understand that the key to winning the fight against crime is making major investments in preventive measures targeting distressed children and youth everywhere in Quebec and Canada.

The most important thing is figuring out not how to put people in jail, but how to save our children. That should be our first concern. They are the ones who will eventually be looking after us. We must remember one thing. One day, our children will be looking after us. If we do not look after them, if we leave them to rot in jail, they will not do us any favours when it is their turn to look after us.

• (1535)

[English]

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what the member opposite said and I was very disappointed in her speech.

First, I heard a lot of criticism of the crime bills that have gone through Parliament. The Bloc has voted against virtually every crime bill, yet she talks about trying to make Canada safe.

On top of that, she talks about my city of Winnipeg. I know all those people and they told me, after she came back from the justice committee, that she spent 90% of her time on her BlackBerry, not listening. I know what goes on in Winnipeg and I know the many different programs that are there for these children. I also know we have the largest number of women who have disappeared or who are abused.

The people wonder why she did not support the human trafficking bill, which they supported and told her that at committee. After this so-called emotional speech in Parliament, how does she square that with what the public has told me in Winnipeg?

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. I must say that I am a little taken aback by what she said about my BlackBerry, but, in politics, one has to expect low blows. I have become immune to all this nonsense.

What she said about the bills is completely untrue. I supported at second reading the bill she put forward because I figured it could be referred to committee where it could be improved. Unfortunately, at third reading, I could not support it simply because it was bad, it was not a good bill.

I am very disappointed in the member. We have sat on the Standing Committee on the Status of Women together, and she never asked her government to stop issuing visas to exotic dancers. What is she waiting for to do so?

I travelled to Winnipeg. This is not a personal attack. I happened to go there, and I was very disappointed with what I saw. How come young 11 and 12-year old girls continue being assaulted almost on a daily basis by men in luxury cars near the railroad in the North End, in her riding? And she wants to fight human trafficking! She should start by looking after what is going on in her own riding.

• (1540)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her passion. I know that she is very concerned about what is happening on the crime issue. I disagree with the member who asked the question.

I have an article from December 2008, which shows very clearly that crime rates are inextricably linked to economic performance. It means that if we look at the unemployment rate and track it, violent crime goes up almost as much, but property crime is even more of an increase than the increase in unemployment.

What it says to me is that when people get desperate, when EI benefits run out, when they do not know how to pay the next bill, sometimes they make mistakes.

Much of the legislation that the Conservative government has brought forward shows the Conservatives want to punish everybody, throw them all in jail and throw away the key. In fact, we should be managing the economy better, then there will be less crime. That is a perfect crime prevention example.

I want to thank the member for raising it. I will give her an opportunity to comment.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. He summarized the situation beautifully. Unfortunately, crime does not just spring up out of nowhere. Criminals are not born, they are made.

I am still talking about Winnipeg, but it could be anywhere. At the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, I met youth who were barely 16. Their experiences included the death of a parent, poverty, dropping out of school, sexual assault, drugs, violence. How can we judge children in this type of situation and not think that they will be recruited into street gangs? These youth are looking for love and a

family, and street gangs say that they are their family, that they will feed them and give them power, that they will protect them and make them stronger than everyone else, that they will be their family. That is what street gangs give them.

We should not put these children in jail. They are victims. We should give them the chance to work, to go to school, to be loved and to live. That is how we will fight crime.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know you want me to ask a question about Bill C-9, the 880-page omnibus bill that the government has introduced in the House today.

I know the member is certainly interested in the softwood lumber issue. This particular bill raises the export tariff on softwood lumber products from Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan by 10%.

It is basically designed to bring Canada into compliance with the decision of the London Court of International Arbitration tribunal regarding the evaluation of export volumes from Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The tribunal ruled that Canada must apply compensatory export charges of \$68.26 million in accordance with the softwood lumber accord.

We know the forestry industry is already in trouble with widespread unemployment. My colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, has talked at length in this House about the softwood lumber sellout perpetrated by various parties in this House. Would the member comment on this provision of Bill C-9, which will basically further hurt the forestry industry in this country?

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

In all honesty, I have to say that I am not a softwood lumber expert. I am more of an expert on public safety. All that I can tell my colleague is that Quebec has not received its fair share. Clearly we will continue to stand up for the forestry industry.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I must congratulate my colleague from Ahuntsic for her excellent work. During the week that she was in Winnipeg, she helped police in their seizure of a record 15,000 marijuana plants in Montreal. She works very hard on the ground. And she was in all the media this weekend.

I would like to ask her how she manages to do so much at once.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. I am an organized woman and I have my colleagues' help in getting things done. And I would like to thank them for that.

It was quite something to be able to help in the arrest of 13 individuals linked to Asian organized crime. I told police about 15,500 plants on the third floor of my constituency office building. I think they chose the wrong place to grow marijuana.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is from Montreal and our ridings are close to one another. I would like to know why she is not supporting the budget even though it is good for Montreal.

**Mrs. Maria Mourani:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

We cannot support a budget that has only one, two or three useful measures while the rest is no good. We support a budget in its entirety.

I could ask him the same question: if they agree with the budget, why are they not voting in favour of it? And if they do not agree with the budget, why are they not voting against it? He and his party are in no position to be lecturing me.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on Bill C-9, which is the budget implementation bill. I believe it was tabled last Monday and I had the opportunity to go to the briefing session by departmental officials.

Members will know that this act covers a broad range of changes in the laws of Canada, most of which are related to this year's budget, but a number of items were not matters of budget. In fact, it is fair to say that, to the extent that there are things that were not in the budget, this represents an omnibus bill.

At last count, there were over 30 different acts of Parliament that were impacted by this. It is very difficult to give a coherent speech about Bill C-9, so I thought I would try to concentrate on a couple things that are important to point out to hon. members.

I had taken copious notes. Interestingly enough, a copy of the bill was not available for the briefing and members were at a disadvantage in not being able to ask questions. I noted a matter that has been mentioned a couple of times here dealing with amendments to the Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act, 2006, which would provide for a higher rate of charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products from the regions of Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

This goes back to 2006. It is a tribunal decision and seeks to recover \$68.26 million from those provinces. Once the moneys are recovered, then the additional tax will cease.

I saw an inequity there. In the case of Manitoba, the volume of business it did and the proportion of its contribution to the over-collection of the \$68.26 million was very small. This is going to be applied to the first dollar and every dollar of softwood exports as we move forward.

The amount of \$68 million-plus is going to be collected by whoever is selling when. If Manitoba actually sells nothing until the \$68 million is collected, it will not pay any of the 10%, but that is not the way the real world works. The fact of the matter is that these provinces are in the softwood lumber business and they are selling as much as they can of their quality products for export purposes.

The inequity is that a province like Manitoba is being disproportionately penalized by being thrown into this. The tribunal

made a mistake and it is not an appealable decision. This is unfortunate. The Government of Canada, in terms of making its representations to the tribunal, let these provinces down. It let them down. It knew the decision was not appealable. It must have known that this was not going to be equitable to, for instance, Manitoba, which in fact was responsible for a very small proportion of the \$68 million.

I thought that was certainly worth noting. The government did not get the job done. That is what happened. It did not get the job done. It should have been more vigilant on that particular issue.

The next issue many of my constituents have talked about is the whole scenario of problems and complaints about debit and credit cards. In part 12 of Bill C-9, there are enactments on the payment card networks act, the purpose of which is to regulate national payment card networks and commercial practices for payment card network operators and, among other things, and this deals with debit cards as well as credit cards, it will deal with such things as disclosure, fees charged to obtain a card, for instance, merchant contracts, the cancellation of cards, any new fees, and a couple of other minor things.

● (1550)

One thing it does not include is anything that comes anywhere close to touching interest rates charged on these instruments, credit cards and debit cards. Canadians were asking for that.

The government has made all of these changes, but what it has not done is try to find out how some of these usuarist rates can be dealt with. Far too many people get caught in a credit crunch. Unfortunately they rely on credit cards for basic necessities. When people are on EI benefits and the money does not come in and they cannot pay the credit cards, all of a sudden they pay usuarist rates, which could go as low as 18% but as high as 29%.

This was a significant item. When we enter a recession, when we know we will be in a downturn for at least five years, and some say even eight years, this is the time to deal with it. If the security or the credit worthiness of people is not there, the banks have to take responsibility of identifying that rather than soaking people year after year and then having absolutely no relief whatsoever from their government when people are drawn in by companies. I thought that was very concerning.

I note also, and I think people will see this to be a positive, that part 17 would amend the Bank Act and other related statutes to provide a framework for enabling credit unions to incorporate and continue as banks. This is a good thing. When I was on the finance committee and we dealt with bank mergers and the like, the big point was we needed more competition in the banking sector. Credit unions were offered this opportunity to step up, and it has finally happened. Credit unions will actually start to have a national presence in our country, and that is a positive.

*Government Orders*

There is another matter that caught to my attention. Part 20 amends the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. There are certain process requirements, comprehensive studies and the like. What I have found is it amends the act to provide in the legislation rather than by regulations that an environmental assessment is not required for certain federally-funded infrastructure projects. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act is not applicable.

Since when did protection of the environment of Canada become an option? We have a federal Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to protect our environment. Federal infrastructure projects have no special status. There can be problems. I am sorry if some projects cannot have an environmental assessment and still get done within a government's time frame.

When we started this program, this whole thing about getting infrastructure projects, the government always talked about shovel ready. To most people that would mean these are projects that are well advanced and ready to go and that could retain existing jobs and create new jobs. What we do not need is "Let's see if we can hunt around for a contractor. Let's see if we can do this thing. Let's get the things approved through our city councils". That is not shovel ready.

The government has seriously misled Canadians by suggesting that somehow the infrastructure program would be the solution because it would have shovel ready. The only thing that was shovel ready was the words coming out of Conservatives mouths. That was the problem.

It is awful when we consider that the last fiscal year and this fiscal year about \$3.5 billion of infrastructure approved funding lapsed. It did not get out. I know why? The government had already made the decisions that put us on a track heading into a recession. In fact, Canada was in a recession even before the global economic troubles occurred. That is why money lapsed, so the deficit the government would show would be lower than it otherwise would be. It is window dressing.

Mark my words, we are going to have the same thing again. This money may have been put on the table for stimulus, but I would be prepared to say right now that a lot of that money will in fact lapse because there are some technical problems.

• (1555)

I have seen so many projects and municipalities come forward and say that they could not do them. I hope the government understands that if these projects have all this work and if they do not go forward, because of some timing or whatever, we have lost the opportunity to have jobs. About a half million Canadians will lose their employment insurance benefits before we know it. This is a recipe for very significant problems for Canada.

It is worth noting the Brian Mulroney governments, which ended in 1993. In the last Mulroney government, the employment insurance fund was operating at a deficit. More claims were made against employment insurance than premiums being collected, to the tune of about \$12 billion. The auditor general said that the government had a separate bank account, just like the government wants to set up now in this new EI corporation. All the premiums went in and the benefits came out. It said that over time it would balance it.

Look at our history. Sometimes EI funds do not balance themselves. The government is the only one that will be able to fund it. Therefore, having a separate bank account simply does not cut it, but it serves a purpose. The purpose is that in Bill C-9, the government would eliminate the record keeping on \$57 billion of surplus that was collected from employers and employees over time.

I know why it is there. It is there because Canada did not enter a recession in the early 2000s like the United States. We had 10 years. Once the budget was balanced after the Mulroney government passed down a \$42 billion deficit, it took until 1997 to balance the books and then we had 10 good years of surplus. We were able to reinvest in our health care system, in our public service, which serves Canadians so well, in the social network and the transfers to the provinces for all the needs of Canadians, especially for those who are unable to help themselves. That is why it is there.

However, in Bill C-9, under part 24, would amend the Employment Insurance Act to establish, in the accounts of Canada, an account known as the employment insurance operating account. The government will close the employment insurance account. It is hard to follow that, but this account, which is a notional account, will be gone. The responsibilities attached to that account will also be wiped out.

Therefore, during the Mulroney years, when the auditor general found out that the government was operating a deficit year after year, the auditor general said that it was a government program and that the operation of a government program must be included in the determination of the surplus or deficit of a government in each of its fiscal years, which it was not. If it was a balance, it would have no impact. If it was operating at a deficit, the government accounts would be misleading Canadians to the tune of \$12 billion.

The auditor general ordered the Government of Canada, under Brian Mulroney, to discontinue the use of that account and that the moneys would be accounted for as part of the consolidated revenue fund, in other words, as part of the determination of the government's annual surplus or deficit.

Even though the physical dollars were not in a separate bank account, the government kept track of money in and money out. When we had a situation where we had 10 years of not going into recession, in each of those years there was a reduction in the employment insurance premiums. The rules associated with the employment insurance account were that if there was a surplus, the government had to keep two years on hand, which was about \$24 billion on hand to take care of a recession. That was the reserve. However, anything over that the government had two choices. One was to reduce premiums until it got back down to the \$24 billion reserve level or introduce new programs so the cost of providing benefits would go up and that would also help the notional surplus to go down.

*Government Orders*

●(1600)

I raise this because this makes sense to me. The government has now set up an account, where it has put \$2 billion into a management group. Starting from January 1, 2009, I believe, all premium dollars are to be dedicated to this new account, all benefits coming out of it. While we are in a recession, there are more payouts than there are premiums coming in. It is operating at a deficit now.

However, the Auditor General told me, when I asked her directly, notwithstanding the government is attempting, again, to hide the true impacts of this recession on Canada and Canadians, that the deficit included in this new employment insurance account would be included in the determination of a surplus or a deficit for the Government of Canada, on an annual basis. Therefore, it will not be able to hide it.

However, what the government cannot say, and even the finance minister said it today, is that it was somehow the Liberals because they built up this surplus. The accumulation of a surplus meant that we could not reduce the premiums or introduce new employment insurance benefits fast enough because we had the highest employment rates in 30 years, or the lowest unemployment rates in 30 years, however one wants to look at it. When we have that, we cannot adjust that quickly. Therefore, it did go up \$57 billion of additional funds more than was necessary to fund that program if it were on a stand-alone basis operated by some third party. That is the fact. However, with Bill C-9, the government has said that it will not be responsible for the \$57 billion. It is just going to keep it.

The government says that the Liberals stole it. If the Auditor General says we have to include it in our consolidated revenue fund, it is pretty straightforward that we will not take the surplus and leave it sit in some bank account. We will pay down debt and reduce the debt charges.

However, the EI account was also, in addition to keeping the premiums surplus there, crediting interest on an annual basis. Much of that \$57 billion is interest earned on the \$57 billion.

The government cannot say that anybody else is responsible for taking away from employees and employers the accumulated equity they had in the EI plan. Bill C-9 would take away that responsibility. It would take away the responsibility to give back that money by reduced premiums or improved EI benefits. The government has misled Canadians on that basis.

I want to talk about the idea of crime about which the previous speaker spoke.

I feel so strongly that Canadians should be taken care of. I once heard a line something to the effect that the measure of success of a country is not so much an economic measure as it is a measure of the health and well-being of its people.

We are in a period now where many Canadians are in jeopardy. They are going to make mistakes. As I said in an earlier question, our experience in Canada is that when the unemployment rate goes up, the crime rate goes up. Violent crime tracks it almost identically. Property crime goes even beyond that.

Therefore, it is easy to make the argument that if we do not take care of the economy with jobs and innovation and take care of the

people's needs, if we say, "Let's balance the books first and then we'll take care of the problems later," we are saying it is okay that crime goes up. Yet the government says, no, we have to be tough on crime.

If the government wants to be tough on crime, it had better be effective on the economy and jobs and innovation. Those are the kinds of things we have to do. Everything in our economy and in our social circumstance in Canada is inextricably linked. We just cannot do one thing at the expense of another. We have to address the full needs of Canadians at all times. Accordingly the government has not done the job.

●(1605)

**Hon. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been very entertaining to listen to my friend. His speech could have been better started with, "Once, long ago and far away", and he could have started his fairytale that way. His explanation of how the Liberals handled employment insurance is absurd. The fact is that the Liberals constantly ran a surplus so that the employment insurance fund became a form of employment tax.

I can recall sitting on his side of the House when the finance minister, Paul Martin, stood in this place and admitted that he had taken the unemployment insurance surplus, had put it into general revenue and spent it. The money is gone. It was spent by the previous government. Let us be clear that the money no longer exists because it went out through the Liberal government. It is gone.

I do not understand how the member can possibly stand there and tell us this fairytale.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member's comments show that he is not prepared to be accountable to Canadians about the facts.

We still have a national debt. When there is a \$57 billion surplus in the EI fund, it is not spent on cabinet ministers' limousines. It offsets debt that is required to finance the nation. We have a national debt. It is not spent, gone and lost, otherwise the interest rates on the national debt would go up simply because it was not paid down.

There are many other priorities that have not been taken care of. I would say to the member that an aging society is one of the biggest challenges we have and I encourage him to take an interest in Canadians in need who are in the twilight of their lives.

●(1610)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my comments have more to do with his leader's apparent flip-flop on corporate taxes. He may or may not agree with what his leader did, but certainly in the year 2000 the then finance minister, Paul Martin, cut corporate taxes by a considerable amount. The cuts have been continued under the present government, to the point where we will be 12 points lower than the Americans, at around 15% by 2012.

*Government Orders*

All this money needs to be made up somewhere and, of course, it is being made up by personal income tax, which has doubled over the last number of years. As a matter of fact, the business community does not back up the government's argument that corporate taxes are a good thing for the economy. For example, Statistics Canada says that business spending on machinery and equipment has actually declined as a share of GDP.

Given that the member's leader at last week's think-tank indicated that he was now against corporate taxes, I would ask him to clarify as to where the leader actually sits on corporate tax reductions at this time.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think anybody is against corporate taxes. I think the member is talking about whether they are increased or decreased.

In the 16 years I have been here, finance minister Paul Martin, and even the current member who was a finance minister as well, always talked about taxes in the context of whether tax cuts were affordable. That is the key. All tax cuts are good in terms of corporations if they create jobs and improve the competitive environment. However, right now our rates are competitive and we need fiscal wiggle room to deal with the needs of the people. That is why the leader of the official opposition has said that the corporate tax cuts are not affordable to Canadians when we consider the consequences to the people in the trenches who do not have jobs, who do not have EI benefits any more and whose pensions are at risk.

We have serious issues to address and now is not the time to give corporate tax cuts and wish and hope that somehow we will get money back. The economic lags are such that it would be mismatched anyway, which means it makes no sense.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to take the member back to his earlier comments in regards to the Canadian environmental assessment initiative that is part of this bill. He expressed some concerns. This is more of a comment than anything.

As I look at the section in this bill that refers to expediting some of these important projects and things like Canada's strategic infrastructure fund, recreational infrastructure Canada, projects under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and projects under the Building Canada fund, these are all projects that all members will know are time sensitive.

The assurances for those are given in terms of the minister's ability. Where there are projects that are sensitive from an environmental point of view, assessments can still be undertaken and the regulators are still in place that will have an ability to do that. I wonder if the member has perhaps failed to recognize that in the bill.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. As a matter of fact it is the one that I concentrated on the most and asked the most questions on at the briefing. Yes, an environmental assessment can go forward at any time but this gives the authority to the federal government to exempt a project from an environmental assessment. In my view, fiscal expediency does not trump prudence in terms of protecting our environment.

● (1615)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. To my community and communities in the Northwest Territories, this is an issue that has stood out in this budget as being one that—

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I question whether the member is really asking a question or making a comment pertaining to this bill. There is an issue of relevance as it relates to the topic here today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I am going to allow the member for Western Arctic to continue. This is a large bill with a lot in it. I hope and expect that before he gets to the question, the hon. member will make it relevant to Bill C-9.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington:** Mr. Speaker, this particular subject, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, is one where we are seeing the start of many cuts that will be made by the government. This year's budget is one that does not really have a future to it. It is a budget that is holding the status quo on a number of areas.

With the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the government chose to cut the budget knowing that, for any further work in this field, the existing program may carry forward for a year or so. This truly represents the start of many cuts that will take place to our social envelope. This budget bill represents a holding pattern that will change very dramatically over the next year or so.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, this place had an emergency debate that went until midnight the other night on the very subject. It really goes to the point that I made earlier about the success of a country. It is really not an economic measure. It is a measure of the health and well-being of its people and its first nations people in particular.

We have very serious problems. I am concerned that the government thinks it will somehow balance the books over five, six or eight years but it is not thinking about the consequences of its actions. Whether it has to do with crime, aboriginal health issues, children, age or pensions, it has not even thought about it. All it wants to do is talk about its economic action plan. It spent \$5 million during the Olympics to tell people that it was called the "Economic Action Plan". That is what I call irresponsible government.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to the budget bill today.

When we talk about the budget, we have to talk numbers. Here are some numbers and some facts.

In September 2008, the Minister of Finance said that the country had not dipped into a deficit and that we were still running a surplus and would run one that year. The minister stuck to his guns and projected an \$800 million surplus for 2008-09.



*Government Orders*

By the time he delivered his fiscal update two months later on November 27, 2008, the country already had a deficit of over \$6 billion, even though he projected a \$100 million surplus for 2009-10.

The same finance minister told Reuters that there would be a surplus in 2009-10:

It's a question of making sure that we maintain a surplus. I'm comfortable with a relatively modest surplus...I think we can maintain that. We're disciplined enough to do that and that's how we plan.

Yet one week earlier, on November 20, 2008, the Parliamentary Budget Officer painted a bleaker picture. He said:

Looking forward, assuming status quo fiscal policy, the downgraded economic outlook translates into a deterioration in the budgetary balance, putting the Government's stated fiscal targets and objectives at risk. In the PBO survey average scenario, modest deficits are projected in the near term.

The actual results bear the Parliamentary Budget Officer's forecast out.

On January 21, 2009, before budget 2009 was introduced, the Parliamentary Budget Officer revised the government's 2009-10 forecast to project a \$13 billion deficit, four months after the finance minister projected a \$100 million surplus. Thirteen billion dollars and \$100 million are not the same. Millions and billions are not the same thing. The actual deficit before the economic action plan was \$15.6 billion, well within the Parliamentary Budget Officer's ballpark.

Hon. members will recall this.

The Minister of Finance told the *Edmonton Journal* on October 9, 2008, that we would not run up a deficit. However, in his 2009 budget two months later, he projected a deficit of \$33.7 billion for 2009-10. The deficit for 2009, after the economic action plan, climbed to \$54 billion. That is \$20 billion over the estimate. It is \$20 billion more than forecast.

• (1620)

[*English*]

The finance minister is on record saying that for the year 2009-10, Canada's budget would be as follows, and it all depends on what time of year it is: October 2009, \$6 billion surplus; November, not even a month later in the economic update, \$100 million surplus; two months later, January in budget 2009, \$33.7 billion deficit; and after stimulus spending, a \$54 billion deficit.

[*Translation*]

Everyone knows that a country depends on the vitality of its economy. That is why the Liberal Party of Canada has always focused on creating a dynamic Canadian economy.

In 1993, when the Liberal Party came to power, it realized that the Conservatives, under Brian Mulroney, had spent the cupboard bare. It took years of sound economic management and difficult decisions on the part of the Liberal government to get the Canadian economy back on track and finally balance the budget.

In fact, the Liberal Party did such a good job with the economy that it started to accumulate surpluses, and it used those surpluses to lower taxes and fund social programs, such as health care, education, research and innovation, as well as to pay down the national debt.

That was important, because it provided the Liberal government with the resources it needed to do good things for Canadians. For instance, just before Paul Martin's government was defeated, the Liberal Party had reached an agreement with the provinces to give them child care services similar to the Quebec system.

The Liberals also negotiated the Kelowna accord with the first nations of Canada. This accord would have resolved a number of disputes.

We were also instrumental in reaching an international agreement at the climate change conference to extend the implementation of the Kyoto protocol beyond 2012 and we convinced the UN to adopt the Canadian concept of "responsibility to protect" during international crises.

As a result of the Conservatives' petty political vision, Canadians can no longer dream about a better country that offers equality and justice for all.

Immediately after the 2006 election, the first thing the Conservatives did was to throw out the Kelowna accord and the agreement on a national day care system and to ignore our international commitment on the environment.

• (1625)

[*English*]

The Conservatives are trying to tell us that because of the recession, we cannot afford to be leaders in the emerging fields of green technologies, we cannot invest in our labour force, we cannot invest in our companies, we cannot be world leaders in peace initiatives and we cannot expect to ever afford things such as pharmacare or daycare.

[*Translation*]

That is the difference between the Liberal Party and the Conservatives: we, the Liberals, strongly believe that the government can be a positive force that helps Canadians and makes Canada stronger. The Conservatives think that the government is not in the business of helping Canadians thrive.

It is not surprising that over time, with a Conservative government in power, we have watched surpluses melt like snow in the sun and Canada become saddled with a huge deficit once again.

The Conservatives like to claim they are financially responsible and that they are determined to balance the budget, but I have a hard time buying that, since it took them only one year to spend the largest surplus ever accumulated in the history of Canada.

In fact, since 2006, the Conservative government has the dubious distinction of being the biggest spending government in the history of Canada year after year.

If they spent all that money, then the question is: what did they spend it on?

There is no national day care system. There is no agreement with the first nations. There is less money for research. There is less money for innovation. There is less money for the environment. There is less money for education.

*Government Orders*

Hospital wait times have never been so long. Pensions have not increased. Universities have received nothing.

[*English*]

Given the Conservatives' track record that I have just outlined, a track record of waste and incompetence, it comes as no surprise to me that this budget fails even in the most basic of tests. This is partly because the minister's numbers just cannot be trusted.

The Conservative government does not get it. Once again it has released projections that contradict the projections of the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer who works with a small staff. The minister uses calculations that envision an unrealistic best case scenario while the Parliamentary Budget Officer uses more realistic calculations. The minister claims the budget deficit will fall to \$1.8 billion by 2014-15, while the Parliamentary Budget Officer projects a \$12.3 billion deficit in 2014-15.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer has proven that he is far more accurate than the finance minister at predicting Canada's financial future over the past several years, and as I said, with the limited resources that he has at his disposal. When I heard that the finance minister released projections that were far out of line with those of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, I thought it was groundhog day. How many times will the Conservatives make the same mistake and how long before they learn from it?

Another reason the budget fails is that the Conservatives do not invest. The Conservatives spend. To get out of a deficit and a recession, governments must invest wisely. There are serious problems facing Canadians as a result of the government's lack of vision. The government has spent more money than any other government in Canadian history. The government has turned record surpluses into record deficits. In spite of spending money at record levels, the government has not delivered sustainable results for Canadians.

Can Canadians say that they are better off today than they were four years ago? Conservative inaction today will cost us even more in the future when the problem becomes less manageable. For example, we cannot send military personnel to a field of combat or on a peacekeeping mission and not take care of the soldiers once they get back. There is nothing in the budget for veterans. Veterans are not being helped with post-traumatic stress disorder. Immigrants are not being helped in order to succeed in their new lives. In a riding such as mine where there is a large number of immigrants, people are knocking on the door asking for help. The majority of them are immigrants and there is just no help for them. There is no help for them to integrate.

There is no plan in the budget to deal with the strains on our health care system. Forget about reading the newspaper, people only need to look at the paper to see pictures of people waiting for an OR. There is no plan to deal with the challenges of an aging population. Pensions are not being protected. Imagine, the hottest topic in Canada right now is pensions and what is in the budget? Nothing.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

With regard to pensions, since December 2009 our party has proposed three reforms that the Prime Minister should consider

immediately. These reforms include recommendations that could be implemented immediately to address the important issue of pensions.

Here are the three recommendations or proposals. First, establish a supplementary Canada pension plan to help Canadians save more. Second, give employees with stranded pensions following corporate bankruptcies the option of growing their pensions through the assets of the Canada pension plan. Third, protect vulnerable Canadians on long-term disability by giving them status as preferred creditors in cases of bankruptcy.

Too few Canadians save for their retirement and for that reason we need a less complicated savings system that is secure and reliable and will encourage savings.

For various reasons, Canadians do not save enough for their retirement. The government must do more to encourage Canadians to save more. This budget does not do that.

One third of Canadians do not have retirement savings other than what is offered through the Canada or Quebec pension plan, old age security and the guaranteed income supplement. Another third do not have sufficient retirement savings to maintain their current standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, more than half of Canadian families do not have an employer sponsored pension plan. The Canada and Quebec pension plans cover 93% of workers. However, by themselves they are insufficient.

According to Statistics Canada, the \$32.4 billion paid into RRSPs in 2006 represents just 7% of the maximum eligible contribution. Almost \$500 billion in RRSP contribution room remained unused. The government must take immediate action.

[*English*]

To grow and prosper, the government must take advantage of opportunities to become leaders in emerging industries. This budget fails because while the Obama administration and even the Chinese government are investing heavily to make their countries more competitive, the Conservatives are slashing investments that could make Canada a leaner and greener competitor on the world stage. The eco-energy program for renewable power production was cancelled. The budgets of Canada's research councils were slashed by \$148 million last year and only \$32 million was reinvested this year, and they are supposed to say thank you.

Even where money is made available for green projects, the Conservatives do not know how to spend it. For example, 93% of the green infrastructure fund was not spent last year because the government does not believe in investing, and \$160 million of approved funding for the Canadian Space Agency has not been invested over the past two years.

*Government Orders*

At a time when Canadians need good jobs in order to put food on the table and fight this recession, the Conservative government is picking the pockets of small business owners who are our key to job creation. The government has spent Canadians' money irresponsibly and run up massive debts. It is now trying to make small businesses pay for its mistakes. This budget introduces \$13 billion in payroll taxes. This outrageous tax hike will probably kill about 220,000 small business jobs. Small business owners cannot afford a tax hike and Canadians cannot afford the Conservative government.

The underlying reason this budget is so bad is that the Conservatives lack vision. This has been the case ever since their first budget. This is not a novelty. The Conservatives do not have a plan for Canada going forward. They do not propose any long-term solutions, only campaign-friendly treats in this budget.

This budget fails to address several key areas, such as early childhood education. There is no commitment to early childhood education for families. Parents need affordable daycare spaces for their kids while they are at work. Instead of creating daycare spaces, the Conservatives cut cheques to Canadian parents that barely begin to cover the cost of daycare and then they have to pay tax on that little cheque that they receive. It is not a solution. It is a wasteful bribe that is designed to get votes, not results. No new child care spaces have been created under the Conservative government.

Higher education is another area of concern. Canada is suffering from a productivity gap compared to the U.S. and other countries. In a changing world where what one knows is going to be the difference between success and failure, the government is doing nothing to ensure that young Canadians get the help they need to pursue a higher education.

The only way for our economy to prosper enough to eliminate the Conservative deficit that we are in for is for Canada to have a dynamic workforce that outproduces our competitors. They have to be educated, efficient and engaged citizens who will make our country more prosperous.

The jobs we need are not low-skill part-time jobs that can be outsourced. We need to attract high-skill jobs that pay well. The only way to do that is not with another tax cut for the Prime Minister's corporate masters. It is by making sure that businesses around the world know that if they need a job done well, the Canadian worker is the one who is going to get it done better, faster and cheaper than anyone else.

We need innovators, artists, executives and craftspeople who have the tools to outcompete the rest of the world, but this can only be accomplished if we invest in our population. A country of minimum wage earners without job security will not be able to pay for increased pensions and medicare costs that we know are coming, but countries that can equip their young people now with the tools to succeed in the future will have a huge competitive advantage.

The environment has been ignored once again by the Conservatives in this budget. Copenhagen was an embarrassment, so there is nothing in the budget for it. Throughout the world, countries and companies with foresight are rushing to develop new technologies, new strategies and new incentives to turn their economies into lean, green money-making machines, but the

government refuses to get in on the ground floor of an economic centre that is about to boom.

Not only is the Prime Minister not leading the green revolution, he is actively obstructing it. Canadian delegations used to walk into international conferences and command the attention of the room because everyone admired what Canada stood for and how we carried ourselves. The Prime Minister's shameful handling of the environment has all but eroded the esteem that the international community once had for Canada.

• (1635)

The budget bill is inherently flawed because the bill is massive in all the wrong ways. The price tag is massive, the waste is massive and the scope is massive. The government has included several items that have no business being in a budget bill. We do not understand why it decided to include so many unusual items in the bill. It does not want to have an honest debate on these separate issues on their own merits, so I feel the government is probably trying to hide something.

The bill is overpriced, overstuffed and overbudgeted, but still manages to be inflexible and ineffective, much like the government that tabled it.

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the hon. member's speech.

I think he forgets the circumstances in which we found ourselves in 2008 and the meltdown. The result of that was that the organizations of states got together, recognizing the drastic condition we were in, to implement some measures. One of those was to delegate some of our GDP, our money from the governments, each government would delegate some of their GDP to shore up their economies, and we made that commitment as well.

I am very thankful that we spent that money on infrastructure. I am sure the member knows that Statistics Canada announced just yesterday that, for the fifth straight month, GDP grew in Canada. In fact January's increase was the biggest monthly increase since December 2006.

We also read in the paper that KPMG ranked Canada the most competitive industrialized country for job creations.

There was an article by Patricia Croft of RBC who said that Canada really has come out of this a winner in many regards and thinks we can stand head and shoulders above in many instances.

Therefore my question for the member is this. What other industrialized country would he suggest has weathered this global recession better than Canada has?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for asking me the question, but I cannot believe that this question is actually being asked.

*Government Orders*

It is fine that it has been asked during question period. The example of using any other country in the G7, no matter what other country has also fallen in recession, is the same example as a house on a street that has been totally renovated, with fire proofing, hurricane proofing and so on, and all of a sudden all the houses on the street are burnt down including the one that has been fire proofed and hurricane proofed because the person who did the job or the person who was living in the house forgot to close the door or forgot to do something like closing the shutters.

The Liberal Party prepared this country to be a leader of the G7. This country went in as a leader before the recession started. It came out as a leader, not because of what the Conservatives did but because of what the previous Liberal Party did while it was in government.

• (1640)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for a very good speech on Bill C-9.

I want to ask the member about the type of thinking that the government must be engaging in that causes a government in a minority situation to introduce an 800-page bill.

I have been in this business for 24 years and I do not think I have ever seen a bill of this size introduced. On top of that, the government has put in measures that have absolutely nothing to do with what we are talking about here.

For example, the bill deals with postal remailing, which was variously presented in Parliament under bills C-14 and C-44 and probably one or two others in past years.

My question for the member is this. Why would a government that seems to be intent on not causing an election be putting in items like this that are only designed to cause people to want to vote against it? What would be the reasoning behind that?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, it is a good question. I will try to be a member of the government and respond by saying perhaps the reason that it put all these items in there is so we can have a fulsome debate, have all the finance members debate. I am on the finance committee and, seeing how we have a superior intellect, we are able to handle all these subjects all at once and perhaps we can modify, amend and spend the rest of our lives on this 800-page bill and make it better. But I do not think that is the reason.

I am not sure why the government would put in something as, I do not want to use the word “idiotic”, non-relevant as remailing of Canada Post. I have no idea.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to get the member's comments on some of the larger economic issues in front of us.

The Conservatives are claiming that this country is doing well with its banks. The record through the 1990s shows that the NDP stood up vociferously against deregulation of the banks. Heroes like John Rodriguez and Lorne Nystrom were people who stood up in this House over and over again and worked to block those types of moves, which would have left our banks in similar situations to those in the rest of the world. Clearly the NDP does well for banks; Canada does well for banks in 2010.

Now I see that the Liberal Party wants to follow us on another policy, which is to stop the erosion of the corporate tax base in this country. Provinces have spiralled down the corporate taxes and now we see the federal government doing the same. It has changed its mind on this. It is very rapid change—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order, please. The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, regarding the first part of the hon. member's question regarding the banks, he has got to look at it the other way. There was only one person who decided to maintain regulation in the banking sector, making sure there would not be any mergers and making sure Canada's financial system would be strong, and that person's name is Paul Martin, and the prime minister at the time was Jean Chrétien. I want to thank the NDP for supporting those initiatives, but let us face it, it is a Liberal initiative.

**An hon. member:** Thirteen strong years.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Thirteen strong years. Mr. Speaker, because of the interruption, I forget what the second part of this question was, so I would like to defer that to a later date.

• (1645)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I basically want to follow up on the question of the member for Western Arctic about the Liberal Party and the Liberal leader's new-found embracement of keeping corporate taxes where they are and not lowering them any further, when in fact it was his party under the previous Liberal government that started the slide in corporate tax rates and corporate tax revenue.

Twenty years ago or so, I believe, the amount of revenue the government was getting from individual taxpayers was about equal to the amount it was getting from corporations. Now after all this time, it has got to the point where the working people in this country are contributing four times the taxation revenue to the government that corporations are contributing in their taxes.

I applaud the Liberals for getting on side, albeit belatedly, but at least they are beginning to recognize that this is the proper position to take, given that we need revenue for social programs and health care in this country.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, once again I would like to thank the NDP for supporting our previous tax policy and continuing to do so. It just means that the NDP wants to see us in power that much faster, if they agree with our tax policies. We are not sure when we will take over, so if that were to happen in the immediate future, our leader has already stated his position when it comes to corporate taxes.

Whether the mix is correct, between 40% for corporate taxes and 20% or 30% of the revenue coming in from personal taxes, is a debate we have to have in this country. We probably should look at tax reform, but I can say, with the way technology works, money has never moved faster. Money is being collected from different sources, different places. Once we take over we will look at the books, because if hon. members noted in most of my speech, I am not even sure what the deficit will be as of yesterday, because that was March 31, the fiscal year end, and the deficit numbers keep multiplying. Who knows what will happen in 2010?

*Government Orders*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Beaches—East York, Child care.

The hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to respond to Bill C-9, which is 880 pages long and a very good paperweight, I might add.

First I want to make some comments on what the member for Western Arctic said. The member for Western Arctic spoke briefly about the Canadian banking system, why it is as strong as it is and the fact that it has nothing to do with the actions of the government. The fact of the matter is that the banking system is as strong as it is because opposition parties like the NDP were here 10 years ago fighting in the House to stop the Liberals, at the time, from allowing the banks to merge.

Members will recall that 10 years ago the government of the day or at least the banks were very interested in following the policies of deregulation, financial institutions and the financial system going on in the United States. They were chafing at the bit. The five existing banks in this country wanted to amalgamate among themselves to become even more powerful institutions. They felt they had to do that to compete with the huge American banks. In other words, they wanted to be too big to fail.

It was the NDP at the time that chased and fought the Liberals on this issue and helped prevent the banks from merging.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** On what issue?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, the member wants to dispute this, but all she has to do is read *Hansard*.

I have given the Liberals credit before by saying that, when they were in government, they turned down the big five banks' attempt to merge, I believe on more than one occasion. However, while all this was happening, where were the Conservatives? In those days, they were the Reform Party and they would have been pushing the Liberal government of the day to move forward, to deregulate even faster and allow the banks to merge.

The point is that it is really the Liberal government of the day that held firm and stopped this deregulation from happening, which is to the benefit of the Conservative government today. Internationally the Prime Minister walks around and says Canada is in great shape because we do not have the banking institution structures that they have in the United States, but he does not say that if he had had his way, Canada would have had the same type of banking institutions that exist in the States and would have been in a mess as big as or bigger than the one the Americans are in right now.

The reason the banking institutions are in the shape they are in right now has nothing to do with the Conservative government and everything to do with the government and opposition that were here before, which worked to make sure the regulations stayed where they were. It is proper for the government to recognize that it is in a very successful position not because of something it did but because of what it inherited. That is what the member for Western Arctic was talking about in his question.

In dealing with Bill C-9 today, I want to talk about the issue of corporate tax cuts. Conservative governments literally around the world since Ronald Reagan's days, the 1980s, have been promoting tax cuts as a way to attract companies to their jurisdictions, to have these companies expand and create jobs. Essentially, what we have seen over the years has been a race to the bottom in corporation taxes, especially when some Nordic countries tax even today at rates of 50%.

When no less a person than George Bush, who became president of the United States, was running against Ronald Reagan in 1980 for the Republican nomination, he used the phrase "voodoo economics". Everybody here has certainly heard the term voodoo economics used before. It was George H.W. Bush who called Ronald Reagan's program voodoo economics and said it would not work.

• (1650)

Then, when he lost the Republican nomination and Ronald Reagan became the successful nominee, Ronald Reagan chose him as his vice-president. So, George H.W. Bush, for eight years as the vice-president of the United States, had to live down his very insightful comments about his boss's economic policy. But yet he continued to follow that policy of Reagan and of Margaret Thatcher in England, to basically embark upon a whole system of deregulation.

Certainly, the financial deregulations that came about throughout that period have resulted in the past recession in the United States, and maybe even the one before, a recession so serious that it is not going to be resolved any time soon.

So, let us look at the whole issue of corporate taxes and what is the proper rate of corporate tax. I think all of us here could agree that we would not want our corporate taxes to be higher by much more than what the neighbouring jurisdictions would be.

I sat in a provincial legislature for 23 years and we were the government for significant parts of that time. I have to tell members opposite, and they know this, that the Government of Manitoba in the last 10 years did reduce corporate taxes. We did that, but we did that knowing that we had to do it because of our competitors.

Who are our competitors? They were the Government of Saskatchewan, the Government of Ontario. And of course, Saskatchewan had the deal with the province of Alberta. So when a competitor, the province of Alberta, reduces its corporate tax, then the Government of Saskatchewan is under pressure to follow suit. And being next to Saskatchewan, we were under pressure too.

We recognize that on a provincial basis our corporate taxes have to be competitive, at least with our neighbours, maybe not with maritime provinces that are half a continent away, but certainly with our neighbouring provinces in the west.

Having said that, the Canadian government is in a different league. Its competitor is the United States. So, when we are looking at corporate taxes of, say, 40% back a dozen or so years ago and the Americans were in the same range, maybe a little bit less, it made sense to lower our corporate tax rates.

*Government Orders*

But where we are going with this is that we are going to find that after the next reductions, which will be taking us down to 15% in 2012, we are going to bring it down roughly 12% lower than the corporate tax rate in the United States. That does not make sense to me.

If somebody can show me some study that says we have to be 12 points lower, then I might believe it. But that is certainly not the indication that I get. I would think that we would want to track the Americans. If the Americans decide they want to reduce their corporate income tax and they move down a couple of points, then it perhaps makes some sense for us to do the same. However, when we do that, we have to determine what sort of value we are getting out of that corporate tax reduction.

Let us look at what some people have said about corporate tax reductions. Statistics Canada and Finance Canada have said:

Despite a 36% drop in corporate taxes, both provincial and federal, in the last decade and record profits for much of this time, business spending on machinery and equipment has declined as a share of the GDP—

Well, that should not happen when one lowers these tax rates.

—and total business investment spending has declined as a percentage of corporate cashflow.

So, there we have evidence that this reduction is not producing the type of activity that we want to have.

•(1655)

The intensity of IT use by Canadian businesses is only half of that of the United States. In 2007 Canadian business spending on R and D was about 1% of the GDP and ranked 14th in the OECD, well below the average of 1.6% and only one-third that of Sweden, Finland and Korea. Despite Canadian corporate tax rates well below those of the United States, business sector productivity growth was actually worse in the last decade.

One would expect that, if the government goes to the effort to reduce corporate income taxes, we would be able to get positive responses and positive activity. We would be able to say that we have reduced corporate income taxes, that we have gained so many more companies and jobs and that, while we reduced the rate of taxation, we actually gained more absolute taxes at the end of the day.

What has happened over the last 20 years? I seem to recall a number of years ago that the taxation that was paid, collected by ordinary Canadians, was roughly equal to the amount of taxes collected by the corporate sector in this country. I am guessing that was 20 years ago. I think Canadians were reasonably happy with that.

Over the years, because of this race to the bottom in the corporate taxation field by the Liberals initially and now the Conservatives, we are finding that ordinary Canadians are paying four times the amount in personal income tax than that collected from corporations. How could it possibly be fair to the working people of this country to see their contribution to this country's taxation regime at a level of four times the amount of the corporate sector?

Let us look at some of those corporations. The biggest, best and most obvious sector I would prefer to take a quick look at would be

those big banks that wanted to become too big to fail. They wanted to amalgamate in the last 10 years and compete with those American banks.

In the last year Canada's big five banks had profits of \$15.9 billion. That does not sound like a sector that needs further corporate tax reductions.

I can see the argument being made that a certain group or sector of the economy would come forward and say that it is dying and suffering and that it needs corporate taxes reduced because it is marginally profitable at the moment. However, Canada's big five banks have a profit of \$15.9 billion and we are telling them that they have done a nice job. We are giving them an even bigger benefit by reducing the corporate tax rate another three points to 15% by 2012.

Let us look at the salaries and benefits of the CEOs of these corporations and big banks. While 800,000 Canadians are drawing unemployment insurance, that unemployment insurance is certainly going to be running out. It has already in some cases, but 800,000 workers are on EI and their benefits are running out. There are no jobs for the people to go to. The government says that the economy is growing by 2.6%, yet the unemployment rate has increased from 8.2% to 8.5%.

•(1700)

There is a glimmer of hope. The minister talks about seeing some good results in the last two or three months and I applaud the government for that. We certainly want to be positive about improving results in the country, especially if the number of jobs increased, but we have a very high unemployment rate and we have a long way to go to get out of that.

While all of this is happening in the country, when it is going through a recession, we have the CIBC president earning \$6.2 million. Now who in this country needs \$6.2 million a year to pay their bills and live? The Toronto Dominion Bank's CEO was granted about \$10.4 million. This is not the United States; this is Canada. We are in Canada and we are paying CEOs \$10.4 million.

The Royal Bank of Canada president makes around \$10.4 million as well. The Bank of Nova Scotia CEO was awarded the biggest increase of 29%, followed by the Bank of Montreal president at 25%. The first president was \$9.7 million in 2009 and the second president was—

•(1705)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. The hon. member for Simcoe North is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Bruce Stanton:** Mr. Speaker, again, back to the issue of relevance, I appreciate that the member opposite is giving us quite a rhetorical history lesson, but it is important to stay on the orders of the day and near as I can tell this is on a completely different path. I wonder if he could get back to the orders of the day.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I take the intervention from the member in good faith regarding the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona. This is a large bill and I was about to say that significant latitude has been given. Does the member want to return to his speech or deal with the point of order?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, Speakers in legislatures across the country for many years have given latitude on bills. I have been around long enough to know what is relevant to the bill and what is not. I have sat here listening to every single speaker over the last couple of days and listened to speeches that definitely had nothing to do with the bill, where in fact, I have been the speaker who has actually waved this 800-page book around and asked, what does that have to do with Bill C-9? My speech is relevant to Bill C-9 and I will certainly indulge the member and deal with my remaining comments specifically on issues dealing with this particular bill.

But certainly, Speakers have always given latitude. You yourself, Mr. Speaker, indicated just a half an hour ago to another speaker that a lot of latitude has been given.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, a quick comment on the same point of order. When we come to this Chamber, there is a specific issue. In the 17 years that I have been so blessed and fortunate to be here, we have shown that flexibility. I would hope that all of us, myself included, would show that respect to everyone when we stand up and speak. Sometimes we tend to go off to make a point. I would ask that we not interrupt each other. That is basically all I am asking for.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In response to the three points of order raised by the hon. members, just a general comment that the Chair does tend to grant leeway to members when they are speaking in the House, in particular when we are dealing with something as large as the bill before us now.

Members may recall earlier this week when we were dealing with two separate pieces of legislation, one specifically dealing with one trade agreement and the other with another, and when that line was crossed I think it was appropriate to bring members back to the subject at hand.

However, I am comfortable that in this case the member is speaking to something that is related to the bill. There is a lot in there and I would give the floor back to the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona. He has one minute remaining in his time.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the ruling.

I think I was just hitting a very sensitive topic for the members opposite, because no sensible person in this country can be happy with the five banks earning \$15 billion and having their presidents paid \$6.2 million when other jurisdictions, like the European Union, have restrictions on what corporate executives earn. I believe it has been a long-time tradition in Japan that corporate executives have had limitations on what they can earn.

Just recently one of the banks did indicate at its shareholders' meeting that it is now taking input from the shareholders as to what executives are being paid. They are saying that they will not let them vet what they give to the executives but at least they will listen to the shareholders.

It is about time the government starting taking some action here and putting in some guidelines and some restrictions on runaway corporate benefits and corporate salaries, especially when it is giving them extra incentives by reducing their taxes.

As I have indicated, this is an omnibus bill. The government is introducing all sorts of extra measures in here that have absolutely nothing to do with the subject at hand. One of the bills was the post office remainers, which has been brought in under various bills over the last three or four years, and as early as last year.

Since the government cannot get that bill through the House, it sticks it in Bill C-9 and basically defies the opposition to vote against it and cause an election. Maybe that is what the government really wants, an election.

• (1710)

**Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly had a very interesting speech from the hon. member across the way. He loves to talk about taxes. I have to say that our Conservative government has the record to prove that it does reduce taxes. Since coming to office in 2006, we have cut over 100 taxes. We have removed over one million low income Canadians completely off the tax rolls. We have reduced our tax burden to the lowest level in nearly 50 years.

The NDP members love to talk about cutting taxes but every time the government introduces tax cuts they vote against it. However, at least one member admits that his party should not be embarking down that path. This is what the NDP member for Thunder Bay—Superior North had to say, “There are elements in our party that have not been adequately concerned about the health and growth of businesses”.

I am wondering if the hon. member would care to comment on what his colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North had to say.

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, the government is pretending that somehow it is a big tax cutter. It is a big tax cutter for corporations but it has increased taxes. A 50% security fee will be paid for air flights. This will make airline passengers even happier with the government when they start paying their 50% security fee.

We have the whole issue with the debit card industry where the government has basically sat on its hands. It says that it will regulate the debit card industry but it is all on the basis of guidelines. I do not know too many of my constituents who are happy with the way they are treated by the credit card companies. They are looking to the government to do something about it but the government sits on its hands and does nothing.

The government is not consumer friendly at all. I would like somebody in this House to tell me one consumer issue where the government has sided with the consumers and not the industry. On the air passenger bill of rights, the government sides with the industry. The rest of us in opposition voted for the consumer. In the area of credit cards, the government sides with the companies and actually against small business because it is allowing these companies to increase the fees that the companies charge to small business in this country.

*Government Orders*

This is all being done under a Conservative government. The member does not need to talk to me about reducing taxes. The government is actually increasing taxes.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the bank executives earning money, we should leave that up to the shareholders.

Does the member agree, given that this bill we are debating today is a jobs and economic growth bill, that the banks, even though there has been no move from the central bank, have the right to start jacking up interest rates? Does the member think it is right that with this bill the Conservative government is bringing in an EI employer-employee tax of over \$13 billion? Will that help stimulate job growth and the economy?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, while the government talks a great line about reducing taxes, the reality is that it is increasing taxes in ways that the hon. member has indicated. It is raising the security fees. There is more than one way to raise taxes. A lot of governments say that they are reducing taxes but meanwhile user fees are going up throughout the whole system of the government.

We say that the financial services industry needs more regulation, not less, and that guidelines should be put in place for bank profits and the salaries of the bank executives.

Why can other jurisdictions in the world operate with reasonable CEO benefits and salaries, where in North America it is the law of the jungle? We have CEOs earning \$10 million a year. How is that fair to working people in this country?

• (1715)

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a really excellent presentation today. I am really enjoying hearing his point of view on this, but I want to go back to the corporate tax cuts.

In looking at this issue, I looked at many of the countries that have higher corporate tax rates and some of the rationale behind it. One of them is that setting a corporate tax rate much lower than the high personal income tax rate will encourage a slippage among the high personal income earners to corporate positions. That is one reason that economists in other countries are saying that there is a danger in making too large a separation between the large personal income tax rate and the corporate tax rate.

How does that fit with these \$10 million salaries for the CEOs of these large banks?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the government do not like hearing about it and obviously the Liberal members are very nervous about it too. The Liberals had their big expensive think-tank last week in Montreal and ended up coming up with an NDP position, basically that corporate taxes should not be lowered in a race to the bottom, that there is a role for reasonable corporate taxation.

The Liberal Party now realizes that, and I am happy to welcome them on-board in accepting that just lowering corporate income tax will not solve the problems of this country. It just takes revenue away from health care and other social programs which we all agree need to be improved. However, we will not be able to improve on

them if we keep lowering the taxation rate for corporations. Someone needs to pay the taxes.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I take exception to the member using the bank salaries and then criticizing the shareholders for having a say. They are the owners. By the way, the rules on the bank system in this country need to be widely held, including the member's CPP account, which has a tremendous amount of bank stock.

Could the member answer the question as to whether the CAW president has the UAW rank and file members decide on what his or her salary will be in a year?

**Mr. Jim Maloway:** Mr. Speaker, I said that it was a good sign that one of the big major banks in the last month had its annual shareholders' meeting and it invited the shareholders. That is a good sign to at least take a look at, not necessarily vet and approve, the salary of the chief executive officer, but at least they presented the information to the shareholders.

However, that should be regulated. Guidelines should be put in place. We should not just leave it up to the banks to do it whenever they feel like inviting the shareholders. That is not the way it should be. The shareholders own the shares to the company and they should have a right to find out what the CEOs' corporate benefits plans are all about and how much the CEOs are making.

That was the first bank to do that but I was told that the other banks will be following suit. However, that has nothing to do with the government. The government's laissez-faire, hands-off approach to the economy is essentially the attitude that the banks are private and they should deal with their own issues. I am saying no. In this one case, the bank did invite the shareholders in to take a look at their salaries, but they did not offer the shareholders the right to make any changes to them or reject them in any way, shape or form.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to Bill C-9 on the implementation of the 2010 budget. I will share my time with my colleague, the member for Sherbrooke.

In the 2010 budget, the demands of our constituents have been completely ignored or perhaps deliberately undervalued. That is completely unacceptable. For several years, we have been doing our job and have told the government that it needed to help Quebecers. It needed to come up with a plan to help workers in the hardest hit sectors in Quebec.

We presented measures in good faith to help businesses make it through the economic crisis and to help people. The Bloc Québécois told the federal government that it could take this opportunity to settle a number of compensation claims with Quebec.



*Government Orders*

We proposed ways to combat the sophisticated schemes that enable the extremely wealthy to avoid paying taxes on their income. We proposed a 1% tax on individuals with a yearly income of over \$150,000.

What is even more appalling is that the government ignored our proposal to eliminate the tax breaks given to the oil industry. We asked the government to treat Quebec's forestry and manufacturing industries fairly and equitably, by giving the Quebec industries the same breaks it gave to Ontario.

What does the government propose? It is maintaining the increases in military spending and completely ignoring the reality facing our forestry industry, investing very little in Quebec. It is completely ignoring sectors that have been suffering harshly for far too long.

In Bill C-290, the Bloc Québécois proposed a measure to help thousands of retirees who have been cheated. Over 20,000 workers and retirees will see their pension plans cut by about 30% following an Ontario Superior Court decision to reject an agreement between Nortel and its pensioners. The Conservative government is doing nothing to help them, and yet there are solutions.

The question asked by my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles is clear. Will the government support the Bloc Québécois' bill to help the Nortel, Atlas and Jeffrey mine workers whose pension plans have been cut off?

The Prime Minister wants to review Canada's retirement income system. If the past is any indication and we remember what the government did to the employment insurance system, we have every reason to fear the worst: we will find ourselves with a program that does not meet the needs of retirees.

The Bloc Québécois is pleased to see that the federal government recognizes that we must make major changes to better protect salaries and pensions. However, these measures do not allay the Bloc Québécois' concerns about declining securities values that, in times of economic crisis, lower the value of pension funds.

If a company goes bankrupt, its pension fund will be unable to fulfill its obligation to beneficiaries, but not because the company fails to make its regular contributions to the pension fund.

The Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to put pension plans set up by companies under federal jurisdiction in trust. That is what Quebec does to prevent companies from liquidating pension funds when the securities market is at a low point. The Bloc Québécois also wants disabled workers insured through self-insurance plans to have preferred creditor status.

The proposal in the budget is not good enough. It does not meet people's needs.

Let us turn now to seniors, who have been largely forgotten in the federal budget. How can the government claim to defend people's interests? For over nine years now, we have been calling for improvements to the guaranteed income supplement. In December 2001, we learned that over 270,000 Canadian seniors, including over 68,000 in Quebec, who were eligible for the guaranteed income supplement were not receiving it. They were entitled to that money.

Our poorest seniors are suffering as a result. They are the ones bearing the burden of this government's spending.

Last week, my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé rose in the House to criticize the rising rate of poverty among seniors. He cited a Conference Board of Canada study showing that between 1995 and 2005, the poverty rate among seniors doubled.

In an effort to promote equality and social justice, the Bloc Québécois has proposed simple, realistic measures to solve this problem and fight poverty among society's poorest.

● (1725)

Nowhere does Bill C-9, the budget implementation bill, propose ways to decrease the poverty rate among seniors. The bill says nothing about this, and that is unacceptable. Improving benefits and paying seniors money that is owing them would prevent an increase in poverty.

The government should start by increasing by \$100 a month the guaranteed income supplement that people currently receive. It should also consider the poverty in which many seniors live. Given the cost of urban housing—we can all do this exercise in our own ridings—and the fact that this cost and many utility charges are rising, the amount seniors currently receive is not enough. It should be increased, but neither budget 2010 nor the minister's Bill C-9 provides for an increase.

The program should also include individuals aged 65 and over who are entitled to the guaranteed income supplement. The government says that it cannot locate these people. It needs to make an effort to find them, even if it tries just once.

One reason why people do not receive the guaranteed income supplement is that they are not aware of the program. Administrative delays are also to blame. The result is that people do not get everything they are entitled to.

The Conservative government should introduce a measure to pay the guaranteed income supplement retroactively. People have been hurt. The solution is simple: make retroactive payments. But Bill C-9 contains no such measure.

The measures in Bill C-9 are not enough and do not meet people's needs.

We also proposed that the government keep paying old age security and the guaranteed income supplement for at least six months after the recipient's death, to help his or her survivor through that difficult time. Again, there is nothing in the bill to meet these expressed needs, such as an amendment to the Income Tax Act or changes to other programs.

Bill C-9, however, contains measures that were not in the budget, for instance, amendments to the Employment Insurance Act and the creation of an employment insurance operating account. There is no mention of a need for reform.

*Private Members' Business*

Among the measures not included in the budget which are included in Bill C-9, there is the liberalization of one of Canada Post's business lines. In the last session and previous ones, the government tried to pass Bill C-44 without much success in the House. With this bill now, it is trying to put something in place that the members of this House did not agree with.

To sum up the first part of my speech, I would say that the government did not listen to the various associations that support what I just said, associations like the Quebec Federation of Senior Citizens, also known as FADOQ. The government is also ignoring the motion passed unanimously by the Quebec National Assembly calling on the federal government to compensate those seniors who have been shortchanged. It was asking that seniors be refunded. Despite all this support, the federal government simply failed to act.

Allow me to pass on what the seniors with whom I met in February told me. They are asking that the public sign their petition. They are currently campaigning to raise public awareness of what is not in the budget.

• (1730)

I think that the government's message is pretty simple, and the campaign slogan pretty clear. I am mentioning it here because these people need the government to hear their slogan at least one. Their slogan is: "The alarm is sounding. React!" That is what seniors want the government to do.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### SEEDS REGULATIONS ACT

The House resumed from March 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill C-474. The intent of Bill C-474, an act to amend seeds regulations, is to "require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted". The intent of this bill is to require that the federal government amend the seeds regulations in order to require that that analysis be undertaken.

I will admit that I have mixed opinions on this bill, but I will say off the top of this debate that I am willing to allow the bill to go to committee. What in part prompted this legislation was the discovery, beginning in Europe in July 2009, that Canadian flax exports were contaminated with the genetically modified flax, Triffid. The presence of the GM flax was found first in Germany in cereal and bakery products.

Let us be clear. The GM flax in question had not been approved for use in Canada since 2001 and this bill would not necessarily have

prevented the Triffid issue from happening. As the Flax Council of Canada confirmed to its members in October 2009, "No varieties of GM flaxseed have received regulatory approvals in the EU".

The consequences on our flax exporters has been severe. According to a *Globe and Mail* story on October 27, 2009, the lucrative \$320 million annual market for flax was threatened with prices declining from \$11 a bushel to \$2 a bushel. That is very serious.

It should be noted, though, that GM Triffid flax was developed in 1998 at the University of Saskatchewan. The Triffid seed is tolerant to soil residues and certain herbicides. In what I would call a smart and futuristic-thinking move, in 2001 Canadian flax producers, through the Flax Council of Canada, moved to have the CFIA, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, remove the variety registration for GM flax in order to protect their export markets. The EU accounts for approximately 70% of Canada's flax exports.

I make that point because the flax industry did everything it could to prevent genetically modified flax from affecting the European market. Yet it still did. Triffid got into the marketplace. This bill would not have prevented that from happening.

Let me turn to the issues that I believe need to be discussed in committee. There is a lot of debate around genetically modified and genetically engineered organisms and people have all kinds of wild and woolly stories. There is a lot of pressure from some in the farm community and some in the investment community not to allow this bill to go to committee.

We have to have the debate. We need to lay it on the table. I believe in a science-based system. I really do not know how the mover of the bill intends to measure market harm, but I am certainly willing to send it to committee to find out how the mover of the bill intends to do that. I am certainly willing to have a discussion with witnesses on both sides of the issue in a transparent way and deal with this proposal in a very constructive way.

The bill does not question the legitimacy of GMOs as an agricultural tool. The debate based upon the provisions of the bill need not become one which focuses on support for or opposition to the use of GM organisms.

• (1735)

Bill C-474 is seeking to propose the establishment of a means by which, prior to export of Canadian products, there can be developed a process by which "potential harm" of exporting GM products into markets which have not accepted their presence can be determined.

In a background note prepared for the agriculture committee on November 26, 2009, it was indicated that soya growers and exporters have taken an innovative approach by introducing a segregation system that allows them to supply their customers with different crops of soya with specific characteristics. However, this segregation system is not available to all varieties.

The economic harm test is established by the fact of a ban on certain GM content and the discovery of it in any shipment. However, the bill does not define how that economic harm would be determined. We will listen closely to witnesses to see if they can possibly put forward the method of defining that economic harm.

*Private Members' Business*

The wider issue remains the acceptability of GM organisms in the food system.

This is not the first time we have been faced with that kind of a decision. In 1994 Monsanto was pressing to have its product, Posilac, approved in Canada. Posilac, better known as rBST, is a synthetic growth hormone that increases milk production in dairy cattle. The Standing Committee on Agriculture, in its report of April 14, 1994, recommended a moratorium on the approval of rBST during which time there would be a review in greater detail of the impact of rBST on the costs and benefits for the Canadian dairy industry.

I bring this up because we are seeing the same kind of concern raised by researchers and some of the big companies right now. The response at that time from the industry to the work of the committee was to question why the committee would even do that work. I received a letter from the president of Ag-West Biotech Inc., a very successful biotech company in Saskatoon, in April 1994. He said:

I am writing to you with respect to agriculture biotechnology and my concerns regarding the recent actions of the Standing Committee on agriculture. The method they used to deal with BST has given me some real concerns for the future of the biotechnology industry in Canada.

He went on in the letter to say:

Their recommendations [meaning the committee] could have serious negative impacts on the future of Canadian agriculture. I trust that their recommendations won't proceed further, as they presently stand.

Another company that was very concerned was Monsanto, which wrote a letter on May 3, 1994. Monsanto said:

Since 1985 Monsanto has followed the current process for BST approval through Health Canada. We support a transparent and science based regulatory system. As developers, we believe this is essential to reassure the public on issues such as food safety...

Monsanto goes on to argue that, should the committee even study the issue, there would be loss of investment in Canada.

The point is that neither claim can be borne out. We made the decision as a committee. We debated the issue. As I understand it, rBST is still not approved for use in Canada. Monsanto and other research companies have continued to invest heavily.

Sending this bill to committee should not impact on investment in Canada. We should study the issue at committee and lay the facts on the table. I hear a government member laughing. I know the government hates to discuss issues. It likes to operate in secrecy. This issue should go to committee. It should be debated there. Proper witnesses should be brought in and then decisions made on the future.

• (1740)

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-474, a bill that would regulate seeds, and in particular, genetically engineered seeds.

This is an important bill we have before us. I think it is an important part of a policy on genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, that Canada should adopt. I will explain that and go into more detail later.

We must pass this bill. We are in favour of this bill because we must take into account the market losses that could be directly associated with some decisions made by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. We must consider the economic impact that the approval of genetically engineered products and substances could have.

We need to do more. Canada must agree to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. The purpose of this protocol is to govern and regulate genetically modified products. This protocol would also give substance to a declaration signed in Rio and to a fundamental approach, the precautionary principle, which is mentioned directly in the Cartagena protocol.

The Food and Drugs Act must be amended because genetically modified foods are not the same as conventional foods. Risk assessments should not and must not be the same for both categories. We have to go even further than that. We have to make sure that Canada has a policy and regulations for labelling products that contain GMOs so that people who go to grocery stores know what is in these foods. People have the right to choose. Canada's legislation has to recognize that right.

We have to pass this bill because there have been precedents. We have seen what happens. The case with China and Canada is an excellent example. A few years ago, in 2001 to be exact, China decided to ban imports of certain products made from genetically modified crops, such as canola, soy and rapeseed. These products were banned from China because they were genetically modified.

What was the effect of that ban on economic activity in the United States, where 70% of the soy crop is genetically modified? It was an absolute disaster for many producers.

That is why we have to be aware of the effect that approving genetically modified seed can have on our producers' economic security. The same applies to Europe. Asia and Europe are two markets that tend to ban imports of products containing GMOs. A Canadian Food Inspection Agency decision to approve a genetically modified product can have significant economic consequences for our producers.

Another example is genetically modified wheat. When Monsanto sought approval from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to market genetically modified Roundup Ready wheat, the Canadian Wheat Board immediately conducted an economic impact study.

• (1745)

The wheat board told the government to be careful, because if it approves genetically modified wheat, we could lose some of our market share. This bill would make the Canadian Wheat Board's measures mandatory, in order to protect our producers.

*Private Members' Business*

This bill needs to pass, but in my opinion, we need to go even further. We need to amend the Food and Drugs Act. At present, under that legislation, a genetically modified food, or a food item produced using genetically modified ingredients, is considered to be exactly the same product as a conventional food item. This is unacceptable. So we need to amend the Food and Drugs Act, to stipulate that a genetically modified product cannot be considered a conventional product, even though the two products may be very similar.

Nor is it true that once the Canadian Food Inspection Agency authorizes and approves a product, and there is a request from a developer to authorize another, that the study and risk assessment of a number of other products are automatically taken into account.

We have to change the Food and Drugs Act and make the distinction between a transgenic or genetically modified food product and a conventional food. What is more, we have to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety. It has to be done. We cannot be the fifth largest global producer of GMOs and refuse to ratify an international protocol that simply establishes a framework for genetic modifications, the transportation of products and the creation of registries. It is our environmental and social responsibility.

What is Canada doing? It is applying the same logic as it does with the Kyoto protocol. Since Canada is a major polluter, it refuses to ratify the Kyoto protocol. Since Canada is the fifth largest global producer of GMOs, it refuses to ratify the Cartagena protocol on biosafety.

We must ensure that responsible environmental standards are set for this type of product. We have to do so because that is what citizens are asking us to do. They are calling for information when they buy products in the grocery store or elsewhere. More than 90% of Quebecers want mandatory labelling for GMOs once and for all, but the government has been dragging its heels for years. Whether it is a Liberal government or a Conservative government, the policy is the same. The government refuses to accept its responsibilities and we cannot accept that.

We are going to vote in favour of this bill because in our opinion it is one of the important pieces of a broader policy on genetically modified organisms, a policy that should include mandatory labelling and provide for a review of the Food and Drugs Act, which should also reflect this bill. When we have all four of the items I just mentioned, then we will finally have a policy that is respectful of the consumer.

• (1750)

[English]

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm).

I thank my colleague from British Columbia Southern Interior, the NDP agriculture critic, for his work. It is fair to say that his intelligence in developing policies is exceeded only by his fairness with which he goes about his work in the House. I am also pleased to say that I seconded the bill.

The bill deals with the use of genetically engineered seeds. It would require the government to consider the harm to the export

value of a crop before permitting the sale of any new genetically engineered seed. The policy basis of the bill is quite clear. It is needed to protect the economic livelihood of farmers and the soundness of Canada's agricultural policy.

The bill is good for agriculture, good for farmers and good for Canada. It represents the kind of progressive policy that is needed to move Canada forward in the 21st century.

Before I get to the crux of the bill, I want to address some of the broader issues that the bill raises.

My colleague and I are both from British Columbia, where we have a very proud farming tradition. Some of the world's best produce and products are grown on some of the world's best farmland. Family farms in British Columbia have been hard hit, like many farms across the country, but thousands of British Columbians take pride in the work they do every day to feed our nation and to feed many people of the world.

In British Columbia the value of quality farmland and sound agricultural practices has long been recognized. In fact, it is built into provincial legislation, which I am proud to say my party, the New Democrats, pioneered.

I want to take one example called the Agricultural Land Reserve. The New Democrat government of Premier Dave Barrett brought in a piece of legislation in 1973 called the Agricultural Land Reserve that essentially protects valuable agricultural land from development. It encourages farming and it controls non-agricultural uses of farmland. In other words, it takes land out of the potential for industrial and commercial development and it preserves it forever as agricultural land, some of the best land, as I have said, in the world. The ALR crew could be incredibly forward thinking. It is an example of the kind of vision of an NDP government.

Let us fast-forward to today. This was 1972, over 35 years ago. Today, we face the 21st century local food movement where we have concerns over climate change. We are talking about 100-mile diets and the importance of locally grown food and sustainable practices around the production of that food.

I want to point out that back in 1972, New Democrats in the country were already anticipating the vital importance that some agricultural practices and good food production have to our country.

The bill before us today shows the same kind of vision. The bill exemplifies the same kind of sound policy that we in the House want to support. The bill protects farmers of the future.

*Private Members' Business*

In my community of Vancouver Kingsway, people recognize the importance of local food production. They know that locally produced food reduces carbon emissions from transportation. It is healthier. Fewer preservatives are needed to keep it fresh. We have thriving local food movements all over Vancouver and in my riding of Vancouver Kingsway. The Trout Lake Farmers Market, which started up not that long ago, will be opening for the season in May. The Riley Park farmers market has now moved to Main Street Station. It was organized by a wonderful community activist named Mel Lehan. It also brings together farmers and local produce providers from around the greater Vancouver area right to the tables of Canadian families living in my municipality.

We recognize that a healthy agricultural policy is based on healthy components. We need healthy soil. We need healthy plants. We need healthy fertilizer practices and we need healthy, sustainable farm practices.

• (1755)

Many community gardens exist in my riding. We have the Cedar Cottage Community Garden that is driven by one of my constituents, Faune Johnson. We have the Cedar Cottage Greenway, one of the earliest gardens of the Greenstreets program, a city of Vancouver program that gives residents the opportunity to become volunteer street gardeners in our neighbourhoods.

I was invited by Beth Brooks to a community potluck to celebrate the success of this garden last summer and it was wonderful to see people brought together to help celebrate what could happen when a community gets in touch with our food production and our gardening roots.

At Windermere Secondary School in my riding, Vagner Castillho is a teacher who has a leadership class. As part of his sustainability initiative, students started a food garden and greenhouses. Individual families all over Vancouver take advantage of the Vancouver climate to grow their own food in backyard gardens.

I want to briefly address another quick farming issue because it is current before the House right now and it also speaks to the need for long-term vision from the government.

I am the vice-chair of the public safety committee and right now the committee is studying the government's decision to close six farms operating at correctional institutions across this country. On Tuesday, our committee heard nine witnesses as part of that study, people from the National Farmers Union, ex-convicts and a dean of law from Queen's University. We heard from sisters from a nuns order. We heard from rural municipal officials, the president of the National Union of Solicitor General employees, agri-business instructors at various institutions and from corrections officials themselves. Grouped together they illustrated the diversity of support for prison farms.

These nine individuals and many other supporters came to oppose the inexplicable decision of the government to close down prison farms, a win-win-win situation for Canadians that provides valuable rehabilitation for prisoners as well as marketable skills to aid these prisoners in reintegration. It saves government money by growing our own food and it is of value to local communities as an economic

driver for agribusiness, providing healthy food for food banks and slaughtering services for local farmers.

I have spoken in broad terms about the importance of agriculture and local food. I want to now draw my colleagues' attention to the specific provisions of the bill. The purpose of the bill is to direct the government to amend the seeds regulations to require an analysis of the potential harm to export markets before approving the sale of any new genetically engineered seed.

Currently, GE seeds are approved for sale with no consideration for their impact on export. This is not a theoretical discussion. Already GE seeds have had a harmful impact on Canadian farmers. Last September, illegal GE flaxseed called the triffid was found to have contaminated our flax exports. The triffid flax was not approved for human consumption or environmental release outside of North America. In response, European countries pulled Canadian products from their shelves and Canadian flax shipments were quarantined. Some 60% of our Canadian flax exports currently go to Europe and Canadian flax farmers were harmed and harmed severely by this.

GE alfalfa has already been approved for release in Canada. Monsanto has relaunched research into GE wheat. This bill seeks to prevent an economic disaster for Canadian farmers and these other crops as well. The agronomic and environmental impact of GE seeds and GE crops is controversial. There is no scientific consensus at present and further research is most certainly needed.

The economic impact of GE seeds, however, is not in question and this is what Bill C-474 seeks to address. Other countries have taken clear positions about their domestic consumption of GE products. Many of these countries are major consumers of Canadian agricultural products. Canadian agricultural policy cannot exist in a vacuum. We cannot live in denial of the international market reality toward GE crops because Canadian farmers rely on these export markets for their livelihood. The government has a duty, we submit on this side of the House, to protect the livelihood of these farmers, and the government has a duty, we New Democrats say, to consider the impact of these livelihoods before approving the sale of GE seeds.

It is my understanding that the government spent \$1.9 million to deal with the contamination of the GE flaxseed. Passing this bill would help farmers and save taxpayers money from having to pay for the cleanup of any future contamination.

*Private Members' Business*

The bill has the support of numerous farming organizations and environmental groups. It has the support of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture which represents over 200,000 farmers and farm families. It is endorsed by the National Farmers Union and the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network.

● (1800)

I am pleased to support this bill and I urge my colleagues to vote to send it to committee for further study. I thank the hon. member for his work in this regard.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to speak today to this important legislation, Bill C-474, an amendment to the seeds regulations.

I will begin by saying what a relief it is to hear the member for Vancouver Kingsway talk about how important the livelihood of Canadian farmers is. I know that in his care for Canadian farmers, he will also take the time to listen to them and stand up to get things like the Colombia free trade agreement passed, as the Canadian Pork Council and other industry leaders have come to us at our ag committee begging for us to expedite it.

I would also like to mention one other thing concerning the member for Malpeque who was speaking earlier. While he often has good ideas, sometimes he comes to them before or after he decides to vote. I am reminiscing back to the product of Canada labelling. He was for it before he was against it. With the budget, he was for it before he was against it. As the Attorney General of Canada, he was for cutting the budget for prison farms and now he is against it. With respect to the long gun registry, he was for it and now he is against it.

It really is difficult to pin down the Liberal Party and some of those members on exactly what their positions are. I cannot help but to be a little saddened by the position they are taking on this. It is a fundamentally dishonest position when they say that they want to sit and talk about this and they want to pass it through to committee knowing all along that they will vote against this bill and try to kill it in committee.

That being said, I would like to commend member for British Columbia Southern Interior. He has been an excellent member of the agriculture standing committee. Although I may not agree with all of his positions, he certainly comes to those positions through well thought-out time and effort. I know it is generally his intent to put good public policy forward.

That is why I raise these questions of concern with respect to the member for Malpeque. We should have honest debate on this, as I am about to participate in. It should not be political gamesmanship when it comes to Canadian farmers.

Bill C-474 would require the Governor in Council to amend the seeds regulations to require an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

Canada is a true leader in agriculture science and innovation. It is important to look at this bill and look at the idea of putting an economic impact on our trade. What we are basically proposing here is to allow other countries to affect our variety regulation and they will do this based on their own internal trade, therefore affecting our

own farmers and imposing a tariff on ourselves. That is basically what I see happening.

For generations, our farmers have practised selective breeding to improve the qualities and characteristics of their crops. In labs across the country, our researchers are working hard to develop new plant varieties and technologies that will continue to support a vibrant agriculture sector. New plant varieties offer a number of clear benefits, including more effective pest control, higher yields and reduced impacts on the environment.

Canada is proud to share our new technologies with the world. Canada's success in agriculture has long depended on the sector's ability to adapt to a changing marketplace by using new technologies to help lower production costs and to enhance the range of products available to meet new consumer demands.

I would like to spend a few moments highlighting one example of how Canadian innovation is helping farmers around the world, including farmers in poorer countries.

The Government of Canada has invested \$13 million to combat wheat stem rust known as Ug99, a fungus which poses a threat to wheat production. Canada is a leader in this kind of research. Our scientists are doing important work to develop new varieties of wheat resistant to this fungus. A greater understanding of the biology of this fungus will make a major contribution to international efforts to combat Ug99 worldwide.

The late Dr. Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Peace Prize winner plant scientist commended us on making this important investment in wheat rust research. He called it an important action to protect the wheat crop in North America and worldwide, and a major step forward in our efforts to stem the global threat of wheat rust. Recent predictions are that we will have to double global food production to feed the global population by 2050.

● (1805)

We must continue efforts to accelerate scientific research in order to feed the population of the planet. We must increase agriculture yields in a major way to meet the challenge of the future. Farmers are at the core of our efforts to meet this challenge.

We recognize that this bill raises important policy issues on how to manage the market impacts of genetically engineered products. We need to be very cautious of any move to introduce a subjective, non-scientific element to our oversight in the introduction of new technologies. I am referring to socio-economic considerations like consumers' attitudes in other countries to genetically engineered food. These matters are not science-based and can change overnight. The industry is divided on the prudence of introducing non-science criteria into the process.

I will quote a letter from Doug Robertson, a canola producer from my home province of Alberta, regarding this bill. Mr. Robertson writes that GM canola has helped him improve his yields and helped the environment despite the coldest and driest spring in recent memory. He states:

Canada has always used sound science to assess whether new ingredients, seeds and traits are safe for Canadian farmers to grow and consumers to eat. That policy makes us a leader in the world and is the only realistic way to assess risk, with clear, sound, scientific methods.

I want to emphasize that, “with clear, sound, scientific methods”.

Canada's food supply is safe already thanks to our sound science system we have in place. Over two decades of studies have proven that. We don't need non-science corrupting our approval system.

I know from round tables that I have done across my province and my riding that this is the overwhelming opinion of the producers in our area that rely on canola, wheats and barley.

In other parts of the world, we are also seeing changing attitudes vis-à-vis GE foods, particularly in a number of European markets. Canada has been a strong proponent of science-based trade, whether it is BSE hormones in cattle or genetically engineered foods. We understand that trade must be rooted in science. Our regulatory system works to ensure that the products we sell to the world are safe and of the highest quality.

It is an efficient system that has put Canada on the map for food safety and quality. Adding in trade and other issues unrelated to science could set a very dangerous precedent. We want to ensure we do not risk bogging things down in red tape. We want to ensure we can continue to bring new technologies, such as our research into wheat stem rust, to the world. Anything short of that would be a tragedy.

I am proud of the action Canada is taking to help its farmers. Canada is blessed with the best farmers in the world and some of the best land in the world. We are a fortunate nation and we are committed to sharing our resources with those around the world who desperately need it. We are committed to finding new and more efficient ways to grow crops. We understand the need to keep a strict and unwavering watch on the food we produce and sell to the world. We just want to ensure we can get new technologies to those who need them with as little delay as possible.

The future of Canadian agriculture depends on innovation and trade, and those important elements are cornerstones of growing forward, our new policy framework for agriculture. With growing forward, we are putting more investment in innovation, from idea to invention to consumer. We are building new opportunities that support innovation and competitiveness. In fact, we have invested \$158 million in the new growing Canadian agri-innovations program.

We want to help the sector to succeed, and a big part of that success depends upon being able to accelerate the development of new products, practices and processes for new and value-added markets.

Growing forward builds on our international trade success through industry-led marketing strategies, a Canada branding strategy, market intelligence and services for exporters and actions to maintain and improve market access.

### *Private Members' Business*

Growing forward takes action on the environment by supporting on-farm, sustainable agriculture practices.

Finally, growing forward builds on Canada's food safety systems with new traceability and bio-security programs so that Canada continues to deliver the safest, highest quality foods to Canadians and our global customers.

Science-based trade works and it brings real results for our farmers, the sector and our industry, and it is science-based trade that we must maintain in order to keep the stability that our industry so desperately needs in these very tough times.

● (1810)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to speak to Bill C-474, An Act respecting the Seeds Regulations (analysis of potential harm). I want to particularly acknowledge the hard work that the member for British Columbia Southern Interior has done on the bill. It is a very important bill.

I know we have heard other discussions in the House. I want to emphasize that this bill is actually narrowly focused. We are not talking about the scientific approval of GE crops. We are not talking about mandatory labelling.

What we are talking about is that the bill requires an amendment to the Seeds Regulations Act to require that an analysis of potential harm to export markets can be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted.

Currently, approvals of genetically engineered crops for human consumption and environmental release are based on safety alone with no consideration given to any potential harm to export markets and the resultant economic harm to farmers. I think that is a very important statement.

I know that in my own riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan we have a very active food security community. I want to acknowledge the work that the Cowichan Green Community does around the development of a food charter, engaging the community in conversations and practices that not only look toward protecting our farmers and making sure that our local farmers have an adequate living but also ensuring that people have access to quality, affordable nutritious food.

We have many bakeries and in Nanaimo—Cowichan there is a famous wine region. Therefore, we are very conscious of the importance of farmers making an adequate living. That is part of what the bill is addressing. It is protecting farmers' incomes.

*Private Members' Business*

In the work that the member for British Columbia Southern Interior has done on the bill, he has identified a number of problems which the bill attempts to address. He said that a GE crop that is not approved in our export markets has little value to farmers. GE contamination is already hurting Canadian farmers and if a contamination incident similar to the current flax contamination crisis were to happen with wheat and alfalfa, the economic consequences to farmers would be devastating.

Currently, Bill C-474 is meant to provide a mechanism missing in the regulations that can protect farmers from economic hardship caused by the commercialization or contamination of their crops by GE seeds in the face of widespread market rejection.

I have had so many letters, e-mails and phone calls from constituents. I just want to read one because I think it captures some of the concerns that people have been talking about. This is an e-mail we received from Heide Brown. She said:

The Bill would support Canadian farmers by requiring that "an analysis of potential harm to export markets be conducted before the sale of any new genetically engineered seed is permitted".

This Bill is really important because, as we know from experience, the introduction of new genetically engineered (GE) crops can cause economic hardship to farmers.

Farmers are at risk when GE crops are commercialized in Canada without also being first approved in our major export markets.

Flax farmers in Canada are now paying the price for this exact problem.

Late last year, Canadian flax exports were discovered contaminated with a GE flax that is not approved in Europe or any of our other export markets.

Flax farmers actually foresaw that GE contamination or even the threat of contamination would close their export markets. That is why they took steps in 2001 to remove GE flax from the market. Despite this measure, flax farmers were not protected.

The GE flax contamination has created market uncertainty and depressed prices. Farmers are also paying for testing and cleanup and may be required to abandon their own farm-saved flax seed and buy certified seed instead.

These costs are an unnecessary and preventable burden.

We cannot allow our export markets to close like this again. It is the government's responsibility to protect Canadian farmers from predictable problems caused by the introduction of new GE crops that have not yet been regulated in our export markets.

—please support Bill C-474 and protect Canada's farmers and our markets.

That is fairly typical of a number of e-mails that I have received in the riding. I think one can tell from that letter that people are well informed about what the issues are that are facing farmers, about the impacts on the economies of farming, about their concerns around GE contamination, and how it impacts on our export markets.

● (1815)

It is important that we listen to the people who have written about this.

Some of the argument is that it is not do able. I want to point to the precedent of Argentina. Argentina is well aware that it is not just growing crops for domestic consumption, so it has a process lined out. The Government of Argentina's National Biosafety Framework, 2004 states:

In addition to the environmental biosafety assessment, a GMO release also requires a favourable food safety assessment...and the assessment of the absence of negative impacts on our exports.

Specifically, when it is looking at market impacts, it states:

A key part of the GMO regulatory process consists of verifying that the commercial approval will not have a negative impact on our foreign trade.

This specific assessment is carried out by the National Bureau of Agrifood Markets...and it includes an analysis of the current status of regulatory systems and public acceptance in the countries that buy our exports.

If Argentina can put in a system that examines the economic impact that could happen on its export market, surely Canada could do the same thing. As others have mentioned, a number of organizations are absolutely in support of this.

The CFA, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, in a news release of March 17, stated:

The varying levels of acceptance of GM-crops by key export markets is a reality Canadian farmers face...Ensuring that these markets are not closed to us because of the technology we adapt should be a government priority as they are work to develop more export opportunities for Canadian farmers.

It goes on in the news release to say:

Having a system in which GM-crops are authorized in one country and not in another means that the inadvertent commingling of crops and crop types while they are being transported to export markets will increase the potential for future market closures.

I want to turn, now, to a briefing that went to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food from the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network. It has a detailed briefing, but I want to touch on a couple of points.

It lays out its initial ask by saying there are two actions required:

Potential harm to markets needs to be considered before any new GE crop is field tested or commercially released in Canada.

The entire regulatory system for GE crops and foods needs to be reviewed and reformed.

The second point is outside the scope of this bill, but I want to touch on the negative economic impacts.

In its statement, it states:

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency...approves genetically engineered crops for environmental release without regard to the impacts on markets for Canadian farmers. Canadian regulatory agencies have no mechanisms by which to evaluate the economic risks, and approve or deny the introduction of GE crops based on this consideration.

In my closing minute or so, I will touch on a couple of items that are not in this bill but are very important to people in my riding. Again, I remind people the focus of this bill is on the potential economic damage for our farmers on export markets where we have countries that will not accept GE crops and are concerned about contamination.

However, in addition, CBAN, the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network, identified a couple of other areas of concern. It indicated that there is inadequate science and lack of transparency.

The Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel on the Future of Food Biotechnology stated:

The lack of transparency in the current approval process, leading as it does to an inability to evaluate the scientific rigor of the assessment process, seriously compromises the confidence that society can place in the current regulatory framework used to assess potential risks to human, animal and environmental safety posed by GEOs [genetically modified organisms].



It went on to highlight a number of other areas of concern, including incomplete environmental risk assessments and inadequate monitoring and surveillance.

In its conclusion, it stated:

The regulatory system for genetically engineered organisms in Canada is not built to include consideration of the potential negative market harm caused by the introduction of GE crops, and is not adequately constructed to assess the complex environmental and health risks of genetic engineering.

I urge all members of the House to support the member for British Columbia Southern Interior's very excellent bill, Bill C-474, and to protect those markets for our farmers.

• (1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Resuming debate. I recognize the hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior for his five minute right of reply.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank all of my colleagues who took part in the debate on Bill C-474. It is my hope that they will work hard to convince members of their respective parties to move this bill forward to committee.

It is vital that we have a thorough and democratic debate on the economic effect on farmers of any further introduction of GE organisms into the environment. At the end of the day, it is up to parliamentarians to do all we can to help our farmers.

Before I move on, I would like to clear up a misconception. It was mentioned a number of times that had this bill been in place, it would not have helped the flax farmers. That is not entirely true because in 1996 Triffid received feed and environmental release approval. In 1998 it received food safety authorization.

Had the bill been in place at that point in time, the economic impact study would have shown that it would have been unwise to continue releasing flax into the environment. It was not until 2001, because of the pressure by farmers, that flax, which already had been released into the environment, was taken out and cancelled. I wanted to clear up that misconception.

The other point that is often mentioned is that somehow this is science-based technology. Let us be clear. The yield increases in crops are due to traditional breeding. For example, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, it is looking at methods now that are capable of increasing more of the crop yield, using a high tech genomic approach or marker-assisted selection. These are non-GE methods and they are the ones that actually increase the yield.

I do not have a great deal of time, so I will concentrate my remarks on the alfalfa industry. Mr. Paul Gregory of Interlake Forage Seeds in Manitoba states that most family-owned seed companies are against the further advancement of GM traits, especially in the forage seed business.

Mr. Kurt Shmon, president of Imperial Seed Ltd. also of Manitoba, writes:

—the users, producers and wholesalers/retailers of alfalfa seed and hay are opposed to the introduction of Roundup Ready alfalfa and yet we are at risk of the release of this product.

### *Private Members' Business*

He also cites the case of a U.S. seed company, Cal/West, which lost its market due to GE contaminated seed. The key word here is “contamination”.

According to the Saskatchewan Organic Directorate, it will be impossible to prevent the spread of GE alfalfa beyond the fields it is planted in for the following reasons.

First, alfalfa is pollinated primarily by leafcutter bees, which often drift several miles in search of better bloom, and also by honey bees, which have a range of up to four miles. Actually, a U.S. study has shown a contamination radius of up to 1.7 miles already.

Second, GE alfalfa for hay is often cut after the blooming starts and, therefore, the pollen is easily transferred to non-GM crops. Third, alfalfa seed crops produce a percentage of what is called “hard” seed that can germinate several years after the field has been plowed up.

Once contamination is discovered, countries that currently reject GMO crops, food and feed, will obviously then reject our alfalfa. Also, a large portion of our alfalfa pellet and cube market would be lost. Our organic livestock industry would also be hit hard if GE alfalfa contamination were to be found.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Consider Argentina for example. Before a GMO is approved for marketing, the government must have in hand the technical advice, including whether the market would accept the GMO, in the absence of potential negative impacts on Argentinian exports.

[*English*]

The government officials responsible for allowing this technology onto the market need a mandate to consider what the impact of doing so will have on our export markets. Bill C-474 will provide the mechanism to give them this mandate.

[*Translation*]

I urge my colleagues to send Bill C-474 to committee so that we can have a thorough and democratic debate.

[*English*]

Farmers are in difficult times. Let us not throw more obstacles in front of them by carelessly allowing the release of GE crops that can lead to economic harm.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 14, 2010, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Do I have agreement to see the clock at 6:30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

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

[*English*]

## CHILD CARE

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my question to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development with respect to child care the other day, she responded saying that parents had choices and that the government prefers to give parents choices. I want to point out that if there are no spaces, there are no choices.

The previous Liberal government had \$5 billion invested over five years. This would have expanded to \$10 billion to have a long-term investment in early education and child care. This is what it is about. It is about early education and child care. This was a long-term investment in partnership with the provinces. It was an agreement with all the provinces across Canada to deliver early education and child care to children.

The first act of the government when it came to power was to eliminate the \$5 billion, thereby eliminating spaces and giving parents essentially no choices. The waiting lists for the last couple of years have gone up tremendously and the spaces are much too expensive. Parents are having to pay \$1,200 to \$2,000 a month. It is far too expensive. That does not give parents a choice of any kind.

The Conservatives talk about providing millions of dollars in child care, offering a paltry \$250 million, which is then divided among 10 provinces and three territories. Under the \$5 billion Liberal government plan, \$254 million went to Ontario alone for that first year before the government cut it. Once that was cut, the Government of Ontario had to make that money last. Therefore, it divided it up to \$63.5 million a year for a number of years. The last of that federal funding dried up this year. The last of the small amount that they had divided dried up.

In the meantime, the Government of Canada has put no real money into child care. It has made no real investment. The \$1,200 it calls universal child care is not a child care program at all. Up until this year, it was only benefiting wealthy families and not low-income

families. This year, it is putting a little bit more into low-income families, making it look as if it is increasing. Essentially though, no matter which way we look at it, we are looking at \$50 to \$100 a month, in fact we are looking at \$1,200 a year. This amount does not even begin to pay for one day, never mind a whole month of child care.

It does not build spaces for child care, provide teachers or pay for all the costs that go into the infrastructure as well. Fees are rising for parents all across the country. There are waiting lists in Toronto that are very long, including in my own riding of Beaches—East York. With this \$63.5 million lost, there would have been 2,000 child care spaces at risk.

In any case, the province of Ontario picked that up, but that does not change the fact that the Government of Canada has a responsibility to partner with the provinces to deliver a national early learning and child care program, which the government has not done. It is a win-win. It creates jobs and helps parents re-enter the workforce. It gives every child the best start. It leads to a highly skilled labour force. The return on investment is huge. The government is pitting parents against parents and politics over policy in its short-term self-interest. That is not acceptable.

• (1830)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our party and our government will not take the advice of the Liberal Party when we talk about parents and families. The Liberals are simply wrong, Mr. Speaker, and I will tell you why.

Our party and our government, this Conservative government, is the party for strong families. We are the party of choice in child care. We are the party that respects parents and families. We believe Canadian parents know what is best for their children and for their families. This is just common sense. Each family is different. Each family makes its own choices.

What we are interested in is providing Canadian parents with choices and with leaving more money in the pockets of those parents so that they are better able to make the choices they want to make for their children. The Liberals are not interested in any of those things.

Due to our government's actions, a typical Canadian family has \$3,000 more in its pocket than under the tax and spend Liberals. Under our government, we have achieved and will continue to make the largest investment in parents and families by a federal government in Canadian history.

Our policies for families are bringing tens of thousands of lower income families off the tax rolls completely, making sure that they have more money and more choices to take care of their children. Our policies for parents and children of more choices, more money in their pockets and less government lead to stronger families. Stronger families mean better communities, and that means a better Canada.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

As I said, the Liberals are not interested in providing these choices, or in leaving families these resources or in less government. They think a government knows best. They think Liberals know best, but they are just arrogant and out of touch.

The Liberals continue their dubious beer and popcorn attitude. The truth is, the Liberals do not believe Canadian parents can raise their own children. The Liberal MP for St. Paul's said just last week that staying at home to raise one's kids does not constitute a real job.

The Liberals want to take away choices for families. They want to tell parents what is best. They do not believe parents raising their kids constitutes child care or real work at all. Their central assumption is that children will be loved and cared for just as much, or even more, by anyone except a parent. The Liberal leader must think so; he wrote about it.

In his book, *The Rights Revolution*, he said, "So-called family values, as propagated in the rhetoric of North American popular entertainment, pulpit sermonizing, and political homily, are a downright tyranny". The family as tyranny by the leader of the Liberal Party. He does not think parents are naturally good at parenting. He wrote that he thought families were so often destructive institutions.

All the Liberals want to do is ship our children off to state-run, state-approved daycare warehouses, and they focus on what a relief that would be for parents. Not us. Not Conservatives.

We are not interested in a left-Liberal, one-size-fits-all plan to nationalize children and that forces one choice on parents and families. The Liberal size fits no one.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, I do not even know how to answer that, because it is so offensive. It is offensive and insulting to the families of this country, to people, to women and all families.

No one ever said that families with women who stay home to look after their children is a bad thing. It is a great thing, but not every

family has the option to do that. Fifty per cent of our labour force is female now, and they are in the labour force whether we like it or not. The fact of the matter is, they need to have quality, affordable early education and child care for their children.,

It is also about the development of the child, by the way, which is something the Conservatives do not understand. Nobody is talking about institutionalizing children. I will not even try to answer all of the idiotic, I am sorry to say, comments the member has made in the House, with all due respect.

The fact of the matter is that it is about choice. When families cannot go to work because there are no child care spaces for their children, they have no choice.

● (1835)

**Mr. Colin Carrie:** Mr. Speaker, I understand my Liberal colleague's frustration. It certainly is a dangerous thing to admit that Liberals really are not on the side of parents and families. They would not want parents and their families in their ridings to hear about it, that is for sure, but that is why I have to bring it up.

Not only do Canadian families not support the nationalization of their children, but Canadians also cannot afford Liberal state-run schemes. Their scheme will cost billions upon billions of dollars every single year. They do not even know how much it will ultimately cost. The Liberal leader said that too.

The Liberals are just in it for themselves. The Liberal leader said to reporters, "It's a legacy issue for the Liberal Party". This is not about the Liberal Party. This is about Canadian parents and Canadian families.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until Monday, April 12, 2010, at 11 a.m. pursuant to Standing Orders 28(2) and 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:36 p.m.)



# CONTENTS

Thursday, April 1, 2010

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### Documents Regarding Mission in Afghanistan

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 1239

### Government Response to Petitions

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 1239

### Democratic Representation Act

Mr. Fletcher ..... 1239

Bill C-12. Introduction and first reading ..... 1239

(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed) ..... 1239

### Committees of the House

#### Natural Resources

Mr. O'Connor ..... 1239

Motion ..... 1239

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1239

#### Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. O'Connor ..... 1239

Motion ..... 1239

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1239

#### Agriculture and Agri-Food

Mr. O'Connor ..... 1239

Motion ..... 1239

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1240

Mr. O'Connor ..... 1240

Motion ..... 1240

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1240

Mr. O'Connor ..... 1240

Motion ..... 1240

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1240

### Questions on the Order Paper

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 1240

### Questions Passed as Orders for Returns

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 1241

### Petitions

#### Climate Change

Mr. Valeriote ..... 1241

#### Animal Welfare

Mr. Valeriote ..... 1241

Mr. Valeriote ..... 1242

#### Canada Post

Mr. Laforest ..... 1242

#### Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences

Mr. Mulcair ..... 1242

#### North Korean Refugees

Ms. Charlton ..... 1242

#### Air Passengers' Bill of Rights

Mr. Maloway ..... 1242

#### Earthquake in Chile

Mr. Maloway ..... 1243

### Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Allen (Welland) ..... 1243

Mr. Julian ..... 1243

Mr. Gravelle ..... 1243

### Points of Order

#### Bill C-304—Secure, Adequate, Accessible and Affordable Housing Act

Mr. Lukiwski ..... 1243

Mr. Comartin ..... 1244

### Privilege

#### Provision of Information to Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan

Mr. Bachand ..... 1244

Mr. Harris (St. John's East) ..... 1245

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### Jobs and Economic Growth Act

Bill C-9. Second reading ..... 1245

Mr. McKay ..... 1245

Mr. Albrecht ..... 1248

Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga) ..... 1248

Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) ..... 1248

Mr. Menzies ..... 1249

### Invisible Work Day

Ms. Demers ..... 1249

Motion ..... 1249

(Motion agreed to) ..... 1249

### Jobs and Economic Growth Act

Bill C-9. Second Reading ..... 1249

Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga) ..... 1249

Mr. Albrecht ..... 1251

Mr. Maloway ..... 1252

Mr. Hyer ..... 1252

Mr. Mulcair ..... 1252

Mr. Menzies ..... 1255

Mr. Paillé (Hochelaga) ..... 1255

Mr. Hyer ..... 1256

Mr. Cannis ..... 1256

Mr. Ouellet ..... 1259

Mr. Maloway ..... 1259

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) ..... 1260

Mr. Maloway ..... 1260

Mr. Carrier ..... 1260

Mr. Maloway ..... 1261

Mr. Ouellet ..... 1262

Mr. Bigras ..... 1262

Mr. Hyer ..... 1263

Mr. Ouellet ..... 1263

Mr. Simms ..... 1264

Mr. Maloway ..... 1266

Ms. Crowder ..... 1267

Mr. Cuzner .....	1267
Ms. Crowder .....	1268
Mr. Del Mastro .....	1271
Mr. Szabo .....	1271

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

#### Arts and Culture

Mr. Cannan .....	1271
------------------	------

#### World Autism Awareness Day

Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North) .....	1271
------------------------------------	------

#### Institut Nazareth et Louis-Braille

Ms. Guay .....	1272
----------------	------

#### Universities and Colleges

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) .....	1272
--	------

#### Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery

Mr. Boughen .....	1272
-------------------	------

#### Daffodil Month

Ms. Bennett .....	1272
-------------------	------

#### World Autism Awareness Day

Mr. Lake .....	1272
----------------	------

#### Daffodil Month

Mr. Dufour .....	1273
------------------	------

#### Democratic Representation

Mr. Chong .....	1273
-----------------	------

#### Midget AAA Hockey

Mr. Murphy (Charlottetown) .....	1273
----------------------------------	------

#### Infrastructure

Mr. Dechert .....	1273
-------------------	------

#### Manufacturing Industry

Ms. Charlton .....	1274
--------------------	------

#### Justice

Mrs. Boucher .....	1274
--------------------	------

#### Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Mr. Lemay .....	1274
-----------------	------

#### Crime

Mr. Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe) .....	1274
---	------

#### The Economy

Mr. Norlock .....	1274
-------------------	------

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Status of Women

Mr. Rae .....	1275
Mr. Harper .....	1275
Mr. Rae .....	1275
Mrs. Guergis .....	1275
Mr. Rae .....	1275
Mrs. Guergis .....	1275
Mr. Easter .....	1275
Mr. Baird .....	1275
Mr. Easter .....	1275
Mr. Baird .....	1276

#### Employment Insurance

Mr. Duceppe .....	1276
Mr. Harper .....	1276
Mr. Duceppe .....	1276
Mr. Harper .....	1276
Mr. Lessard .....	1276
Mr. Blackburn .....	1276
Mr. Lessard .....	1276
Mr. Blackburn .....	1276
Mr. Layton .....	1276
Mr. Harper .....	1277
Mr. Layton .....	1277
Mr. Harper .....	1277
Mr. Layton .....	1277
Mr. Harper .....	1277

#### Afghanistan

Mr. Dosanjh .....	1277
Mr. Kent .....	1277
Mr. Dosanjh .....	1277
Mr. Kent .....	1277

#### Taxation

Ms. Coady .....	1277
Mr. Flaherty .....	1278
Ms. Coady .....	1278
Mr. Flaherty .....	1278

#### Democratic Reform

Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	1278
Mr. Paradis .....	1278
Mrs. DeBellefeuille .....	1278
Mr. Paradis .....	1278

#### Taxation

Mr. Paillé (Hochelega) .....	1278
Mr. Flaherty .....	1278

#### Tax Harmonization

Mr. Paillé (Hochelega) .....	1278
Mr. Flaherty .....	1279
Mr. Garneau .....	1279
Mr. Flaherty .....	1279
Mr. Garneau .....	1279
Mr. Flaherty .....	1279

#### Government Programs

Mr. McGuinty .....	1279
Mr. Paradis .....	1279
Mr. McGuinty .....	1279
Mr. Paradis .....	1279

#### Democratic Reform

Mr. Fast .....	1279
Mr. Fletcher .....	1280

#### Government Programs

Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) .....	1280
Mr. Paradis .....	1280

#### Fisheries

Mr. Donnelly .....	1280
Mrs. Shea .....	1280

<b>Afghanistan</b>	
Mr. Bachand .....	1280
Mr. Kent .....	1280
Mr. Bachand .....	1280
Mr. MacKay .....	1280
<b>The Environment</b>	
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	1281
Mr. Prentice .....	1281
Mr. Scarpaleggia .....	1281
Mr. Prentice .....	1281
<b>Canada Post</b>	
Mr. Masse .....	1281
Mr. Merrifield .....	1281
<b>Hibernia Project</b>	
Mr. Harris (St. John's East) .....	1281
Mr. Flaherty .....	1281
<b>International Aid</b>	
Mr. Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) .....	1281
Mr. Kent .....	1282
<b>Corrections</b>	
Mr. Holland .....	1282
Mr. Toews .....	1282
<b>St. Lawrence Action Plan</b>	
Mr. Bigras .....	1282
Mr. Prentice .....	1282
<b>Aboriginal Healing Foundation</b>	
Ms. Ashton .....	1282
Mr. Strahl .....	1282
<b>Agriculture and Agri-Food</b>	
Ms. Hoepfner .....	1282
Mr. Ritz .....	1283
<b>Presence in Gallery</b>	
The Speaker .....	1283
<b>Business of the House</b>	
Mr. Goodale .....	1283
Mr. Hill .....	1283
<b>Points of Order</b>	
<b>Oral Questions</b>	
Mr. Mulcair .....	1283
<b>Statements by Members</b>	
Mr. Duceppe .....	1283
Mr. Lukiwski .....	1283
Mr. Blaney .....	1284

<b>References to members or ministers—Speaker's Ruling</b>	
The Speaker .....	1284

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

<b>Jobs and Economic Growth Act</b>	
Bill C-9. Second reading .....	1285
Mrs. Mourani .....	1285
Mrs. Smith .....	1287
Mr. Szabo .....	1288
Mr. Maloway .....	1288
Mr. Laframboise .....	1288
Mr. Pacetti .....	1289
Mr. Szabo .....	1289
Mr. Abbott .....	1291
Mr. Maloway .....	1291
Mr. Stanton .....	1292
Mr. Bevington .....	1292
Mr. Pacetti .....	1292
Mr. Van Kesteren .....	1295
Mr. Maloway .....	1296
Mr. Bevington .....	1296
Mr. Maloway .....	1296
Mr. Maloway .....	1297
Mr. Van Kesteren .....	1299
Mr. Cannis .....	1300
Mr. Bevington .....	1300
Mr. Wallace .....	1300
Ms. Faille .....	1300

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

<b>Seeds Regulations Act</b>	
Bill C-474. Second reading .....	1302
Mr. Easter .....	1302
Mr. Bigras .....	1303
Mr. Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) .....	1304
Mr. Storseth .....	1306
Ms. Crowder .....	1307
Mr. Atamanenko .....	1309
Division on motion deferred .....	1310

## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

<b>Child Care</b>	
Ms. Minna .....	1310
Mr. Carrie .....	1310

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