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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 3, 2012

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

CONTENTS

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

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 3, 2012

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, concerning the Main Estimates 2012-2013: Votes 40 and 45 under Justice, 15 and 20 under Parliament and 45 under Treasury Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013.

* * *

COMMISSIONER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS IN CANADA ACT

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-420, An Act to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons in Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to introduce a bill to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young Persons. The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children, including their health, safety, material security, education and socialization.

As we know, Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on December 13, 1991.

[*English*]

The purpose of my bill is to establish an independent statutory officer, office of a commissioner of children and young persons, to advocate at a national level for the needs, views and rights of children and young persons, and to promote, monitor and report on the effective implementation of Canada's obligations under the convention.

I believe very strongly that the creation of the position of commissioner will affirm clearly the importance that Canada accords the youngest and most vulnerable segment of our society. I hope that I can count on the support of the House for the passage of this bill.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Saint Boniface, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege to rise today to present a petition from the people in my riding of Saint Boniface.

[*English*]

This petition calls upon the House of Commons to confirm that every human being is recognized by Canadian law as human by amending section 223 of our Criminal Code.

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at times, as members of Parliament, we are called upon to deliver petitions that we may not agree with, and this is one of those times.

I am presenting two petitions from the citizens of my riding requesting that the government amend legislation relative to the definition of a human being.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions.

The first one is from petitioners who are in support of Motion No. 312. This petition calls on the House to amend section 223 of the Criminal Code regarding the definition of when a child becomes a human being and calls on the House to consider 21st century medical evidence.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition concerns the Canada-Europe agreement on comprehensive and economic trade.

Government Orders

The petitioners call on this House to reject any agreement that restricts the favouring of local goods, services and food, restricts the farmers' use of seeds, results in precautionary seizure of property for alleged infringements of intellectual property and increases the cost of health care.

The petitioners also call on the government to disclose the contents of the agreement.

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions today from members of my riding, residents of St. Thomas, Aylmer, Belmont and Port Stanley, asking for a change to section 223 of the Criminal Code.

[Translation]

PRIVACY

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition from 30 or so people from Sherbrooke who oppose Bill C-30. They are asking that Bill C-30, which would make it possible to spy on Internet users without a warrant, not be passed.

Such access to the personal information of Internet users violates the rights and freedoms guaranteed by section 8 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and unfairly treats all law-abiding Internet users like criminals. These people are opposed to Bill C-30. I have the honour to present their opinions here today.

[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present this petition regarding sickle cell disease and thalassemic disorders.

Sickle cell disease affects blood cells that carry oxygen throughout our bodies. In sickle cell disease, red blood cells harden into long slivers that block veins and arteries causing injury to blood vessels of organs, including the brain and lungs. About 10% of children develop strokes. Children with sickle cell also are extremely vulnerable to infection and have periodic health crises that cause terrible pain and difficulty breathing, and their lifespan can be reduced by about 30 years.

The petitioners are calling upon the House of Commons to adopt Bill C-221, An Act respecting a Comprehensive National Strategy for Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemic Disorders.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to present two petitions.

The first petition is from residents primarily in the Toronto area who are urging the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister to make it very clear to the People's Republic of China that Canada wants to see action on human rights, particularly in relation to the practitioners of Falun Dafa and Falun Gong, but obviously, as well, for Christians under persecution in China and Tibetan monks under persecution in China.

● (1010)

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition today comes from residents within my own riding of Saanich—Gulf Islands, primarily from Salt Spring Island.

The petitioners urge this Parliament to take action to address the urgent crisis of climate change. They urge that the government commit and develop a plan to reduce by 25% from the 1990 levels carbon dioxide levels by 2020 and by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. This was legislation passed by this House on a private member's bill in the 40th Parliament introduced by my colleague to my right, the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North. It is time we took action.

* * *

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 Question No. 453 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. 453—**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

For each fiscal year from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011, what is the total amount of: (a) payments made to the government by credit card; and (b) merchant fees paid by the government to credit card providers?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

BILL C-38—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That, in relation to Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, not more than six further sitting days shall be allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the bill; and

That, 15 minutes before the expiry of the time provided for government orders on the sixth day allotted to the consideration of the second reading stage of the said bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this order, and, in turn, every question necessary for the disposal of the said stage of the bill shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

Government Orders

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1 there will now be a 30 minute question period. As we have done in the past, we will try to keep questions to about a minute and the responses to a similar length. We will go on the rotation used in question period, so preference will be given to opposition members. However, some government members will be recognized for questions.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are two major travesties taking place today, and I will remind the government of its own previous opinions on this. One is how this budget bill is being implemented and two is what is actually contained in these 421 pages is a travesty and injustice to Canadians.

My first question for my friend across the way is on the implementation. Someone he knows well once said:

...in the interest of democracy I ask: How can members represent their constituents on these various areas when they are forced to vote in a block on such legislation and on such concerns?

The bill contains many distinct proposals and principles and asking members to provide simple answers to such complex questions is in contradiction to the conventions and practices of the House.

The Prime Minister said that before he was Prime Minister.

There are 421 pages of complex and individual ideas now lumped together in an omnibus bill. If the government had the actual courage of its convictions and believed that these were right issues to debate and present to Canadians, it would not lump them all together: the rollback of OAS rights to Canadians, the devastation of pay equity rules that apply to federal contracts and a ripping up and destruction of environmental protections when it comes to major projects.

If the Conservatives used to believe that these distinct issues should stand on their own merit for debate so Canadians can understand what is being applied, why the change of heart, why the change of convictions now?

•(1015)

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, we think it is very important that Canadians have an opportunity to listen to this debate. We have allowed seven more days to allow a fulsome debate before, and we hope that it will receive support, going to committee. What is almost unprecedented is that we will set up a subcommittee as well to look even more closely at this and to allow more witnesses to appear before the committee and voice their concerns.

I would suggest there will be a lot of Canadians, and in my further answers I will reflect on quotes from many of those Canadians, who think it is very important that we get this moved along for the economy, for jobs and for the long-term prosperity of this country. The debate will continue and we encourage all hon. members to be part of the debate. There will be seven more days of debate before it even goes to two levels of committee for further discussion.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of State for Finance. Obviously, I will not be asking a question on time allocation because we already know that the government is abusing its power and has already tabled time allocation hundreds of times, whether it be in the House or in committees, which is totally abusive.

I think that question would be geared more toward the government House leader.

However, since he is Minister of State for Finance and he knows about numbers, we worked on committee together, could he tell us the formula? How does he work out six days on a 500-page document when on a 200-page document it is three days? Are we missing some kind of formula here? Is it based on the number of words or number of pages? How does it really work? How does the government set time allocation? Is it based on the number of pages, or is it just that the Conservatives wake up in the morning and say that today they will close debate in six days or three days or four hours? How does it work?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, my friend across the way and I sat through many hours on the finance committee and we agree on a lot of things and, of course, we will need to agree on what I will reflect on right now because I believe it was his government in 2005, on Bill C-43, that amended dozens of different pieces of legislation. I had the privilege of sitting in the House following that debate and I am sure that was an important debate and fairly concise.

What we are expecting here is that focus. I would encourage everyone not to just stand up and read a speech that has been repeated time and time again. I ask that they make a focus point. I encourage all hon. members to discuss with their constituents and bring their thoughts forward to the debate.

[Translation]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Madam Speaker, I continue to be shocked that, in a parliamentary democracy, the first thing the government does is limit debate. We are dealing with a very important bill, one that will change many lives and have a great deal of impact, and the first thing the government does is limit debate.

How will limiting debate help economic growth? I see no reason why this bill has to pass this week rather than in three weeks. Why is it urgent that we pass it now and have such a short debate about such fundamental issues?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, as I said in one of my previous answers, there will be seven full days of debate before it even goes to committee to discuss it and bring witnesses in. When we talk about limiting debate, it was the hon. member's own party that managed to filibuster and limit debate. It did not allow any more than two or three minutes for the Liberal Party and no time for the Green Party to speak when the budget was tabled. It troubles me when the hon. member asks that question. We are providing seven days. We are going to provide an opportunity for anyone in the House, depending on what the whips will allow, to speak his or her mind and those of his or her constituents. We encourage people to do that.

Government Orders

• (1020)

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Madam Speaker, again, what we are hearing this morning from this bulldozing government is quite scandalous. What is more, the minister is trying to teach us a lesson. He is telling us how to intervene during debates. Unfortunately, this government has developed a bad habit of using time allocation, especially when we are talking about a bill that is 425 pages long and amends 60 or so other pieces of legislation.

The thing that gets me the most—and this is what I want the minister to address—is that there is a pile of new measures in the budget implementation bill that the government has said nothing about before and a pile of poison pills.

Is the government really doing this to muzzle the opposition and the general public on a pile of measures that we will only later realize were insidiously rammed through by this government in the budget implementation bill? I would like the minister to answer that question directly.

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, this has provided a great opportunity already. I have pages and pages of quotes from Canadians and associations across this country, whether they be groups of educators or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Let me read one quote by the FCM. It represents an awful lot of Canadians. It represents the municipal level of taxpayers. It consists of elected officials who speak to their constituents on the ground every day. It stated:

Canada's municipal leaders welcome today's commitment—

Referring to the tabling of the budget:

—by the federal government to continue working with cities and communities to rebuild the local roads, water systems, community centres and public transit that our families, businesses, and economy depend on. ...

Today's budget continues building a new infrastructure partnership that creates jobs and strengthens Canada's future economic foundations.

Those are Canadians wanting us to get on with this so those infrastructure projects can move forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Madam Speaker, the 425-page bill before us here today deals with complex issues that were not disclosed in advance. I also heard several MPs say that they had heard rumours about major changes to the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and huge changes to the Fisheries Act—probably the most significant change to that legislation in 40 years—hidden in the budget implementation bill.

This has nothing to do with the budget and everything to do with coastal communities that will have an incredibly hard time adjusting to such a major change concerning habitat protection. It is inconceivable that this change is not being examined by the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. We are talking about just seven days of debate and then the bill will be sent to a special budget committee, even though this will have an enormous impact on Canadians and their communities. They will not be able to maintain the same quality of life.

Why are the Conservatives in such a hurry to send this to a committee that has nothing to do with the budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, I would object to the suggestion that we are hurrying this through. Most Canadians watching this debate, and those who will be watching for the following seven days, can also watch two different levels of committee proceedings.

I also understand that the Senate, hoping it gets to that stage, will put forward a number of committees that will hear further from Canadians. I cannot even tell the House how many Canadians that will allow to give presentations.

I would suggest that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities might object to what that hon. member was talking about because it is faced with the challenges of developing water systems, waste water systems and roadways in its municipalities. It has come to us with its challenges and said, “Can we make the Fisheries Act workable? We don't want to imperil fisheries at all.” The FCM has been very clear about that. It has asked that we make it workable and that is what we will do.

• (1025)

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to continue on with my Liberal colleague's question.

There are many different pieces of legislation in Bill C-38. In the past, the government has restricted debate on other bills to two, three or four days. If we add up the number of days that we might want to debate all of the different pieces of Bill C-38, according to the government's timetable it would add up to a lot more than seven days.

I want to talk about the government shifting away from funding basic research and the fact that it is hurting Canadian researchers in that area. It is a very specific area and a principle that is part of the bill. It needs to be discussed. I want to make sure I have the time to collect all of the information and talk about it.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, we have had quite a bit of time to bring forward the discussions that we have each had as members of Parliament reflecting what our constituents have been telling us.

Certainly, my constituents have been telling me to move on with this. We are the strongest country in the G7 as far as fiscal capacity. My constituents are telling me that what we are doing is right. They are asking us to continue doing that. That is what the budget implementation bill for budget 2012 is all about. It is enabling what we have put forth in the budget that people have had quite a length of time to discuss among themselves and share with their MPs.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after all, we are talking about the budget and the reason why this budget should be passed and passed within a reasonable amount of time. I spend a considerable amount of time reading what the economists are saying about the budget, as I think most members do.

I have a quote here from Craig Wright, RBC's chief economist, who said, "The federal government has delivered on its promise of guiding the Canadian economy towards improved fiscal performance...."

Did I just hit the odd economist who has endorsed this budget or is this a trend? Could the hon. member enlighten the House with respect to that?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, it is a trend, but a very good trend.

We consult with economists on a regular basis. Four times a year we consult with Canada's top economists to determine whether this government is headed in the right direction. We ask them if our analysis is equivalent to that of private sector economists, and we reflect that in the budget. That is reflected in this budget. They help guide us in the right direction, so of course they will tell us that this is the right direction.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Nicole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Madam Speaker, as my colleagues have said, what is going on is scandalous. The government has had months to work on the budget. This 425-page budget affects people from all walks of life and will mean major changes for all Canadians, yet the government says that we cannot spend more than six or seven days on it. This 425-page budget affects women, people with disabilities, the environment and everything.

What are you so afraid of that you have to shut down debate and democracy? Answer me. What do you want? Do you want to bring people to their knees?

• (1030)

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind all members to address their comments to the Speaker.

The hon. Minister of State for Finance.

[*English*]

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, Canadians expect us to debate in the House. They expect us to bring new thoughts, new ideas, their thoughts and their ideas. They do not expect us to just regurgitate the NDP ideology that we should tax everyone more and then everything will be better. We watched that happen in Europe. We watched the NDP policy in Europe. The outcome of that is Greece.

Canadians have told us to continue to do what we are doing. We are bringing low taxes to Canadians, providing them opportunities, reducing the red tape that stops Canadian businesses from being able to compete internationally. That is what we are doing in this budget. We are simplifying the business processes for businesses so they can compete internationally.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Madam Speaker, I quoted the Prime Minister to my friend on a conviction that his leader and his party used to have about this type of measure. My friend has used the past record of the Liberal governments to justify his actions now. It seems passing strange, because when the Liberals made these types of actions, his party had convictions around this type of measure.

I will quote to him again, a friend who sits quite close:

Government Orders

Here we go again. This is a very important public policy question that is very complex and we have the arrogance of the government in invoking closure again. When we look at the Liberal Party on arrogance it is like looking at the Grand Canyon. It is this big fact of nature that we cannot help but stare at.

He has to be careful. We have to understand that in these 420 pages, revoking pay equity or destroying environmental protections that Canadians rely upon is not something that his government ran on in the last election, nor does it have a mandate to do so. Lumping it together in an omnibus bill like this is undermining the very institution that we all represent, and our ability to hold government to account.

Does he not believe in the convictions that he, his ministers of culture and immigration, and the Prime Minister, used to have with respect to these types of draconian measures?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, the convictions that this government has, has always had and will continue to have, are to do what is best for the country. We have put forward three budgets in a row that have focused on jobs and the economy. With this one we now have the opportunity to look longer term.

What have the results been of the previous budgets? Almost 700,000 net new jobs. Those are the results that matter to Canadians. More Canadians are working now than at the beginning of the recession. Not many countries can say that. We are trying to leave the old ideologies of the NDP out of the way. We do not want to overtax those businesses so that they lay people off. We continue to reduce taxes and provide an environment where our businesses can compete and grow jobs.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti: Madam Speaker, I could not get a direct answer to my last question about how the government calculates when it is time for time allocation, even though it has done it a couple of hundred times, whether it has been in the House or in committee. It is not based on the number of pages, so we will let that one go.

I am going to try to match up some of the answers to some of the questions, because he is just answering questions based on his question sheet. My question is going to try and understand his answers.

There is a problem with the bill. The NDP members do not understand it because they are left-wing ideologists. The Conservatives do not understand the bill because they are right-wing ideologists. Therefore, do I understand correctly that the government will consider all Liberal Party amendments for this bill? I would like a straight answer.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, it is nice to have a little levity in the House of Commons this early in the morning, and I thank my hon. friend for that. By the way, I do not have the question sheet; I actually have an answer sheet.

My answer is to provide some more quotes that I would like to read into the record because the opposition seems to think that Canadians are not prepared to move forward on this economic action plan for 2012.

One concern that has been raised is about sustainable development. Let me read a quote from Vicky Sharpe of Sustainable Development Technology Canada:

Government Orders

In these tough economic times, SDTC is pleased to see the Government's emphasis on stimulating the economy through increasing business innovation.

Those Canadians are telling us to move forward. We have seven days of fulsome debate. We encourage people to get to the point instead of arguing over whether or not it is sufficient. Let us use the time properly.

• (1035)

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member toured the country, as I did, on the issue of pensions. There were many town hall meetings that took in input, and it strikes me as strange that now it is almost as if a wall is going up about input in this place.

There are hundreds of pages in this document that touch on many critical areas. I am a member of the finance committee, and some of the members are present. We do not have expertise in fisheries or the environment. These particular controversial areas should have been hived out of this document and put to the appropriate committees. It is troubling to see this happen.

There is controversy around this document because of the fact that it is like an omnibus bill. It goes into areas that are not going to get properly critiqued because the time for discussion is condensed down to what the member calls reasonable; for 400-some pages, these few days are certainly not reasonable.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, with all due respect to my hon. friend, that is quite a bit of time to discuss this bill, especially considering the urgency. We are running out of days before the spring rising of the House, and it is important that this legislation get through so that we can enable some of this, and I referred to FCM's request to get this moving quickly.

I need to remind my hon. colleague that committees are the masters of their own domain, and if they choose to take a more serious complete look at this they can. However, we have also said that we recognize the challenges of the finance committee, a great bunch of MPs, in that time is limited, so we are going to put in a subcommittee to help the finance committee study some of the finer points of this legislation.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, the world has acknowledged that the Canadian economy is doing so well because of the hard work and the good work of this government.

Part of doing the right thing includes eliminating the penny. Some would wonder why we are eliminating the penny, and I would ask the member if he could explain the rationale behind it. I believe it is another example of us doing the right thing.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, that may seem like a small item, but people back home told me after the budget was tabled that we had finally done a common sense thing. They told me we have a majority and we are doing the right thing. We have waited a long time to do the right thing. When we tell Canadians that it costs 1.6¢ to manufacture a penny, they ask why we have been manufacturing them for so long.

Common sense is what this Conservative government is all about.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Madam Speaker, the member just mentioned common sense. Common sense is not about putting time allocation on a bill this

large. It is not about putting time allocation on a bill that will have so much impact on Canadians.

I could talk about the experimental farm in Kapuskasing. This farm provides a service, research, to northern Ontario and northern Quebec, and the Conservatives say that research is important. Why, then, are they closing down a farm that provides research to northern Ontario and northern Quebec? That is atrocious. That is why we need more discussion on the bill.

Why is the government trying to shut down debate?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, my interest in agriculture tells me that the private sector is actually very interested in taking over research in this country, and by doing this, we are providing them an opportunity.

I will give canola as an example. The private sector has funded research on canola, and western Canada and Ontario are increasing their acreage in canola. The reason it is doing so well is that the private sector was allowed to invest in research and development. We are just providing that opportunity to the rest of agriculture.

• (1040)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Madam Speaker, others before me have said how atrocious it is to put time allocation on the bill.

The bill could be called one of two things. It could be called the deconfederation of confederation act, or it could be called the charter of rights for foreign and domestic corporations to basically exploit our resources without worry.

As debate is being closed in the chamber, will the minister assure us that the bill will be allocated to at least four separate subcommittees—those being environment, fisheries, human resources and finance—so that we can discuss this bill in detail?

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, I have never been accused of being the House leader, so I will leave it up to him to decide where the bill goes. I do know it was standard procedure, even back in the dark days when the Liberals were in power, for a finance bill or a budget implementation bill to go to the finance committee.

We are actually expanding that. This is ground-breaking. We are providing another subcommittee that will provide hours of opportunity for witnesses to appear and explain how important the pieces of this budget implementation act are to them.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Madam Speaker, it is very difficult to be brief when the government is doing something as outrageous as tabling a 420-page omnibus bill that destroys decades of environmental law, much of it brought in by the previous Conservative prime minister, Brian Mulroney.

I want to quote people who are not able to be characterized as NDP ideologues. Professor emeritus Ned Franks said:

These omnibus budget implementation bills subvert and evade the normal principles of parliamentary review of legislation.

In the *National Post*, Andrew Coyne, speaking of this travesty, Bill C-38, wrote, “This is not remotely a budget bill, despite its name. The scale and scope are on a level not previously seen or tolerated”—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. I must give the hon. minister 30 seconds to respond.

Hon. Ted Menzies: Madam Speaker, I must suggest that my colleague across the way could perhaps have used her time better in actually asking a question pertinent to the budget implementation act, Bill C-38. That would have been very important.

I would love to have had more time to read into the record all of the quotes from associations and from Canadians who support—

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forthwith the question on the motion now before the House.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

• (1125)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 187*)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)

Brown (Barrie)
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Gosal
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
O'Neill Gordon
Oda
Opitz
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Rempel
Richardson
Saxton
Shea
Shory
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Tweed
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 145

Government Orders

Bruinooge
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Flaherty
Gallant
Glover
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Hoepfner
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Lake
Leaf
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
O'Connor
Obhrai
Oliver
Paradis
Poillievre
Raitt
Reid
Richards
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shiple
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Atamanenko
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brisson
Caron
Cash
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar

Government Orders

Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rae	Rafferty
Ravignat	Raynault
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Sitsabaiesan	Thibeault
Sullivan	Tremblay
Toone	Valeriote — 122
Turnel	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion adopted.

I wish to inform the House that because of the proceedings on the time allocation motion, government orders will be extended by 30 minutes.

SECOND READING

The House resumed from May 2 consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Madam Speaker, as I was saying when I was interrupted, hon. members know that Canada is a world leader in a very competitive global economy. Members also know that our government is committed to protecting the environment even as we work to protect the economy and create jobs.

Across our files: climate change, both mitigation and adaptation; water quality; water monitoring, both in the area of the oil sands and right across the country; the renewal of our Great Lakes water quality treaty with the United States; the development of clean air strategies; cleaning up contaminated sites; protecting species at risk; maintaining and growing our national parks and protected spaces; stiffening the enforcement of environmental regulation; operating the

chemical management plan; and improving and contemporizing the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. That brings us to responsible resource development and Bill C-38.

[*Translation*]

As I said yesterday, we all know that, thanks to the work of this government, Canada has received worldwide recognition for having overcome the economic crisis of the past few years.

[*English*]

We are taking decisive action with responsible resources development legislation in our jobs, growth and long-term prosperity bill to create a modern regulatory system for the 21st century that would help foster jobs, investment and growth.

It would also enhance environmental protection and encourage responsible development. This initiative would ensure resources are allocated where they can do the most good; that is, on those major projects that may actually pose a risk to the environment. It would also assure public participation and involvement, accountability for decisions, and stronger environmental enforcement and compliance tools. Through improved environmental protection, Canada would also be better placed to address the concerns raised by aboriginal groups.

The legislation before us introduces enforceable environmental assessment decision statements that would ensure proponents of major projects comply with required mitigation measures. It would provide federal inspectors with authority to examine whether or not conditions of a decision statement are met. It would authorize the use of administrative monetary penalties for violations of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the National Energy Board Act.

It would provide new funding in support of improving pipeline and marine safety. It would allocate \$13.5 million over two years to improve pipeline safety across Canada, by enabling the NEB to increase the number of inspections for oil and gas pipelines by 50%, from about 100 to 150 inspections per year, and double from 3 to 6 the number of annual comprehensive audits in order to identify safety issues before they occur.

It would fund \$35.7 million over two years to further strengthen Canada's tanker safety regime, including ensuring appropriate legislative and regulatory frameworks related to oil spills and emergency preparedness and response.

In short, the responsible resource development initiative is an intelligent approach to environmental protection that goes hand in hand with the resource development that creates jobs and wealth for Canadians. I am very proud of the accomplishments and the dedication of this government to the environment. We are serving Canadians every day of their lives and protecting Canada for years to come.

Government Orders

● (1130)

[Translation]

That is the way of doing business that our economic action plan is based on. Our approach meets the economic needs of Canadians every day in terms of jobs and growth and will enable us to build a strong economy for future generations.

[English]

If I could repeat myself, that is the path our economic action plan will follow, a path that every day serves the economic needs of Canadians for jobs and growth and that builds a strong economy for generations to come.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, it is nice to hear that the Minister of the Environment thinks this budget is pro-environment when, in fact, anybody reading this 400-page document, which includes 200 pages eviscerating 40 years of environmental law, would form an opposite conclusion.

I wonder if the minister could speak to the matter of how he rationalizes the downgrading of federal environmental laws against the commitments under Canadian trade agreements that we will not downgrade environment laws for an economic advantage.

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I would answer simply that what we are doing in an appropriate legislative timeframe is addressing issues that have been very clear to all, to successive minority governments in this House.

We are improving and we are contemporizing the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency as well as with regard to major pipeline projects under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board to ensure that we address the issues that are relevant today. We are eliminating duplication even as we provide for more rigorous examination of the environmental potential for negative impact on the environment or on the people who live in proximity to these resource projects.

However, in short, I would say that rigorous environmental protection can also be timely.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister about the repeal of the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. Right now, the Minister of the Environment is to publish a climate change plan each year detailing measures being taken to meet Canada's commitments, including the timing and expected reductions, forecasts for emission reductions as a whole and an explanation of how any measures that were not implemented as planned will be redressed.

The independent National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy is to assess each year's plan and offer constructive expert feedback but the NRT has been eliminated. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development is to report regularly on Canada's progress in implementing its climate plan and achieving its target.

Repealing the act will eliminate all of the above accountability measures and I am wondering what the minister will put in place to be accountable on Canada's international climate commitments.

● (1135)

Hon. Peter Kent: Madam Speaker, I anticipate that next week, when the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development presents his annual report, that members will perhaps see his acknowledgement of Canada's legal right to serve notice of our withdrawal from the Kyoto protocol and that, in this final year under the protocol, we will again appropriately report, as provided under the protocol, our greenhouse gas inventory.

With regard to the national round table, I have a number of times in this House thanked the round table that was created 25 years ago, a full quarter of a century ago, for serving Canada well. However, that organization's time has passed. There are any number of other similar bodies in academia within the NGO community who can adequately address connections between the environment and the economy.

We are moving for a post-Kyoto climate change regime that will include all of the major emitters, both in the developed and the developing world.

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, introduced by the government's finance minister who was rated the best finance minister in the world by his colleagues in the G8.

I will begin by congratulating all of the members on our one year anniversary, which occurred yesterday, particularly those who were elected for the first time. I know we will work closely together to ensure that public policy decisions are made wisely and with the best interests of Canadians at heart.

I saw quite an old movie recently called *The Candidate*. Robert Redford, who starred in the movie, is picked to run as a democratic candidate for senate in California against a republican senator who has been around for a number of years, who is quite accomplished and who is expected to win once again. However, Robert Redford, as the democratic candidate, wins the senatorial seat. In the last scene of the movie, Robert Redford is standing in a hotel room across from his political consultant who ran his campaign and he mouths the words, "What do we do now?"

When this government, under the leadership of the current Prime Minister, ran in the 2011 election, we knew exactly what we would do on May 3 of last year. We knew that the people had sent this government to Ottawa with a strong mandate to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We were sent here with a strong, national Conservative majority government to implement a plan. We were the only party with a plan, a workable plan, a plan that first started in 2006 when we were first elected. The first three years, we had surpluses in our budget, which we applied to bring down the debt of the government by \$37 billion.

However, with the downturn in the economy in 2008-09, certain stimuli measures were required to be put in place, which we did.

Since that time, since the end of the recession in 2009, this government has created 690,000 net new jobs. We are the only government that has recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession of the G8.

Government Orders

We have a corporate tax rate of 15%, and that is a great brand that we have around the world. What we found after we lowered the corporate tax to 15% was that investment rose but, more important, corporate tax revenues rose. We have more money in general revenues because we lowered the tax than if we had an increase in taxes.

The opposition states that we need to increase corporate taxes. What it does not understand, however, is that corporations are not people. They do not pay taxes. People pay taxes. Madam Speaker, pardon me for speaking while members are trying to interrupt, but that bird has been plucked. There are no more feathers left on that bird any more.

I need to tell members something, and they do not need to take my word for it. However, the IMF, the World Economic Forum, the Economist Intelligence Unit, *Forbes* magazine, Bank of Canada, everybody says that this government is on the right track, doing the right thing, bringing jobs and economic growth to Canada. That is why we are the number one performing economy in the G8 bar none.

• (1140)

The budget that was introduced by the Minister of Finance on March 29 is a long-term plan and the plan involves a comprehensive agenda that will exceed our time in office. This is not a Conservative plan or a Conservative budget. This is a Canadian budget that looks out, not to the next election cycle, as previous governments would have done, but to Canada's long-term interests and prosperity. This is one of the first governments that has ever thought of doing that. It is because we care about Canada and the long-term prosperity of Canada.

A number of the examples that were given in the budget and the pillars that it was built on relate to innovation. A lot of governments before had talked about innovation but products were not produced. There is no such thing as an innovative product if there are no customers to buy it. Our government will focus on innovative products where there is a demand for those products and they will be purchased. We put \$400 million into a venture capital fund for this very purpose.

The next pillar that we based our budget on was regulatory reform. I know some of my colleagues on this side have talked about regulatory reform, the resource sector and the environment sector and have spoken quite eloquently about them. However, opposition members are mistaken when they believe that more government, more red tape and more regulation leads to more rigorous scientific evaluation. What it leads to is time wasted, workers who are not hired and investors who look at our regulatory regime only to say that it is not worth it and they go elsewhere. As a country, we cannot afford that. What we have done in the budget is streamline the regulatory process so that investment can be approved or not approved depending not on the merits of the project but based on rigorous science. That is what this government has proposed.

The next pillar that this budget is based on is jobs. We have created 690,000 net new jobs since the end of the recession in July 2009. That is a record that stands tall. Nobody can hold a candle to Canada when it comes to our job creation performance record. We have lowered personal income taxes for people. The average family is saving \$3,000 in personal taxes. As a father raising eight-year-old

twins, the money is better in my pocket than in the government's pocket because everyone who has kids knows that we are always be asked for something. Our job creation record is outstanding and we are told that by everyone around the world.

We are streamlining our immigration system to get rid of the backlog for those people who have faint hope when applying to get into this country. We will streamline the immigration process under the leadership of our Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, who is doing a fantastic job.

The final pillar of the budget is trade. Trade is the future of our nation. It will bring jobs and investment to this country. Since 2006, we have signed nine free trade agreements that were opposed by the NDP each and every time. We are now reaping the rewards of all of those trade agreements. Job creation is up, investment is up and exports are up. I have a number of companies in my riding of York Centre that export, such as Bombardier, Sanofi Pasteur, Estée Lauder and Planters Canada.

I will wrap up by saying that this budget is a Canadian budget and I would urge all members on that side who are interested in the long-term interests of this country to support the budget.

• (1145)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I note my colleague's comments about extra dollars in his pocket. I come from a territory where many people suffer with low income, not the income of parliamentarians that puts them in the top 5% of our country.

Seniors and elders in my territory have worked hard all their lives and they will now have to add another couple of years on to that. They already have low incomes. While the quality of income is reducing, the member opposite, one of the top 5% of wage earners, talks about his ability to put an extra \$3,000 in his pocket. I am insulted by that.

We have to talk about equality. When we have wage inequality in the western world, the population suffers greater social and health concerns.

How would my colleague respond to all those people who are not in the top 5% of wage earners, people who work hard to make a living and are now told they will have to work an extra couple of years just to get a pension?

Mr. Mark Adler: Quite easily, Madam Speaker. The member talks about parliamentarians being in the 5% of wage earners and says that he cares about poor people. That is very noble of him.

When we put forward a 25% increase in the GIS in last year's budget, that member and his party said no. That party forced an election on it. That was simply outrageous.

Now he has the nerve to get up and talk about what we will do. We are putting people to work. We are giving people jobs. We are creating investment. We are giving the private sector an opportunity to expand and create jobs. That is the best welfare program we can ask for.

Government Orders

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I was interested to hear my friend say that this is a Canadian budget. I come from Prince Edward Island, the cradle of Confederation, and I might remind the hon. member we are part of Canada but we certainly feel left out in the budget.

There are provinces where people can get their EI claims processed. Prince Edward Island is not one of them. There are provinces where people can talk to someone at Citizenship and Immigration Canada if they need its services. Prince Edward Island is not one of those places. Two hundred and thirty-two jobs were cut from the Department of Veterans Affairs. If a veteran in Prince Edward Island wants to talk to a live person, that individual is out of luck. If someone wants to talk to someone on the computer, the cap sites are being closed.

Prince Edward Island is part of Canada. Why has Prince Edward Island been left out of the budget?

• (1150)

Mr. Mark Adler: Madam Speaker, once again the opposition misses the entire point. Twenty-five per cent of this budget is for the Canadian social transfer, which has not been touched. In fact, we have guaranteed a 6% increase to 2016 on the social transfer consistent with nominal GDP.

Hon. members on the other side claim that we are not doing the right thing. I am sorry to tell them but job creation is the right thing. We are doing the right thing for Canadians. That is why they sent us here. We put a plan to them in last year's election and they sent us back with a strong mandate to implement that plan of job creation, growth and long-term prosperity.

I am really ashamed of the opposition for not standing up proudly and supporting Canadian jobs and Canadian investment.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share my time with the hon. member for York South—Weston.

Bill C-38 is a complete assault on the democratic process. The government has tabled a 421-page budget bill, the majority composed of significant policy reforms far outside budget matters, all the programs and policies that are of critical significance to Canadian families and communities.

The bill introduces reforms to long-standing policies and programs. When I say long-standing, it is 50 years of environmental, fishery, health, pension, employment equity and immigration policies and programs. All of these are significant public policy matters and legislation that normally would come before the House in separate proposed bills. They would go through full debate, go to committee review and would afford the opportunity to Canadians who are concerned and affected by these policies to be consulted. It is absolutely shameful what the government is doing in this bill, and I cannot say anything less than that.

Then the government imposes closure on the minimal debate that it has allowed us to have on behalf of our constituents, on likely the most critical bill to come before the House in decades. It is a bill that commits billions of dollars in spending, at the same time significantly eroding its constitutional mandate. So much for the Conservative government platform of open, transparent, grassroots

democracy. We have closure after only a few hours of debate on a 421-page budget bill. Is that transparency, open government, participatory government? I will let Canadians decide for themselves.

The government claims its budget is all about creating jobs, yet according to the analysis by the Parliamentary Budget Officer it will actually result in the loss of 43,000 jobs.

Bill C-38 introduces pension rollbacks. It proposes major changes to Canadians' access to public pension benefits on which they have come to rely. Despite complete silence during the election, despite analysis by the PBO that the changes are financially unnecessary, the Prime Minister, post-election and from Davos, Switzerland, announced significant reductions in OAS benefits, now implemented through the bill. This is in spite of the fact that the majority of Canadians have no access to private pension plans. The effect will be that many Canadians will be denied old age security until the age of 67. There will be disproportionate impacts on women, already making up the highest percentage of Canadians living in poverty, and those surviving on minimum wage or working as physical labourers.

The government has said that there is a lot of time to save up to survive those lean years. It has said this to families that already have record personal debt, that contributed all their lives toward a pension, that are likely overwhelmed caring for elderly parents, or trying to pay off their mortgages, or university fees for their children or prescriptions. They should not look to fall back on EI. There are no special favours for seniors. Under the new laws, they can now relocate to other provinces to earn their keep.

Bill C-38 would severely reduce transparency and centralizes power in the cabinet. It would reduce the audit and reporting powers of the Auditor General. It would limit the rights of Canadians to participate in reviews of major industrial projects to those directly affected, as determined within the complete discretion of the minister. It would transfer powers from independent quasi-judicial boards to ministers to decide on assessing or approving major industrial projects. It would cut libraries. It would further cut Statistics Canada. What is next, book burnings? We already have the witch hunts against those who are assisting communities and first nations in trying to determine what the impacts of major projects might be on their health or livelihoods.

Government Orders

However, most important, to me and to the many Canadians who have spent decades volunteering their time intervening in multi-stakeholder processes to ensure that we develop sound, credible environmental laws in the country, laws that have been held up and marketed around the world as the model for how to do economic development and at the same time ensure sustainable development and protection of health and environment, the bill would rescind critical laws that have been in place for 40 to 50 years. It is absolutely reprehensible and contrary to the prior practices, which I used to brag about around the world, of intensive consultation with industry, the public and impacted communities.

● (1155)

The Conservatives are amending the federal Fisheries Act. They are strangling the unilateral federal power to protect fish and fish habitat, not just for the benefit of Canadians but for the sake of the preservation of the species. The minister formerly spoke of avoiding duplication. I have worked hand in glove with federal and provincial agencies over forty years toward removing any sense of duplication. We already have in place scenarios of review and approval of projects where the federal government is already invisible, despite its constitutional powers and its mandates under Canadian law.

In truth, the government is amending the Constitution, without consultation, by removing its exclusive power to protect our fisheries, which further erodes the Crown's duty to protect aboriginal rights and titles.

It imposes a two-year time limit on reviews. It empowers the National Energy Board to make decisions on endangered species. Heaven forbid, we actually have a federal law on the books where the government is obligated to go through a very thorough process with appropriate scientists and careful review with the public and anybody impacted. The government will short-circuit the process and give that to the National Energy Board to decide.

In essence, the bill would download mitigation and cleanup costs from the proponent of a major project to impacted Canadians and first nations. It would allow the federal government to transfer its powers and duties to provinces. We are downloading possibly unconstitutional measures.

This is mere months after the government committed to finally exercise its authority and responsibility to ensure proper monitoring of the oil sands development on the Athabasca, the Mackenzie basin. It is cutting monitoring dollars. It is cutting a 100 more scientists, while muzzling the remaining ones.

Of personal interest to my constituency, the government is shutting down all the regional emergency and oil spill response teams. That is in the wake of the largest fresh water spill in North America, where the federal government completely dropped the ball and failed to deliver on its responsibilities on emergency response to these spills. This is in addition to a major spill in Wrigley, Northwest Territories, a major spill near the Lubicon First Nation in Alberta and massive fish kill from derailments in the Cheakamus River in B.C.

What is the government's response? To save a few pennies, it is removing all capability of the federal government to exercise the responsibility. It regulates the railroads. It has a responsibility for fisheries. It has responsibility for first nations peoples. In the very

least, it has responsibility for transboundary waterways. It is completely dropping the ball on its responsibilities.

Is all of this legal? Downgrading environmental laws offends the clear mandate of the Minister of the Environment under the Department of the Environment Act. Contrary to what a series of Conservative members have propounded, the minister has, under that law, a singular mandate to protect the environment, not to sacrifice it to fast-tracked energy projects fronted by foreign investors.

The government, in downgrading its environmental laws, is actually also violating its trade laws. From NAFTA to the most recent free trade agreements with Panama, Canada's trade deals forbid Canada to weaken its environmental laws and regulations for an economic advantage. In exchange for those expanded markets, Canada committed to improve, not downgrade, its environmental protection laws. Therefore, the government is not only failing to exercise its constitutional responsibility, it is not only failing to deliver on its environmental mandate, it is violating the very trade agreements about which it brags.

● (1200)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is worthwhile to note that the government has once again moved time allocation on a very important bill.

This is a budget bill. It is one of those bizarre ominous bills in which the government has made the determination to take what I believe is a cowardly act, bringing into this bill legislation that should have been standing on its own. I am referring to the environmental legislation.

What the government is doing, through the back door and by putting in time allocations, is undemocratic. Quite frankly, it is just the wrong direction for the government to be moving in with regard to the environment. The legislation is devastating to our environment.

Does the member agree with Liberals that the environmental portion of this ominous bill should have been stand-alone legislation? The government is wrong to bring it in through the back door in this ominous bill. Does the member agree?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Madam Speaker, I do not have to agree with just the Liberals, I am agreeing with over 100 of my colleagues who very demonstrably made this case in the House.

I participated in the processes to develop the current Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. I participated in the development of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. All of those processes were open, transparent and participatory. They occurred over many years.

Government Orders

Previously, under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, there was an advisory body consisting of industry, the provinces, the federal government and the public, to advise on proper implementation of this bill and to consider everyone's interest. In one full blow, inappropriately through a budget bill, with no opportunity for discourse or dialogue with the Canadian public, we have this absolutely reprehensible move by the government. I know that Canadians will chastise it for this. It is incumbent on the government to separate this bill and to open it up for proper review and discussion by Canadians.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am standing here today to correct some misinformation that is being perpetuated by not only this member but a number of members of the House of Commons with regard to the length of debate, et cetera.

I just heard my Liberal colleague from Winnipeg North make what sounded like a hypocritical statement about time allocation. In my hand I have the past 10 years of time that was dedicated to budgets. In the last 10 years, not a single other budget bill was debated longer than the 7 days we are about to do, the 28.5 hours we are about to do, in this House. Not a single other one.

Let me read for the member, and I would like to ask her to reflect on this because I am going to ask her a question about it: 1992, 11.2 hours, 4 days; 1996, 16.9 hours, 5 days; 2004, 10.7 hours, 3 days of debate; 2005 was the longest one at 21.8 hours or 7 days by the Liberals; and ours is 7 days, 28.5 hours.

Is the member prepared to apologize for the misleading information she has provided?

• (1205)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this is the second time in two days that I have heard this comparison about a decade. I will remind the hon. member her government is responsible for six years of those. If time has been given short shrift, it is the Conservatives' responsibility. We can always compare to the worst-case scenario.

The point that other members in this House and I are making is it is not simply the length of the debate of a budget bill but the short-circuiting of discussion of significant policy matters, generally speaking, by the public of Canada who have a right to come forward and tell us their views on the many extraneous public policy issues in this bill. It is absolutely a disgrace.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the assault on democracy, one could not even read this bill in 28.5 hours. The bill is enormous. It touches on more than just how much money we are going to tax Canadians, which is what a budget is about. It touches on the environment, fisheries, pensions and so many things that are not supposed to be part of a budget, but they are.

I note the comments by my colleague for Winnipeg North about this being an "ominous" bill. I think that was a slip of the tongue as it is an omnibus bill, but I also think it is an ominous bill for Canadians. The bill is missing some things. There is nothing here for the burgeoning demand for public transit in this country. There is a huge infrastructure deficit, but the bill is completely silent on whether the government is going to attend to the problem.

On immigration, my colleague for York Centre suggested that we are just getting rid of the people who are on the faint hope list. However, this has nothing to do with getting rid of people on a faint hope list. This has to do with people who have discovered that the government gives them faint hope because it changed the rules after their application was in. After a couple of years, it decided to cut them off the list and give them some of their money back. These people have spent countless sums on legal fees, tests, police checks, et cetera, that they will never get back. The Conservative government is completely uncaring about the huge devastation it is causing those would-be immigrants from other countries by leaving them on a list for 10 years and then cutting them off.

The bill has nothing on the huge increase in fuel prices in my riding in the past few weeks and months. I hear about this daily. Ordinary Canadians are worried that they will not be able to afford to get to work and that seniors will not be able to afford to get to the doctor. Seniors' pensions do not go up by the amount that fuel prices have gone up in the last little while. The government is completely silent on it.

The government suggests that the bill is about jobs. Well, according to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, whose reports the Conservatives do not like, the bill would actually cost the economy 43,000 jobs. That is a lot of jobs. The Conservatives' oft-touted figure of how many jobs they have created since the recession ignores the fact that they have been in government for much longer and the number of people looking for work has gone up. The percentage of people in the workforce who cannot find a job has gone up significantly since the Conservative government took office. It is all well and good to say that there was a recession and we are back, but we have done nothing about creating the structures in this country to create full employment. This budget does nothing more about it.

On pensions, the Conservatives talk about how there is a crisis. There is no crisis. In fact, the crisis they claim is because baby boomers are retiring. However, their solution exempts most baby boomers from the solution as baby boomers would continue to get the full OAS and GIS. It is the people who come after the baby boomers who are going to be shortchanged. They will be penalized doubly: they would have to pay for the baby boomers because the government says it is a crisis, but they would get nothing in return.

Canadians are going to wake up and smell the coffee at some point, and realize that the Conservative government has got it wrong and there is not a crisis. There may be crises in other countries that spend significantly greater amounts of their budgets on pensions, but not here in Canada where we spend a small fraction of what is spent in other countries on basic OAS.

Government Orders

What I really want to tackle the government on, and I should not be doing this in the context of a budget bill but it is in there, is the elimination of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and the replacement of it with the Canadian environmental evisceration act. The decision by the government to incorporate this in a budget bill has nothing to do with budget, it has nothing to do with spending of money. However, the government's suggestion that it is stronger is absolutely wrong, and I will give some examples.

● (1210)

The definition of an environmental effect in this budget is significantly different from the definition in the old act. The old act suggested the environment is land, water, air, et cetera, and that has not changed, but the environmental effect is the effect of any change on such things as wildlife, critical habitat, individuals, health and socio-economic conditions of human beings, physical and cultural heritage, and the current use of land and resources. That is not in the new bill. The new bill talks about environmental effects as being: fish, as defined in section 2 of the Fisheries Act, which is changing; aquatic species, as defined in section 2 of the Species at Risk Act; migratory birds, as defined in subsection 2(1) of the Migratory Birds Convention Act; and any other component of the environment that is set out in Schedule 2.

I will read Schedule 2. That is a moment of silence for the environment because Schedule 2 is empty. There is nothing there.

The government suggests that it would protect the health and environment of human beings. It is not in this bill. It has left it out. The minister can make regulations under Schedule 2, but he can also change them. He can also decide not to have any regulations. It is very clear that the old act was very specific. It protected the environment, not just of fish, birds and the air but of human beings, their culture, heritage and dwellings. That is missing from this bill. It does not go unnoticed by this side of the House that it is a reduction in the protections that would be available to the environment by the government.

There is another big change in this act. The old act talked about needing environmental assessments any time there were projects, which included any physical work, proposed construction, operation, modification, decommissioning, abandonment, undertaking and proposed physical activity. There is a good definition of what a project is. The new act talks only about designated projects. The minister would get to decide what a designated project is. He would make regulations under section 84 for the definition of a designated project. Therefore, not everything that we have come to expect would be assessed. That is gone. The minister would get to decide which things will be environmentally assessed. As a result of that discretion being left to the minister, based on the current minister, woe betide the environment. That is not very helpful to the environment, abandonment of what can go on.

I do not have enough time to go into the machinations of what this bill would do in many other areas. Unfortunately, I will not have time to do that in part because time allocation has been applied by the government, which, with its majority, is determined to cut off debate. That debate would be cut off before I could even read all of the portions of this bill that would affect Canadians in an adverse way.

We now know, and it does not take much reading to discover, that the government's agenda is about helping its friends in the oil patch. In particular, with the definition of "designated project", I am willing to bet there will be a whole bunch of things that will not need an environmental assessment any longer. When those environmental assessments happen, the government has said that they will be streamlined. They will take two years, no more and no less. If a project takes longer to study it, if it is that big, if it crosses all of Canada and takes longer, should we not do it right rather than rushing to do it wrong and harming the environment?

The definition of "sustainable development" is still the definition that existed in the previous act. However, it is not going to be possible to have sustainable development under this act if the government, as we suspect, abandons its responsibility to study many of the projects that are now being studied and if it abandons its responsibility to study those elements of the environment that are important to human beings and not to just fish, birds and other wildlife.

● (1215)

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, West Coast Environmental Law says:

For decades, Canadians have depended on the federal government to safeguard our families and nature from pollution, toxic contamination and other environmental problems through a safety net of environmental laws. Today's budget would cut up this environmental safety net...

It further states:

A robust, sustainable economy depends on a healthy environment. The multi-billion dollar clean up costs from the Exxon Valdez and the Gulf oil spill remind us that it is citizens who pay the price when things go wrong.

Does the hon. member think that the environmental sections of this bill should be hived off, as the Liberals have called for, and sent to committee for public scrutiny in a clause-by-clause study?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the NDP as well has determined that this portion of the bill—and perhaps several other portions, but this portion in particular, which deals with the environmental assessment changes—has nothing to do with budgets. It has nothing to do with whether we tax people or whether we give people back their money. It has to do with protecting the environment, and it ought to be studied in much greater depth and by the right parts of the government, meaning by the environment committee and the environment departments rather than by the finance department. It has nothing to do with finance and everything to do with the environment, and yes, it ought to be hived off.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member. As usual, his analyses and comments are excellent.

This new budget basically ignores sustainable development, or the co-operation among various rural communities throughout Canada and the development of economic projects and drivers that will create jobs.

Government Orders

How is it that we have only six or seven days to debate a budget that will have an unbelievable influence and unacceptable impact on many regional economies? Why are the Conservatives hiding things throughout this 425-page budget that will only benefit big business?

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, these changes and the speed being proposed for their adoption are at the nub of what is going on here, particularly with the environmental issues. May 14 is now the deadline. Why is May 14 the deadline? There must be a project in the works that needs this kind of non-environmental assessment and that cannot begin until the government has passed this bill. My suspicion is that there is some other agenda that we have not yet heard about. Is that not the way that the government has behaved so far?

We did not hear about the cuts to the OAS until somebody in Davos decided to leak the information. We did not hear about the evisceration of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act until we saw it in the budget. This certainly was not campaigned on by the government, yet here we are, so I suspect we have more surprises in store from the Conservatives and their hidden agendas.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the reprehensible downgrading of environmental law, by following this procedure of introducing changes to the environmental assessment and fisheries laws through the budget, the government has actually violated the side agreement to NAFTA, which obligates Canada to provide advance notice and opportunity to comment on any proposed change to environmental law and policy.

I wonder if the member could speak to not just the substance of it, but to the government's violation of its international commitments as well.

• (1220)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, it certainly appears to me and to most casual readers to be a violation of NAFTA. However, will we be accused of being anti-Canadian if we ask our friends in Washington to suggest that the government should have given notice to both Washington and Mexico, the partners in NAFTA, that it was about to downgrade its environmental protection system? There certainly should be some involvement by our partners in all of our so-called free trade agreements, some of which we actually did support.

Mr. Greg Kerr (West Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint Boniface.

Recently our government delivered the economic action plan for 2012. This budget is one that would support jobs for Canadians, grow our economy, reduce red tape and increase efficiencies across government. This budget is a moderate approach to returning to balanced budgets in the medium term while making key investments in business and innovation. This is a budget Canadians can count on. There are many items in the budget that would help Canadians find jobs and save money.

While we are focused on growing the economy and putting more Canadians back to work, the opposition is focused on negativity, fearmongering and killing Canadian jobs.

In my remarks, I will focus on some key areas of the budget and highlight why the changes we are making would be good for Canadians' future.

A few things I would like to focus on are the changes to the old age security, reducing red tape in our project review processes and improving efficiencies at Veterans Affairs.

With regard to OAS, the opposition is trying to scare our seniors into thinking that we are taking away their benefits. That could not be further off the mark. What we are doing is ensuring that benefits remain for the long term, because we know that Canadian seniors need these benefits.

Let us talk about the changes to OAS. OAS is a government program, funded through general revenue, that if left in its current state will become unsustainable. What we are doing is introducing a reasonable plan that would be phased in over a long period of time and that would ensure that these benefits our seniors need remain far in the future.

We are making OAS more accessible to seniors by providing automatic enrolment instead of having them go through an application process. We are also introducing the option of deferring the beginning of OAS benefits, an option that would allow more seniors the choice for what is right in their situation.

Our decision to make changes to OAS is not an easy one, but it is the right one, and the opposition knows it.

For our most vulnerable seniors, we have created a GIS top-up. In budget 2011, we announced additional annual benefits of up to \$600 for single seniors and \$840 for couples for more than 680,000 low-income seniors.

We have also moved to reduce taxes for our seniors. In 2012, a single senior could earn at least \$19,542, and a senior couple \$39,084, before paying federal income tax. As a result of our actions since 2006, 380,000 seniors have been removed from federal tax rolls.

Through these measures, we are taking the tax burden off many seniors so that they can keep more of their savings.

We will continue to make responsible decisions that ensure Canadian seniors are receiving the benefits they need in retirement.

Government Orders

On environmental and project review, the opposition has spoken out against our plan to streamline the process for project reviews. Somehow it has come up with the notion that duplication, red tape and barriers to economic development are good things for Canada. The difference between our government and the opposition is that we actually support Canadian jobs and growth in the economy. What we are doing is making sure that projects that need more oversight get it in a timely manner; for smaller projects that have little impact on the environment, we are making sure they are dealt with through a quicker process, as they need less scrutiny.

What we have now is more duplication, a long and unclear review process for both large projects that require more assessment resources and smaller projects that are minimal environmental risks.

Projects in the queue have to go through multiple steps and multiple levels of government approval processes that are not clearly defined, and they are not given an estimated timeline. In some cases the federal review process is only begun years after an approval at a provincial level or from another federal agency. The result is wasted time, effort and money.

While projects are going through a complicated review process, it costs the business, it costs the economy and ultimately it could mean new jobs are not realized.

While large projects do need close review, many smaller projects, such as replacing an existing culvert or constructing a new pumping house for a maple syrup plant, do not need the same level of scrutiny. These smaller projects, in the current review system, are taking up much of the resources that could alleviate the length of time it takes for a larger project to be reviewed.

If the opposition had its way, it would ensure that all reviews would go as slowly as possible, thus wasting time and effort on projects that do not need that kind of survey.

• (1225)

The opposition would effectively kill jobs in sectors where there is huge potential for economic growth, such as the natural resource, oil and gas sectors. A clear example of the NDP's intentions is the fact that it actually sent representatives to Washington at taxpayers' expense to oppose the Keystone pipeline, a project that will create thousands of jobs in North America.

The economic action plan will commit to bringing forward legislation to achieve the goal of "one project, one review"; make new investments to improve regulatory reviews; streamline the review process for major economic projects; support consultation with aboriginal peoples; strengthen pipeline and marine safety; continue to support the major projects management office initiative, which has succeeded in shortening and streamlining reviews and improving accountability; and ensure the safety and security of Canadians and the environment as energy resources are developed.

The opposition would put Canadians out of jobs. We want to make sure Canadians have work for generations to come.

With regard to Veterans Affairs, the opposition has been trying to convince our veterans for months that our government is slashing the budget for Veterans Affairs. As we can clearly see, that is just not the case. The opposition kept telling our veterans that benefits were

being cut. The total reduction to the Department of Veterans Affairs is only 1.1% in an effort to reduce red tape and bureaucratic barriers. This will make for easier access to benefits and help ensure our veterans receive the care and support they deserve.

I will take this opportunity to again point out that while opposition members have criticized the government on veterans, not once have they voted in favour of the measures to increase veterans' benefits.

The reality is that budget 2012 strongly supports veterans and their families. We have promised to maintain benefits for our veterans and we are definitely following through on that promise.

I have elaborated on a few of the important measures brought in by action plan 2012. This budget supports growth and jobs for Canadians. It acknowledges the reality that we are working with a fragile global economy; this budget proves, though, that Canada remains a leader in fiscal management, as we are making responsible reductions to balance the budget while growing our economy and creating jobs.

I encourage all Canadians to go online and visit or call their MPs' offices to learn more about economic action plan 2012. With the plan that is in front of us, we have the sound fiscal management to ensure growth and prosperity well into the future.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to one issue here. Within the cuts that have taken place, Parks Canada has been hammered viciously by the government.

We saw the government talk with great enthusiasm about all of the great work it did with respect to increasing the size of the national parks in the Northwest Territories. Part of what was supposed to happen was a commitment to the people of the Northwest Territories that there would be some economic return, that these parks would be well managed and that they would increase tourism, but what do we see in the budget? We see huge cuts directly to national parks, cuts that will cause our economy not to get a boost from tourism. Where is the thinking there? On the one hand, the Conservatives love to take the credit for expanding national parks; on the other hand, they are slashing the budgets for these parks so that they cannot do the things they are supposed to do with that increased size.

Government Orders

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, certainly the government is moving a number of areas of efficiencies to try to make government more economic and more compact, and the delivery is certainly felt at the final end. In other words, the idea is to grow the economy and encourage the private sector to invest in our economy. We feel that as a result of eliminating the deficit and keeping taxes very low, the opportunities in all the communities—in my rural community and in the member's rural community—will continue to grow through the years. Once the stability has taken effect, we are very confident that we will see growth and opportunity for Canadians across the country.

• (1230)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in Bill C-38, the number of changes to virtually every environmental law ever passed in this country is literally shocking to anyone who has practised environmental law. The hon. member will remember me from when he was Minister of Environment in Nova Scotia all those years ago and approved Agent Orange spraying, driving my group to court at the time. It is all water under the bridge, so I have nothing but goodwill toward the hon. member for West Nova.

However, I ask the member now if he has reviewed section 5 of the new Canadian Environmental Assessment Act? Can he explain to Canadians how federal environmental reviews will now be limited to fish and migratory birds only?

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, I would not have gone back into history but since the member mentioned it I remember our days together in Nova Scotia. What I do know is that the member was quite prepared to take on companies and government and yet it was okay for neighbours to use that same spray on their lawns. Their neighbours and kids and so on did not matter because taking on government was far more fun.

The fact is that we are moving toward efficiency. We are absolutely committed to environmental control, environmental regulatory protection and the right penalty process. Those people who cause problems should be held accountable.

However, to delay a process is not progress, does not help Canadians and certainly does not help the environment.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a brief point of order. At the relevant time, the mix of 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid was never registered for home use.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): That is a matter of debate rather than a point of order.

The hon. parliamentary secretary on a short question.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for all the hard work he does as chairman of veterans affairs committee. I was pleased to hear him talk about veterans in his budget speech. It is important to ensure that we protect the men and women in uniform and those who have served so bravely for our country.

I would like to give the member another opportunity to cite those things that he feels highlight the needs of his community, things that would make things better in his community.

Mr. Greg Kerr: Mr. Speaker, we are just wrapping up a committee review of the dozens of changes that have taken place in

the delivery of service and our response to the needs of veterans. As our former minister, Greg Thompson, used to say, we can never do enough.

I think all members of the House understand that the initiatives are incredibly important for our veterans down the road, and I feel the same about the initiatives in the budget right across the country. As a rural member, I am in tune with the impacts of a budget and the overall impact is one of positive long-term growth, which we should be proud of.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to stand here in the House to speak to the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act to implement our 2012 economic action plan. Both this legislation and our recent budget represent an ambitious, substantive and positive response by our Conservative government to the economic challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow.

I am proud that the measures contained in the bill and in budget 2012 will fuel the next wave of job creation and position Canada for a secure and prosperous future.

By focusing on the drivers of growth, innovation, business investment, education and skills, these new measures will solidify, strengthen and draw upon the entrepreneurial sectors' role as the driving force behind Canada's economy.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Our plan sets out a comprehensive agenda to bolster Canada's fundamental strengths and address the important challenges confronting the economy over the long term, like the demographic challenges arising as a result of an aging society.

Canada's businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators have proven time and again that they are up to the task, provided they are given the chance. With our economic action plan, our Conservative government is ensuring that they will have all the opportunity they need to flourish.

[*English*]

For starters, this ambitious agenda includes a new approach to supporting entrepreneurs, innovators and world-class research.

As a world leader in post-secondary research with a highly skilled workforce, Canada has strong fundamentals for innovation. In fact, Canada has the highest proportion of population with post-secondary education of anywhere in the world.

Government Orders

With \$10.1 billion of annual federal investment to support post-secondary education and \$2.5 billion annually for labour market agreements with the provinces and territories, it is no surprise that Canadian students perform well in international tests. Canada also compares favourably to most other G7 countries with respect to job related training.

However, for all of this promise, Canada continues to lag behind our peer nations in terms of overall innovation performance, including with regard to private sector investment in R and D and the commercialization of research into products and processes that create high value jobs and economic growth. Our government is taking important steps to foster the innovation needed to fuel jobs and economic growth.

First, we set up an expert panel to determine the reasons for this lagging performance, and now we are responding to the panel's recommendations in a way that will create high value jobs through investments in education and training, basic and applied research, finance opportunities for businesses with the potential to become globally competitive, and better linkages between public research and market needs.

[*Translation*]

Among other things, economic action plan 2012 will double the contribution budget of the industrial research assistance program to better support research and development by small and medium-sized companies.

It will refocus the National Research Council on demand-driven applied research that will help Canadian businesses develop innovative products and services.

It will support innovation through procurement, by connecting small and medium-sized companies with federal departments and agencies to build their capacity to compete in the marketplace. And the plan will help high-growth firms access risk capital by committing significant funds to leveraging increased private-sector investments in early-stage risk capital, including a \$400 million investment to support the creation of large-scale venture capital funds led by the private sector.

Furthermore, it will support private and public research collaboration through internships for graduate students, and funding for business-led research and development networks.

The SR & ED tax incentive program will be enhanced by removing capital from the expenditure base, making it more cost-effective through design improvements and a measured rate reduction, and providing greater predictability through administrative improvements.

[*English*]

However, to effectively compete and succeed globally, Canadian job creators need more than just bright ideas. They must be supported by a modern regulatory environment that promotes competition, business investment and economic growth. This implies a competitive and efficient tax system, a well functioning financial system and access to international markets.

That is why the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity bill includes key commitments in all of these areas, which would

improve conditions for business investment and drive the next wave of job creation. This means we are transforming not only how we innovate, but how we regulate. We are supporting responsible resource development, improving the review process for major energy and resource projects to make it more timely and transparent while protecting the environment, and introducing legislation to modernize the regulatory system to realize our objective of one project one review.

These measures are all fundamental to our success but, ultimately, Canada's success rests upon maximizing the power of our greatest asset, our people, and unleashing their full productive potential. With that in mind, the bill makes significant investments in training, infrastructure and work incentives, and supports job creation by facilitating the participation of under-represented groups in the labour force.

Employment insurance, for example, is Canada's single largest labour market program. Our budget plan will make a number of targeted, common sense changes to make EI a more efficient program that promotes job creation, removes disincentives to work, supports unemployed Canadians and quickly connects people to available jobs to improve their quality of life and Canada's economy.

At the same time, we will ensure predictable and stable EI rates by limiting rate increases to 5¢ per year until the EI operating account is in balance and then move to a seven year break even rate. In addition, we are extending the temporary EI hiring credit for small business for one year to reduce the cost of hiring new workers. This will benefit approximately 536,000 employers whose total EI premiums were at or below \$10,000 in 2011, reducing their 2012 payroll costs by about \$205 million.

In more targeted labour market actions we are also investing \$50 million in the youth employment strategy to assist more young people in gaining tangible skills and experience and connecting them with jobs in fields that are in high demand.

● (1240)

[*Translation*]

At the other end of the demographic scale, we are also funding the extension and expansion of the successful ThirdQuarter project, which helps employers find workers over 50 who have the skills they are seeking.

I am especially proud of this project, piloted by the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, which provides an online forum that makes it easier for individuals to find jobs that match their skills, while helping businesses and organizations to recruit employees who have the skills they are seeking.

Government Orders

[English]

I would be remiss if I closed without quickly reviewing other important initiatives in the economic action plan 2012. They include: investing an additional \$30 million in the opportunities fund to enable more Canadians with disabilities to obtain valuable work experience; proposing \$100 million to support first nations education, as well as \$175 million to build and renovate schools on reserve; supporting further improvements to foreign credential recognition; and more and more.

[Translation]

Securing long-term prosperity for Canadians in uncertain times means we must act today. Under the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity bill, we have taken decisive action to that end by increasing employment opportunities in the long term and ensuring economic growth.

That is why I am urging the House today to support the measures set out in this bill.

[English]

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskwasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member across talks about jobs, growth and economic stability. I wonder if she can explain how putting thousands of people out of work, which the government is doing by giving pink slips to a lot of people across different government departments, will assist in jobs, growth and the economy.

I would also like to know if the member could elaborate on the experimental farm in Kapuskasing and maybe give us an idea of the exact date of that closure because those workers would like to know. They have been given a pink slip but they have not been told the exact closing date. They could base their decision-making on that closure date, given the fact that they have only been given 120 days to make their decision.

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to jobs, it is very clear across the world that Canada is looked at as an example of success following a recession that touched us all.

When we look at the statistics, the IMF and the OECD look at Canada as being one of the countries that will see the strongest growth going forward. Growth means those jobs are actually succeeding. We have had almost 700,000 net new jobs since the recession, 90% of those jobs are actually benefiting people who are in full-time occupations and 75% of those are in private sector positions.

What will not help us create jobs is the NDP plan: a \$10 billion corporate tax increase that would kill jobs, GST increases that would kill jobs, doubling of the CPP that the CIBF said very clearly would literally shut down dozens of small businesses across the country, and, of course, the EI 45-day work year that it advocates for would kill more opportunities and more jobs. The single biggest measure that would negatively impact Canadians would be the carbon tax that it wishes to place on Canadians at this time. It is the worst time possible.

We will stick with our plan. We are the best in the G7 and we will stay there.

● (1245)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think one of the greatest threats that the government has brought forward with regard to this budget and this bill that we are debating today is the fact that it is taking other issues and bundling them together and trying to pass them along with the budget.

Many would suggest that there should have been a series of other legislative agendas or other bills that should have been brought forward, thereby being provided due diligence and scrutiny of the House and committee. The government is doing a disservice to Canadians by taking issues, such as our environment, and passing, through the back door, substantial changes to environmental legislation that will have a profoundly negative impact going into the future.

Why did the government choose to go through the back door, changing important environment laws, on a budget debate when it should have been stand-alone debate in itself?

Mrs. Shelly Glover: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague well knows, the budget implementation acts are traditionally very broad. Let me give an example to my colleague from the Liberal Party of a budget bill that his party put forward in 2005. In fact, Bill C-43, which was introduced in the 38th Parliament, amended dozens of different pieces of legislation including the Auditor General Act, the Asia-Pacific Foundation of Canada Act, the Broadcasting Act, the Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador Additional Fiscal Equalization Offset Payments Act, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Canada Post Corporation Act, the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act, and more.

It is hypocritical to stand in this place and tell Canadians that what is being done is unusual, because it is not. That member knows it, the members from the official opposition know it and every member of Parliament in this place knows very well this is not unusual. This is the way it goes. That member ought to be apologizing for misleading Canadians when he and his party have done exactly the same thing in the interests, they say, of Canada.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Western Arctic.

I want to begin my remarks today on Bill C-38 by saying, and it should be said, that this clearly is not only a budget implementation act.

I found it very interesting to listen to the parliamentary secretary's comments just a few moments ago when she chided the Liberal member for the record of the Liberal government, bringing in a massive omnibus bill as well. I remember that bill, C-43, but it is curious, because I seem to remember that the Conservatives in opposition at that time certainly had lots of concerns about what was hidden in that massive bill. I think it was about 1,000 pages. I remember the debates in this House about how the Liberals were trying to hide things and rush them through.

Here we are today in 2012 with another budget implementation bill, which is anything but. It has become a massive cover for putting through major public policy issues under the guise of a budget implementation bill.

Government Orders

I want to say, just for the record, that it is really bad public policy. It is a terrible way to make decisions. It is a direct attack on the ability of members of Parliament to examine legislation.

Much of the stuff that is in the budget implementation bill should be coming to the House as stand-alone legislation. When we go through the list, go through those 422 pages that comprise the current budget implementation act, we can just see how far-ranging the directions are in the bill.

For example, we know it is raising the age of eligibility of OAS and GIS from 65 to 67, something that the Prime Minister never campaigned on in the last election. For heaven's sake, it repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, meaning that the government is no longer required to report on its emissions under the act. That is in a budget bill? The Conservatives are putting that through in a budget bill? Is there something they want to hide from Canadians? I think so.

As we have heard many times in the House, it guts the environmental assessment regime and fish habitat protection. Again, this should be stand-alone legislation that the government should have the guts to bring forward on its merit and be willing to debate in this House, instead of trying to sneak it through in a budget implementation bill.

Just in terms of the changing environmental assessments, this would have a major impact on my province of British Columbia, on things like the Enbridge pipeline, where there has been incredible public interest in being involved in a democratic public process to comment on the environmental impact and assessment of that project.

What is the government doing? It uses the budget and the budget implementation act to actually shut down and to gag the public and say that not only is it putting short timelines on these major assessments but it will also delegate authority to other authorities, including the provinces, so it is basically narrowing the opportunities people have to comment on these important things.

To add insult to injury, not only does the bill gut environmental requirements; it also goes after civil society organizations by saying that the Canada Revenue Agency will tighten up what kind of political activities they can be engaged in. There is an attack on both sides, by legislation and by trying to fetter and gag the work that very important organizations do in our country to bring awareness to these major environmental projects that have a huge impact on all of us.

Here are a few other little gems in the budget. It would repeal the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act. I am familiar with this, because as a city councillor in Vancouver over many terms, we actually used the federal fair wage act to set a benchmark for what we did municipally to pay fair wages to municipal contractors.

Now all of a sudden this act is gone. It has been there for decades. I do not know how far it goes back, but it has been a benchmark of what is considered to be fair wages.

Presumably this is now being completely eliminated because the Conservatives want to give more handouts to their corporate buddies and they want to undercut union wage rates. This is an attack on

labour, just like we have seen with Bill C-377, where the government is attacking labour and trying to allege that they are not transparent organizations when we know they are. This is hidden in a budget implementation act.

• (1250)

It would also amend the Employment Equity Act so it would no longer apply to federal contractors. This is a major shift in public policy. I was part of the standing committee that reviewed the Employment Equity Act. It has to be reviewed every five years. The federal government is mandated to cover employment equity both in terms of its own direct services and of all the areas it covers like transport, airlines and banks. To amend the Employment Equity Act so it no longer applies to federal contractors is just a sheer gift and bonus to the Conservatives' buddies in saying that things like employment fairness, fair wages and ensuring diversity in the workplace would not count anymore and they would not have to worry about it. This is a major and dramatic shift in public policy.

I also want to mention a few local things that are very concerning to me, such as the cuts to the CAP program, which is purely mean-spirited. Low-income people who can currently gain access to the Internet through the community Internet access program would no longer have access to that. This is just a small thing, but it really does affect people. We live in an Internet age but there are lots of Canadians who still do not have their own computer or access to the Internet and they use the community access program to have that opportunity and capability. Why on earth would the Conservatives go after that? Why would they target people in that way?

As the health critic for the NDP, I want to speak briefly about some of the health aspects in the few minutes I have left.

We have said in this House many times how absolutely staggering a \$31 billion decrease in health transfers to the provinces would be. This is a massive shift. The Conservatives unilaterally made a decision about health transfers in this country without any negotiation, debate or co-operation with the provinces and territories. It is something that is unheard of. This is a major assault on our health care system.

It goes even further than that. One of the little sneaky things that is in the budget is the amendments to the Food and Drugs Act to give the Minister of Health more power, supposedly on the basis of streamlining and improving the efficiency of various classifications of foods and drugs. However, it would basically give the minister more power to set up her own regulatory process and go outside the system. Again, this is something that should be coming forward in its own piece of legislation.

I will conclude by talking about what the budget does not address.

Government Orders

I live in Vancouver, and in Metro Vancouver probably the greatest issue we face is the lack of affordable housing. I have met with the Canadian Rental Housing Coalition in Metro Vancouver, which by the way, is made up of building owners, apartment owners, tenant groups and co-op housing groups. It is a broad coalition and they are all saying the same thing: the federal government must be part of a solution to build affordable housing in this country.

Where do we expect workers to live if they are paying 50% or 60% of their income in rent? The hotel workers and the people who work in the stadiums, on the waterfront or in the service industry can no longer afford to live anywhere close to where they work. This is a major issue in Metro Vancouver and also in other Canadian cities, yet there is not a single word in the budget implementation act that would make this a priority. It is just zero. It is as if it does not exist anymore.

We look at the contrast of the handouts to the Conservatives' friends in the corporate world while ignoring the real priorities of Canadians for basic human needs like housing, shelter, good pensions or even access to the Internet. All of these things have either been ignored or cut.

This is a terrible budget, a terrible bill. We should be offended as parliamentarians that this budget implementation bill is so broad. It has so much in it that we cannot even begin to debate, especially now that there is a gag order on the time we have for debate, which was passed earlier today. What an affront to parliamentary democracy.

We are here to stand up to say we oppose the bill and will use everything we can to oppose it all the way.

• (1255)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few months ago the Prime Minister was overseas and he talked about senior pensions. A huge outcry swept our country from coast to coast. It was, "How dare the Prime Minister look at our pension programs?" Canadians treasure these programs and they are seen as fundamental social programs that are absolutely essential, not only to keep and maintain but to look at ways we can enhance them. I appreciate, to a certain degree, they might have backed off from what the original thoughts were, but still a vast majority of Canadians believe, and the Liberal Party believes, that we have to maintain the option for retirement at age 65 as fundamental to our pensions.

Could the member comment on raising the age of eligibility from 65 to 67? We believe that is wrong and that it has to be maintained at 65.

• (1300)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, the meeting the Prime Minister attended was a very exclusive meeting of billionaires and big movers and shakers in Davos, Switzerland. It was pretty insulting to all Canadians that he chose that venue to make a major decision about the Conservatives' intention to bring about a fundamental change in our pensions system. Therefore, I would agree with the member.

I recently held a public forum in east Vancouver on pensions. People are hopping mad, not only seniors but also younger people, because they know the impact this change will have. By raising the age of eligibility, it means people in their older years will have to

work longer. It also changes the dynamic in the job market and means there are fewer opportunities because more people are now forced to work longer or else they will be on the provincial welfare roll. This is another example of provincial offloading.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again I stand to take advantage of this opportunity to tell Canadians that the member opposite is misleading them. The previous NDP speaker said earlier that democracy was at risk in all of this, but she was misleading when she said that the limited time was unprecedented. Seven days is actually, historically, the longest period of time in the last 20 years. She was upset about there being 10 years. Well let us go 20 years.

The member opposite who just spoke was also upset about seven days of debate. Over 20 years, the debate was two days in 1992, four days in 1993, four days in 1994, five days in 1995, three days in 1996, two days in 1997, three days in 1998, four days in 1999, three days in 2000, three days in 2001, four days in 2003, three days in 2004 and it goes on.

In 20 years we have never seen this length of debate ever before. Seven days is plenty of time. We need to start talking about the measures that the members will support and that can help Canadians do better.

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, we have never seen such a terrible bill that has so much horrible stuff in it that we will not even get to talk about because the debate will happen so quickly.

We have to look at the context of what is taking place here. Almost every piece of legislation that has come the House from the Conservative government has been under a gag order of some sort of closure. What are the Conservatives afraid of? Are they afraid that more of us will speak to it, or are they so dismissive of democratic practice that they want to shut down debate in the House?

The member can read from whatever list she wants. The fact is the record of the current government in gagging members of Parliament in debating substantial issues in the House is happening on a weekly basis. The budget implementation bill is just the latest example.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are many things about Bill C-38 that I could speak about, such as the total rewriting of Canada's environmental protection law, repealing the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act, raising the age of retirement to 67, the elimination of the National Council of Welfare, the elimination of employment equity for federal contractors, weakening the Auditor General, having cabinet-approved pipelines rather than the arm's length National Energy Board and the gutting of the regional employment insurance appeal process. However, as the only member of the opposition from the three northern territories, I will speak about how the bill would change the three acts that could be considered the constitutions of the three territories without having consulted the people of the north.

Government Orders

Clauses 214, 215 and 216 of Bill C-38 would amend the Northwest Territories Act, the Yukon Act and the Nunavut Act. They would amend these acts to give the federal cabinet the ability to make more regulations governing the fiscal capacity of the three territories. Instead of moving toward the Conservatives' promise of improving and devolving northern governance, which is the fourth pillar of the Prime Minister's much-promoted northern strategy, these amendments would actually increase the amount of control Ottawa would exercise over the three territories. There is no provision to ensure that the three territorial governments would have any input or that there would be any measure of consultation or approval over the nature of these regulations or any changes made to them by future federal cabinets. This is hardly responsible government for the territories.

All of us who use the Westminster system of democracy know the key to responsible government is having control over fiscal matters. These amendments completely make a mockery of any statements from the Conservatives that they believe in consulting with and building a better north.

In the past Parliament, I tried to lessen the intrusiveness of the federal government over the people of the north. Over and over, I spoke to northern leaders and my constituents and then presented a bill that would give more certainty and control in the Northwest Territories over their fiscal capacity. It was to be achieved through actual legislation.

Speaking to my bill at committee, Mr. Chris Forbes, the assistant deputy minister, Federal-Provincial Relations and Social Policy Branch, Department of Finance, described how the borrowing limit provisions were a holdover from when the only institution the territories could borrow from was the Government of Canada. Since 1983, the territories have been able to borrow on the open market. Colonial at the start and colonial it continues under the Conservatives.

My bill was well supported across the Northwest Territories.

If the Conservatives had consulted with the people in the north, they would have heard that what northerners wanted was this federal control over borrowing removed. So far we have not been any consultations on these amendments, unless they have been done in secret. They exclude Canadians because they do not care what Canadians have to say about many of these aspects.

The Prime Minister has made a point of stressing the growth of governance in the territories. If that is what he wants, then the Conservatives should have done the right thing in amending these three acts, and that is to take the federal government and the federal Department of Finance completely out of the process.

Where are the members for Yukon and Nunavut on these changes? Do they support increased control over the territories by Ottawa? Is it okay with them that the legislative assemblies of the territories lose autonomy with these changes? Why the silence?

The people of the north have proven they can govern themselves. They have proven they are capable managers of money. Moody's Investment Services has given the Northwest Territories an A1 rating. This rating is second highest and places the NWT in line for credit risk with most of the provinces.

Moody's rating takes into account recent developments related to the Deh Cho Bridge project. The credit opinion notes that Moody's:

—had already included the Deh Cho Bridge liability in our calculations of the NWT's net direct and indirect debt, reflecting the government's debt-like obligation to make periodic availability payments. As such, formal assumption of the related debt is not expected to alter the NWT's credit profile in a material way.

According to Moody's, the rating reflects:

—prudent fiscal policies that have, over the past several years, limited debt accumulation. A well-developed fiscal framework (including a Fiscal Responsibility Policy which guides the NWT's fiscal policies and use of debt) should help to ensure that the debt burden remains low and affordable.

The NWT's fiscal responsibility policy mandates how the NWT may borrow. The policy guides the GNWT fiscal policy and use of debt and includes guidelines respecting the types of activities for which debt can be issued, as well as limits on total debt and debt servicing costs to ensure affordability. A borrowing plan is required to detail options and preferred choices for funding the short-term and long-term borrowing requirements of the government at minimum cost.

● (1305)

Our territory is responsible. It is acting in a manner which many other provinces should emulate.

However, these amendments do not treat the territories as responsible. Instead, they treat them in a paternalistic, uncaring fashion, without any concern what northerners think about changing their constitutions.

The people of the north have the same political rights as Canadians who live in the provinces. History has given us a designation as territories rather than provinces, but regardless what we are called, changes to our laws in Parliament should make northerners more equal to other Canadians instead of less.

All three territories are anticipated to be the great growth area of our great country. Northerners say "Respect us, treat us as equals, don't make us come cap in hand to Ottawa to be treated in a manner that other Canadians take for granted".

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees all Canadians a right to a legislative assembly. It guarantees all Canadians that rights are held equally and that Canadians are treated equally by laws. These amendments do not move our legislative assemblies closer to equality with the provincial legislatures. These amendments actually move the northern legislatures further from equality.

Through a long and arduous process and negotiations on this issue over three years, my government was never told that the Minister of Finance would create these new powers for the federal cabinet.

Is the Conservative government so insensitive that it thinks it can now operate by decree?

Government Orders

A process that started as government-to-government negotiations has ended up as laws from master to vassal. Shame on this process that is blind to the desire of all northerners for equality, for respect and for their own political rights in our great country.

• (1310)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on another issue which I think is really important for us to cover, and that is the issue of health care. All Canadians are concerned with regard to the future of health care. They want to have a certain level of comfort in knowing that the federal government will be there for them in a very real and tangible way.

One of the greatest accomplishments of Paul Martin was the establishment of the health care accord, which ensured a guaranteed increase in funding. This would ensure that the federal government would continue to play a strong role in terms of demonstrating leadership on the health care file for all Canadians.

To what degree does the member believe the current Conservative government is committed to that ongoing financing commitment for the provinces across Canada?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, this is an issue in which the three northern territories are treated in an equal fashion to the provinces in Canada.

We have the same concerns as all the provinces do. After 2015, if we see reductions in the increases in health care transfers, with ever-aging populations, ever-increasing costs of doing business in the north, which is incredibly expensive, with the cost of energy climbing upward, we simply will be unable to afford the systems we need to protect the people who live in these territories.

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed to hear my friend's position. His riding extends to the north of my boundary, in northern Alberta. I thought he would be very happy with this budget because it would do a lot for Canadians.

It would establish our place, as has been indicated the World Economic Forum, as the soundest banking system in the world for the fourth year in a row. We continue on with that same track record in this budget. We do that through promoting sound resource development, ensuring that one project, one review, is the order of the day and ensuring that during that review, Canadians have the ability to comment on it. We are also moving forward with the development of good, sound, straightforward environmental policy ensuring that the reliability of the environmental data instead of having five or six competing things going on at the same time with the same issue involved and getting different results.

I know he and his party did not support Canada's economic action plan in relation to building infrastructure across the country, \$45 billion which is a record amount. Will he step apart from his party at this time? He knows this is a good budget for the north. He knows this is a good budget for Canadians and Canadian jobs. Will he not stand for his constituents right now and support this budget?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, who resides in the riding next to mine in Alberta, is represented in the legislative assembly in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, which has rights and privileges that we in the Northwest Territories can only hope to have

for the future. When he refers to my riding, he is actually referring to the jurisdiction of the Northwest Territories, a separate political entity in this country, one that has to move forward and one that will be part of the economic development of this great land through mining, oil and gas, and all measure of natural resource development.

The people in the jurisdiction I represent want control over what happens, just as the member has that same control in Alberta in his legislative assembly. We want what and expect the same things that other Canadians have. We do not expect to see the little that we have already denigrated by this legislation and this Parliament.

• (1315)

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

I am happy to stand today and support the budget action plan 2012, Canada's economic action plan, because it is so important. It is certain to bolster Canada's long-term economic strengths and promote job growth, and that is what it is all about.

We are federal representatives who support Canadians in their endeavour to have a better quality of life, and that is exactly what Canada's economic action plan 2012 does and I am proud to stand up for it.

This is such a good budget for the people I represent. This budget is all about me coming forward to talk about what my citizens are so excited for in this particular budget. It starts with job creation to innovation and invention. It is important to continue to invent things and to work hard to have patents and intellectual interests that actually stimulate growth in our economy because we can sell that to others.

I am proud to say that in my riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca, we have more patents registered than in all of the rest of Canada combined. It is certainly more than any other jurisdiction of that area or that population. That is why it is important to have innovation and invention, which the budget speaks to.

From my background as a retailer, although the elimination of the penny for some people it is heartfelt, it is a good business decision, good for Canadians and good for northern Albertans.

We will prosper under this budget and continue to have a great quality of life. I am very proud of our government and I am proud of this particular budget. It goes without saying that we on this side of the House are proud of this budget because it takes a step forward.

We saved serious amounts of interest payments when we knocked down \$39 billion in direct payments two or three budgets ago. Then we got into a budget of promoting economic wealth through creating jobs, infrastructure and a better quality of life. Now we have an austerity budget, a budget that, in my mind, is more about efficiency and productivity than any other budget in Canada's history.

Government Orders

I will elaborate on a few of my favourite initiatives. I am very happy to see in this budget that some education has been taken from the Senate, in particular the Senate's ongoing inquiry into the involvement of foreign foundations in Canada's domestic affairs. This has brought a lot of attention to the Senate and to this budget, and some people speak against this. However, for me that is not the case.

I donate a lot of money to charities. I support charities and I sit on a board or two. I have done that for years. I think it is clear that some charities are not respecting the rules regarding political activities. It is necessary to do that because Canadians expect their charitable donations to be used for those particular purposes and not for some political purpose or some economic purpose beyond the mandate of that particular charity.

I will quote Senator Finley who said in March of this year:

Shady foreign money is being used to influence Canadian domestic and commercial policy in an obscure fashion.

There is nothing wrong with groups advocating for environmental conservation. However, there is a problem when their unstated intent is to undermine Canadian industries and do irreparable damage to Canada's economy.

We are not talking about \$100 here or there, or somebody paying for some protest signs. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars that are being funneled from other countries, other interests, including petroleum foundations that are in competition with petroleum foundations and petroleum companies in Canada. They are actually funnelling them to our country and to other countries to fund environmental and aboriginal activists working to block our economic development.

Some people say that they should be able to do that. I have no problem with Canadians doing that as long as Canadians know what they are doing, know where the money is coming from, know where the money is going and they obey the law. However, Canadians deserve to know. It is time to find out clearly where that money is coming from, who it is going to and what it is being used to fund. Bluntly, it works against taxpayer dollars and it costs more taxpayer dollars to follow through with that economic policy that this place and the members of this place put forward and have put forward. They are working contrary to that purpose, exactly contrary to it, and it costs Canadians more money. I do not think that should continue unless, of course, Canadians want it to continue and Canadians know about it.

● (1320)

Economic action plan 2012 proposes measures to ensure that charities devote their resources almost exclusively to charitable rather than political activities. How would it do that? First, by proposing that Canada Revenue Agency enhance its education and compliance activities with respect to political activities by charities. I do not think many actually understand the ramifications of this and that they need to stick to their knitting and do what Canadians expect them to do with their charitable donations.

Second, to improve transparency by requiring charities to provide more information on their political activities, including the extent to which they are funded by foreign sources. We do not know where this money is coming from. We are starting to learn a little about it. I think most Canadians would be shocked to find out that some of

these groups that are opposing our development strategies are funded by oil companies abroad. That is troubling because it is Canadian domestic policy in which these foreign governments are interfering and that should not be allowed. We certainly should not be allowing them tax breaks.

Whether members agree with my position, the government's position, regarding exporting our resources throughout the world, I think 99.9% of Canadians, I hope, believe that this decision is about Canadian jobs, the Canadian economy, Canadian prosperity and our quality of life, every life in the country, including the lives of the constituents of the member for Western Arctic who spoke briefly before me. It is about Canadian policy and it should not be made by foreign trusts for foreign priorities that are operating strictly against our policies and what Canadians voted for last May, one year ago. I congratulate the Conservative majority government. Canadians voted for us to move forward with these initiatives, not to have foreign interests, foreign governments, foreign oil companies interfering in our domestic policy. This is Canadian policy that should be made at home in the best interests of all Canadians.

If Canadians do not like it, their job is to de-elect us, just like it is to re-elect us. I think they will like these policies because they will have a better quality of life, a better job and a better family life as well, because all of those things add up for a better quality of life.

Probably the most obvious budget proposal for me to speak to today is responsible resource development. This is one of the things that throughout my adult life I have pursued. I consider myself an environmentalist. I have spent a tremendous amount of time outdoors. I am a registered trapper in Alberta. I almost finished a masters degree in environmental law in Australia because that was my passion at one time.

I believe the concentration on one review for one project will be better in the end because all of the resources and thought processes will go into that one review. Instead of two, three or four reviews that are competing and have competing interests, we would have one review. We would get all the experts to work on that one review and we have the assessment forwarded with a yes or no so people know where they stand. We cannot wait 5, 6, 8, 10, 12 years where we have money to invest or where outside companies or Canadian companies have shareholders who expect to receive a return on investment. We cannot wait a decade or more for a yes or no answer. We need to ensure we provide that answer to them. What is so exciting for me today is that the budget has a responsible resource development part in it.

Government Orders

In the next 10 years, more than 500 major economic projects, representing \$500 billion in new investment, are planned across Canada. I am proud to say that a recent study by the Canadian Energy Research Institute estimates that in the next 25 years the oil sands growth, which I represent most of, will support an average of 480,000 jobs, which means \$2.4 trillion to our GDP. What is important in relation to this is that there is one review. We would put all our effort into that review to ensure we streamline it, to ensure we give an answer to the people who are investing and to ensure we get the best possible results for Canadians. Protecting the environment, ensuring we stand up for Canadian families, Canadian jobs and consulting properly with first nations across the country, all of those things are important.

Our track record speaks for itself. We have gone through a minority opposition government, two minority governments and now a majority government. Canadians have spoken loudly. They trust the Prime Minister and they trust the cabinet to stand up for their priorities and we will continue to do that through this budget.

• (1325)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have learned something remarkable, that the government's attack on charitable organizations is a means of counteracting an economic war between oil companies. I just learned that. I would like the member to tell us a bit more.

Which foreign companies are we talking about? Which foreign governments are funnelling money into Canada? I believe it would be interesting to know this.

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the member was not at natural resources committee to hear testimony in relation to this particular activity. The testimony was very clear. I invite him to look at it. It was probably about a month ago that we heard testimony in relation to this. The member can follow the records and see how these foundations are funded.

It is more important to concentrate on their motives. Why would an oil company in some other part of the world work directly to block our ability to move forward with resource development? That is what I would like to know. That is a question that the member opposite should ask himself. Why would a foreign foundation funded by oil companies that are owned abroad fund protest movements and blockades in our country? There is only one reason I can think of as to why they would do that. The motive is clear.

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I followed my colleague's speech intently. We worked together on environment committee for many years.

He and several of his ministers have been making pretty impressive and frankly wild comments about the funding of Canadian NGOs. We are hearing now that apparently international oil companies that are probably active in the oil sands are funding environmental NGOs to attack Canadian oil. I am wondering if the member could name the oil companies, the foundations, and their activities. More important, I wonder if he could stand outside the House and name them.

Is the member prepared to go as far as the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of the Environment who have said on public record that these contributions are illegal? Can he stand and state categorically that these contributions are illegal?

Mr. Brian Jean: Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member. Although he wears the cloak of a Liberal he has a Conservative value in him somewhere; I have seen it.

My colleague wants to know what is standing between Canadians' quality of life, between moving forward with proper resource development and moving forward with regulatory change. He wants names, but I am not allowed to provide them. The member for Ottawa South is one of those people.

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2012 builds on our successes. A number of tax reductions have been extended to Canadian seniors, to Canadian families and to Canadian businesses. Could the hon. member detail for us those tax reductions that will be most beneficial to his residents?

Mr. Brian Jean: There are just so many of them, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot do them all justice. The best thing that we did as a government was in 2006 to 2008 when we paid down debt of \$37 billion. That was the first thing we did.

My riding is diverse. The average age in the northern area of Fort McMurray is 29 but there are a lot of seniors in the south. We provided \$2.5 billion in annual tax relief to seniors and pensioners, including taking 380,000 seniors from the tax rolls. That was just the start of it. We have provided many tax credits, such as the children's fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit. There are about eight or nine others.

The reality is that we give money back to Canadians. They know how to spend it a lot better than I do and a lot better than bureaucrats do. Canadians deserve more of their money and that is why we gave them Tax Freedom Day about 11 days earlier than ever before over the last 43 years. Conservatives believe that Canadians know how to spend their money better than anybody else in here does. That is why they continue to vote in support of this government.

• (1330)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, economic action plan 2012 is Canada's plan for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. The plan is focused on the priorities of hard-working Canadians and on our families. Our economic action plan is focused on prosperity for all Canadians. We are taking clear and decisive action to further strengthen our economy, and create quality jobs and a better quality of life for generations to come for our children and our grandchildren.

I will use my time today to highlight certain economic imperatives and to frame the choices we face globally, as governments and citizens alike work to secure long-term prosperity in a difficult global environment that is not about to change soon.

Government Orders

The OECD and the International Monetary Fund predict that our economy will again be among the leaders of the industrialized world over the next two years. For the fourth year in a row, the World Economic Forum said our banks are the soundest in the world. Among G7 countries, Canada has the lowest overall tax rate on new business investment. We have the highest credit rating. Canada is one of only two G7 countries to regain all of the jobs lost in the recession. This was achieved because our government made historic investments in infrastructure, and we encouraged businesses to invest and helped them to avoid layoffs.

In order to come out of a recession, during the recession we must take measures that are timely, targeted and temporary in nature. Governments should never create new permanent programs or institutionalize new government bureaucracies because of a recession. In today's era, resisting protectionism is crucial.

The best road to take to create long-term prosperity and new markets for Canadian products and services is to pursue free and open trade. For example, a trade agreement with the European Union is a key part of the most ambitious trade expansion program in Canadian history. With one in five Canadian jobs generated by trade, a Canada-EU trade agreement has the potential to benefit our nation enormously. It would mean a 20% boost in bilateral trade, a \$12 billion annual increase to Canada's economy, which is the equivalent of almost 80,000 new jobs or about an additional \$1,000 for the average Canadian family. Such an agreement would benefit Canadian workers, particularly those working in technology in Mississauga and Brampton, and chemicals and plastics, wood and wood products, and resource and renewable energies.

The second and even more important ingredient is the type of foundation we stand on. What we do to prepare before the storm is a good indicator of whether we will be the first to emerge once the hurricane has passed. The wealth we enjoy today here in Canada has been based on the good growth-oriented policies, the right and often challenging choices, and the hard work done in the past by our Conservative government. We have engaged in the transformations necessary to sustain job creation, economic growth and prosperity now and for the next generation. This means two things: making better economic choices now, and preparing ourselves now for the demographic pressures that our economy will face.

We need to keep tax rates down. Keeping taxes low and ensuring the sustainability of our social programs and fiscal position over the next generation is key.

Let us review the record of our Conservative federal government. We reduced personal income taxes and cut the GST from 7% to 6% to 5%. We allowed seniors to split their pension. We established the working income tax benefit for low-income working people. We removed more than a million low-income Canadians from the federal income tax rolls altogether. We established the registered disability savings plan and the tax-free savings accounts, the most important personal savings vehicle since the RRSP. We introduced the children's fitness tax credit and the children's arts tax credit. Altogether, an average family of four saves more than \$3,100 in taxes. That is money that stays in their pockets to spend on their priorities.

● (1335)

At the same time, our government reduced taxes on businesses that create jobs for all Canadians. That is a significant advantage for Canada and the global economy. It is helping to create jobs and preserve jobs in communities across our country, now and for the long term. Our Conservative government rolled out one of the largest and most effective economic stimulus plans among the nations of the G20. In Mississauga and Brampton, those investments put our neighbours to work. However, they also helped us to build lasting infrastructure like the new Sheridan College, new swimming pools, a new ambulance station and basic road construction. It was done without taking on the massive debts and long-term deficits now faced by many other countries. It was done without raising taxes.

As a result, in those difficult years Canada has outperformed most other industrialized countries. Since July 2009 our Conservative government has created nearly 700,000 net new jobs. Our net debt-to-GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7 by far. Whether it is family finances, running a small or large business or running the finances of the entire nation, what we do before and during the economic slump is a good indicator of how bright the future will be. That is why economic action plan 2012 builds on our successful approach. It is a clear plan to make effective and targeted investments to support world-leading research, innovation and entrepreneurship. It supports an ambitious trade expansion plan and puts into place a globally competitive business tax regime. It is also why we are focused on implementing economic action plan 2012 now.

For example, our Conservative government in the past has reduced the general tax rate from 22% in 2007 to 15% in 2012 and cut the small business rates to 11%, while raising the small business threshold to \$500,000. That is more than \$60 billion in tax relief for job-creating businesses. What does this all mean? KPMG says that business tax costs in the U.S. are 55% higher than in Canada. *Forbes* magazine says that Canada is the best country in the world to invest and grow a business. Canada has gone from being the least tax competitive G7 country to being the most competitive now. That is from 2005 to now.

So what does this mean on the ground? As I mentioned, it is almost 700,000 new jobs since July 2009. For those who are the proud beneficiaries of one of those 700,000 jobs, it means food on the table, the ability to pay their mortgage and to provide a bit more for their family.

Government Orders

Canada has regained all the output lost during the recession. Business investment in Canada is projected to reach record highs, well beyond pre-recession investments. In addition, we have removed over one million low-income families altogether from the tax rolls. We are cutting taxes in every possible way we can. We have targeted personal income taxes and cut them to the lowest tax rates. We have extended the hiring credit for small businesses. We have increased the amount Canadians can earn tax free. We have provided seniors with the much-needed ability to split their pension income. Most notably, though, we reduced the GST from 7% to 5%. That is something that helps all Canadians every day, every time they make a purchase. It puts approximately \$1,000 back into the pockets of the average Canadian family. With this plan, total savings for the average Canadian family are approximately \$3,100. Our government has cut taxes over 140 times since Conservatives took office, to the lowest point in almost 50 years.

This next subject is close to my heart as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Budget 2012 is a clear victory for our veterans. I have had the great opportunity to travel across the country to hear the priorities of our veterans. We made a commitment to maintain all benefits to veterans and budget 2012 delivers on that promise.

Our government is also increasing health care transfers to the Province of Ontario by 6%. That is at a time when Ontario says it will only increase its health care spending by 2%. We are delivering more for Ontario. That is this Conservative government delivering for the people of Ontario.

I am very proud to stand in support of economic action plan 2012.

• (1340)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the remarks by the parliamentary secretary because she talked about the bill as if it were about most of the things she was talking about today. However, it is curious that a bill that spends one-third of its time on environment deregulation was not even mentioned in her speech. A bill that provides for major changes in the employment insurance program, which will allow further changes in benefits without any reference back to Parliament, was not mentioned. The abandonment of federal responsibilities for fish habitat, which is very important for employment in sport and commercial fishing in my region, was not mentioned. The elimination of the Inspector General of CSIS, a very important part of the civilian oversight of CSIS, was not mentioned, nor were cuts to emergency preparedness, the raising of the old age security age and reductions in the coverage of federal contractors' employment equity.

The things she talked about, wonderful themes the government likes to put in its talking points, were not actually the stuff that we find in the bill before us today.

I wonder if she would like to comment on some of the actual content of the bill.

Ms. Eve Adams: Mr. Speaker, I would be delighted to do so. Perhaps if the hon. member had listened to my speech, I did in fact talk about transformative change in our departments and ensuring that we have long-term prosperity for future generations. That is exactly what we are doing with the OAS.

We continue to have a growing seniors population. As they continue to age, we will have fewer and fewer workers providing tax dollars to support their pension incomes and their health care costs. We need to take measured, prudent steps today to ensure the long-term sustainability of our programs.

This is exactly what our government is doing. We are acting today in order to ensure long-term prosperity for this generation and for future generations.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no seniors crisis. There is no need for the government to look at increasing the age for OAS from 65 to 67. The government knows that. The Parliamentary Budget Officer knows that. There is no justification for increasing the age of retirement in Canada from 65 to 67.

In the budget, the government says it will cut 19,000 jobs. Many of those jobs will be the types of jobs that provide services to vulnerable Canadians from coast to coast. That is the real impact this budget will have.

The government has chosen to bring in time allocation, and this is not the first time. We can talk about back-to-work legislation for unions at Canada Post. We can talk about Air Canada back-to-work legislation. We can talk about the pooled pension program and the Canadian Wheat Board. In endless legislation, the government has brought in time allocation to prevent legitimate, good, solid debate in the House of Commons. Instead, we have a minister who wants to pay \$16 for a cup of orange juice.

The government's priorities are all wrong. When will the government bring in the type of legislation that will deal with our environment through the front door as opposed to the—

Ms. Eve Adams: In fact, Mr. Speaker, our priorities are squarely focused on the priorities of Canadians, average Canadians who are struggling to meet their bills, struggling to make their mortgage payments, struggling to ensure that their children can go to hockey practice or soccer practice. These are people who work every day and then sit in their car and commute back home. They are focused on putting groceries on the table. That is why we have reduced taxes in every possible way we can. That is why we want to ensure that money is left in the pockets of average Canadians to spend on their priorities.

I do not believe that we can tax our way to prosperity. I do not believe any government can do so. Our record speaks strongly to that. Our country is the most successful country coming out of this recession.

If the opposition members have serious concerns about helping Canadians, they would stand in support of the budget.

Government Orders

• (1345)

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter the debate, but not so pleased to see that we are again faced with time allocation, especially when we are debating a bill that is so big. All too frequently time allocation seems to be the habit of the Conservative government, which decides it will simply crunch everything in. This is not a four-page bill, as some of them are; this is 400 pages that impact not only the budget but a multitude of other agencies and regulations, and it will dramatically change many areas.

I would like to share my time with the hard-working hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

In earlier comments the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca talked about this tale. I believe the member for Ottawa South asked him to please explain what the tale was about. I do not mean the tail on a donkey; I mean the tale with “e”, which is more like *Aesop's Fables*. He talked about the NGOs and charitable organizations that are going to be impacted because of their charitable status and that foreign oil companies will get them to do their bidding, especially when it comes to his riding of Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

I had a quick peek to see which foreign oil companies he was referring to. They are BP p.l.c., which I believe is a British company; Chevron, which I believe is an American company; ConocoPhillips; Exxon Mobile Corporation; Imperial Oil; Korea National Oil Corporation; Nippon Oil; Royal Dutch Shell; and Sinopec, the state company of China. They are not actually donating money to charities to get them to engage in destroying our energy policy; they are mining the oil sands. Why on earth would they ever give money to other folks to stop them from doing the very thing they are doing?

There are more foreign national companies in the oil sands than one can count. That is okay; no one says that is a bad thing, but for the member to suggest that somehow foreign companies are trying, through the back door of an environmental group with a charitable status, to lobby to stop what is happening when they are indeed doing it is the height of incredulity. Who would believe it for a second?

Clearly it was a bit of a fable. Maybe it was a mixed metaphor. Maybe that is what it was. Maybe I just did not quite get the mixed metaphor about the foreign oil companies that are actually mining. Bless them, they are entitled to do that. This country is a trading nation, and they can come here if they play by the rules. It is a little unfortunate that the state oil company of China made sure it got a sweetheart deal to ship out raw bitumen and did not actually create jobs in Alberta for Albertans or, better still, in Sarnia for Ontarians. I leave that to the Conservatives to defend, because clearly that is not something we did.

I have heard from the other side that when it comes to OAS, we have this demographic bump, which I happen to be part of. I am at the tail end of the baby boomers. There are others in the House who are at the front end of the baby boomers, but we all know that there is this demographic bump. However, it is a bump; it is not forever. It is a bump. When we are finished with the bump and go back to the other end—a little piece beyond the bump, because we will all, unfortunately, meet our maker—that group will be gone, and we do not have another baby boomer group after that. Is the government now suggesting that once that happens, there will be no reason for

the retirement age to be 67 and we will go back to 65 when that group is gone?

Clearly it is about planning for the demographic that existed and that everyone knew about. Back in the 1960s, everybody knew there was a demographic called the baby boomers. Now a plan should be put in place, and the plan does not need to include retiring at age 67. Most actuaries across this country have said that it is not needed, that it can be financed, that it can be done properly if we make the choice.

• (1350)

Over and over again I have heard my colleagues on the other side say there will be fewer people working to support seniors, as if seniors do not pay taxes. There is this misbegotten belief that when one becomes a senior, it is a tax-free holiday for the rest of one's life. That is not true. Seniors pay into the system like everyone else, but they are made to sound as if they are some sort of parasite on the system, drawing money out and not actually doing anything for the country. I find that a very difficult thing to swallow, because clearly these are the folks who built this great country; we should have respect for them, but I really believe that has not happened.

I would say to the government that there is no legitimate, logical, rational reason to go to age 67, but then again, that would not quite go with its policy, would it? Still, there is no need to go to 67. There is no need to do it and there is no sense in doing it. The government should leave the age at 65.

The one thing that is rational and logical and the one thing that absolutely will happen is that when seniors living in poverty get to the age of 65, they will live in poverty until they are 67 because of what the government is doing. That indeed will be the reality for them. However, that reality does not need to happen, and the government should prevent it from happening by amending the bill and making sure that the age is kept at 65. I would ask the government to do that.

One of the things in the bill reminded me of the days in the province of Ontario when we had a Conservative provincial government back in the 1990s, led by a premier called “Harris”. I remember a number of folks from that government because I get to see some of them here. There are cabinet ministers in this place who were cabinet ministers in that place. I believe in 1995, or it might have been the spring of 1996, one of the first bills that Mr. Harris created was an omnibus bill that changed regulations and the face of Ontario for the worse. It attacked the poor and went after everyone else. Now we see it again. It is déjà vu all over again.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Who was the leader of that government before that?

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Actually, the leader of the government before that is now a Liberal. Things change in life. At some point in time, leaders decide to do other things.

Government Orders

One of the things that bothers me a great deal in the bill is about the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and people need to be concerned because things get hidden in the bill. On the surface of it, many aspects of this agency appear to be on their way to being privatized, which sets a dangerous precedent.

Sheila Weatherill, who was hired by the Conservative government to look at CFIA, said that part of the reason the listeriosis crisis broke out was that there were not enough public inspectors doing the work that needed to be done to keep our food safety system and keep our food safe. She recommended that be changed. To give credit to the government, it decided to make the change, but now it is going back on those changes.

The government is moving backwards. It would take us back to a place before the listeriosis crisis of 2008, a place where the food inspection system would not be as rigorous as it should be and would not live up to the standards that Canadians expect or think it is, which is even worse. When Canadians think they have a certain standard in place and it turns out not to be true, they lose faith in the system.

On the labelling piece, as it starts to unravel, if there is a complaint or health concern about a label, I am not sure who the contact would be, but I guess it would be a 1-800 number. People would call 1-800-something to say that they did not like the label. The response might be, "Are you validated to complain about that label?" Of course, the answer would be no, they are not validated, and therefore they would no longer have a complaint. If someone called CFIA, they would say, "Sorry, we do not do that anymore. We have handed that off." Whom would we call for health and safety complaints about labelling and food? Would it be a call centre? Where would it be and how would it be staffed? Would it be staffed with folks who just follow a chart that says if the question is Y, answer X, or if the response is Q, make it a P? Who knows?

Clearly this government has rammed a whack of legislation into a budget bill and made it an omnibus bill, which it did not have to do. Oversight is needed, whether on environmental regulations, CFIA or the multitude of other things in the bill. The government could have brought the budget implementation bill, which would have taken care of the piece that it is required to do, and we could then have debated the other legislation piece by piece. We could have had an honest, open debate in a democratic fashion and not be faced with time allocation.

• (1355)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I admire greatly the work the member does in this House, particularly in the area of agriculture.

I know that the hon. member shared my concerns, and many Canadians' concerns, when the government snubbed its nose at existing law that required that it consult with farmers on the Wheat Board, and when the government snubbed its nose at the order of the court that it ought to obey the law.

The hon. member heard the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca basically saying, and encouraging, that we should now spend millions of dollars for Revenue Canada to investigate the very organizations that are going to help small communities, first nations

and Métis settlements to intervene in the review of major projects that might impact them.

As I have mentioned in the House previously, there actually is an obligation on the Government of Canada, a commitment, to provide advance notice of an opportunity for consultation, for anybody in North America who might have a concern with the proposed new environmental law.

I am wondering if the member shares my concerns about not just the content of this bill but the manner in which the government is bringing these matters before this House.

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona. I note her great work and the great career she has had in the environmental movement, working on behalf of all of us across this land. She deserves a great deal of credit.

The member is absolutely right about process. There is no reason to stuff this bill with environmental protection regulations that are going to be done away with. There is no excuse for it. There was no need for it. It is absolutely reprehensible that it has actually happened. It should not have occurred.

When it comes to the environment, one of the things I have learned, and I am not an environmentalist, far from it, is that the air we breathe around here moves from somewhere else and the water that goes through that stream moves from somewhere else. We cannot build a wall around that environment and say we are living in the bubble.

What is done here or over there will indeed impact where we are here. That is a troubling piece, when all of that impact can have not only a hemispheric piece, an interaction, but indeed a global piece. As we used to say, think globally, act locally.

At the end of the day, it is about how we act. It is not about how we have inaction. It needs to be action. This is about to bring us inaction, and that is not a good start.

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my colleague speak, he brought up the issue of food safety and I am very glad he did.

I believe the member is facing a dilemma, because he and his associates asked that we do more for food safety. I am happy to tell him what he probably already knows, that there is an additional \$51 million in this budget for food safety, to enhance our food safety systems.

I am so interested in knowing exactly how this member will vote. I already saw how he voted on the budget, but as I told him during question period, he has an opportunity to redeem himself during these budget implementation votes. He can vote in favour of additional funding for food safety, just as he has been asking for.

How does the member respond to that?

Statements by Members

Mr. Malcolm Allen: Mr. Speaker, I did not realize I had gone that far down the list that I needed to be redeemed. If I need redemption, I hope my hon. colleague will help me find it. It is probably a horse running in the fourth, but then again Fort Erie is closing the slots and that may actually do away with the raceway, so there may not be any horses there anymore.

It is abundantly clear, and this parliamentary secretary knows it, that this one-term funding that has been dropped in for this one budget year will disappear. He knows it and so does the minister. It will disappear. The budget will decrease, along with the agriculture budget, which got hit by 10%.

If anybody needs to redeem themselves, I would suggest it is my hon. colleague across the way and the minister who allowed the agriculture budget not to be trimmed but to have a meat cleaver taken to it. It had its arm chopped off to the tune of 10%-plus.

That is where redemption ought to be for farmers. It ought to be for that minister and that parliamentary secretary to stand up for farmers and fight to get that money back to make sure that farmers across this country are looked after, protected and well maintained. That did not happen through this minister and parliamentary secretary.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

KITCHENER RANGERS

Mr. Peter Braid (Kitchener—Waterloo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate and to pay tribute to Steve Bienkowski, winner of the Lions Club 2011 Citizen of the Year award for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Steve is the chief operating officer of the Kitchener Rangers and the impetus behind their ongoing success over the past decade. The Kitchener Rangers may be out of the playoffs, but they are still winners in our community.

Under Steve's leadership, the Rangers have become strong community partners, making important contributions to our region's economy and generous donations to local charities.

In addition, the team's emphasis on player participation in the community reinforces the hockey heritage of our region and provides role models for aspiring young players and fans.

Please join me in saluting Steve Bienkowski and thanking him for his outstanding contributions.

* * *

RANDY KAPASHESIT

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great leader and a good personal friend, Randy Kapashesit, chief of MoCreebec on Moose Factory Island. The people of the James Bay are shocked that a leader who had so much vision was taken from us so suddenly.

Randy was an advocate for aboriginal equity. His vision for sustainable cultural and economic development for the MoCreebec people involved the building of co-operative housing and the immensely successful Ecolodge at Moose Factory.

Randy also had an international vision. He worked with the United Nations North American Indigenous Peoples Caucus. He was planning for the 2014 conference.

However, Randy also loved music, ideas and people. Whenever we were in the presence of Randy, we knew we were in the presence of someone who was very profound and special.

I am deeply sorrowful that I cannot be there with his family and community as they say goodbye. However, on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to his partner Donna, his children Waseyabin and Ajuawak and the people of the Moose Factory region who have lost a great leader.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, international trade is truly a kitchen table issue. It means opportunities for Canadian business and for Canadian jobs.

More than 60% of Canada's annual income and the jobs of one in five Canadians are generated by trade. Canada's advantage is enhanced by strong people-to-people ties with countries around the world.

Canadian business, including those in my riding of Etobicoke—Lakeshore, applaud measures taken by our Conservative government, including the signing of trade agreements with Panama, Costa Rica, Jordan, Honduras, Columbia and Peru and the modernizing of free trade agreements with Chile and Israel; the pursuit of new trade agreements with the European Union, India, Japan, Morocco, Ukraine and the great trading nations of the Pacific rim; the beyond the border initiative to streamline trade with the U.S.A., our largest trading partner; the lowering of corporate taxes, making Canada a preferred country to establish headquarters and create jobs; and maintaining the lowest deficit and debt ratios in the G8, underpinned by the world's most stable financial sector.

We have expanded opportunities for Canadian businesses, Canadian young people and Canadian families.

* * *

HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I attended an event at Nathan Phillips Square, organized by members of Toronto's Vietnamese community, specifically the Vietnamese veterans.

The ceremony was intended to help commemorate and remember those who have given so much in the name of national service. It highlighted the differences that make us unique, but more important, it helped us to pay tribute to the qualities and the goals that unite and cause us to work co-operatively for a better tomorrow.

Statements by Members

In effect, the ceremony called upon the Vietnamese government to respect basic human rights and it called upon Canada's government to redouble its efforts to show leadership on this issue. These are qualities that all Canadians can support.

Because of this, I would like to extend a special note of congratulations and thanks to all of those who work tirelessly to advance this positive message of peace, collaboration and justice for all.

* * *

2012 RBC CUP

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday, Canada's national Junior A hockey championship will commence in Humboldt, Saskatchewan. One hundred and thirty-three teams from 10 leagues make up the Canadian Junior Hockey League and all start their season with the goal of making it to the RBC Cup. These teams represent the best of hockey in small-town Canada, a place where people play for the love of the game.

This year, the tournament is being hosted by the town of Humboldt, whose Humboldt Broncos will show the Woodstock Slammers, the Soo Thunderbirds and the Penticton Vees the same thing they recently showed the Portage Terriers: how hockey is really meant to be played.

The Broncos, who have twice won the national Junior A hockey championship, are an active part of the community. They love their fans and Humboldt loves its Broncos. That is the key. The Broncos will defeat the Slammers, clobber the Thunderbirds, upend the Vees and embarrass the Terriers, not just with superior hockey skills, though that will soon be evident, but they will win the RBC Cup because they have the greatest hockey fans in the country, fans who will provide the heart necessary for victory.

Congratulations to Humboldt and its great volunteers for hosting the RBC Cup.

* * *

● (1405)

[Translation]

MEFLOQUINE

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the courage and determination of Sonia Scalzo, a constituent in Joliette who, for the past six years, has been working hard to raise awareness among Canadians about the military's use of the internationally controversial anti-malarial drug mefloquine.

The drug is meant to prevent malaria, but it can have serious side effects for some people, including hallucinations, anxiety and aggression.

The United States stopped systematically prescribing this drug to its soldiers in 2009, but we continue to administer it to our Canadian troops.

After Ms. Scalzo's lonely six-year battle and seven refusals by the Canadian Forces ombudsman to investigate mefloquine, I am joining her in calling for a thorough review of this important issue.

I want to thank her for her exemplary courage. Her tenacity is an inspiration to all the soldiers and military families who have been affected by mefloquine.

* * *

[English]

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one needs look no further than the riding of York Centre, the riding I am privileged to represent, for evidence that our Conservative government's policies have created an environment in Canada for business and manufacturing to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Bombardier, the single largest employer in the GTA, whose airplane manufacturing plant is located in Downsview Park, has reached an agreement with WestJet to supply 20 Q400 planes for WestJet's newly created regional carrier, with the option for an additional 25 aircraft.

WestJet chief executive Gregg Saretsky said "The Q400 won out because it flies fast, it can fly longer range and we can get more people on the aircraft...".

I am proud to represent a riding that demonstrates the quality of Canadian innovation and manufacturing. This is just one example of the benefits our government's policies are having on creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Both NDP and Liberal job-killing tax hikes would raise the cost of manufacturing and drive investment and jobs elsewhere.

I congratulate Bombardier on its achievement, and I look forward to continued success under economic action plan 2012.

* * *

BEEF INDUSTRY

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this week the Canadian Cattlemen's Association hosted the Alberta Beef Producers to meet with members of Parliament and continue working closely with our Conservative government developing policy to enhance Canada's beef industry.

Canadian beef producers are moving ahead. The industry is growing and poised to fill all those orders that our Minister of International Trade and Minister of Agriculture are securing around the world.

The cattlemen appreciate the advance payments program our government provided. They support the government's entry into the trans-Pacific partnership negotiation. They support our efforts to secure free trade with Japan and increase the age limits for Canadian beef.

Beef producers support our efforts to get them unlimited duty-free access to the European Union market and the 500 million customers that my constituents and producers in Crowfoot are determined to feed.

Statements by Members

Canada's cattle producers, and the ones in my riding as well, appreciate having input into our government's policy-making process. The government is listening.

* * *

GREAT PLACES IN CANADA COMPETITION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Parkdale—High Park in Toronto is home to many vibrant, culturally rich and engaged neighbourhoods. I am proud to call myself a resident and representative of these neighbourhoods.

I rise today to recognize the achievement of one neighbourhood in particular. In the Canadian Institute of Planners' Great Places in Canada competition, Roncesvalles Village is now one of eight finalists selected from a field of ninety submissions.

The community organized, worked together and cast more than 200,000 votes in support of its neighbourhood being the best in Canada.

I want to congratulate the residents of Roncesvalles Village on building their community with strong social engagement. Roncesvalles is without doubt really one of the best neighbourhoods in Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

POLISH CONSTITUTION DAY

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is Polish Constitution Day. On May 3, 1791, Poland adopted Europe's first democratic constitution only four years after the Constitution of the United States was signed.

Soon after its adoption, Poland would lose its freedom to foreign occupation. However, the Constitution of May 3 would continue to serve as a symbol of freedom, democratic rights and the fight for Polish independence.

Today May 3 is celebrated as a national holiday in Poland, where major streets and monuments throughout the country are dedicated to its memory.

Here in Canada, Polish Canadians reflect on the long-standing historic legacy of the fight for liberty and democracy. They also celebrate the fact that Canada reflects those same values and that Poland is now a free and prosperous European ally.

I join with Polish Canadians in celebrating this holiday and would like to take this opportunity to remind Canadians that we must always stand on guard for individual freedoms and always resist the forces that seek to limit it.

* * *

[Translation]

DANIEL LAROUCHE

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 29, Daniel Larouche passed away. He was the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada representative for the workers at the Stadacona mill in Quebec City.

Mr. Larouche made a name for himself during the painful labour dispute at White Birch Paper, where he worked selflessly representing the Stadacona mill workers.

Former Stadacona CEO André Sarasin described Mr. Larouche as a credible, trustworthy person with an intelligent approach to the issues. Renaud Gagné, vice-president of CEP-Quebec, said Mr. Larouche was a craftsman and everyone at CEP is mourning his loss.

I saw Daniel Larouche on several occasions. I am sorry to see this man, who was so dedicated to and respected by the workers he represented, leave us just a few short years before his well-deserved retirement.

I want to offer my sincere condolences to the love of his life, Ginette Bouffard, his children, Katherine-Sarah and Thomas, and all his fellow workers.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to positive measures that focus on employment, growth and long-term prosperity.

Unfortunately, on the NDP side, it does appear as though the MPs have not yet fully understood their role, since many of them remain voiceless, while others continue to party, even paying for clowns on the taxpayers' dime. Worse still, their leader dared to describe public servants as "racist", when they are simply doing their jobs. He is setting quite an example for the new MPs.

The leader of the NDP and his apprentice MPs are great at improvising. They have a long way to go before discovering successful economic policies for the Quebec and Canadian economy.

Only a strong, stable Conservative government under the leadership of our Prime Minister was able to pull Canada out of this economic crisis with dignity. Our government will continue doing what is necessary to create jobs and return to a balanced budget.

* * *

[English]

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark World Press Freedom Day reminding us of the profound importance of freedom of expression, the lifeblood of democracy, consecrated as a core freedom in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international law, while the rise of the Internet and social media have underpinned and propelled the Arab Spring.

Yet we cannot ignore the obverse side, the criminalization of freedom of expression, as in the case of Egyptian blogger Maikel Nabil, or the targeting and murder of journalist Marie Colvin in Syria, or the establishment of an Internet firewall, as in Iran, to quarantine Internet freedom, or that the same Internet that transports the best of free speech also transports the worst of assaultive speech, including even state-sanctioned incitement to genocide, thereby warranting remedy and sanction.

[Translation]

Let us join together in celebrating World Press Freedom Day in the hope that freedom of expression will be protected, that journalists who are imprisoned for exercising it will be released, and that those who attack this freedom will be held accountable.

* * *

[English]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Brian Jean (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP leader has a history of making inaccurate remarks. He leads his party by example with over-the-top attacks on government policy and unnecessary personal attacks on members of Parliament. The leader of the NDP will do absolutely anything to make the news, even if that means misleading Canadians.

On Monday, he misled Canadians by saying that there were two sets of books for the F-35s. That is absolutely ridiculous. In reality, the deputy minister of National Defence testified to Parliament stating, “we just had one set of books”.

Canadians want to know when the NDP leader's baseless smear campaign will end.

Maybe it is the NDP that has two sets of books: one to sell Canadians on voting NDP and the second, after being elected, to undermine Canadian jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

* * *

•(1415)

[Translation]

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Press Freedom Day, and the NDP would like to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives while keeping us informed.

Even now, around the world, many publications are censored or banned because of their content or because they campaign for greater freedom and democracy.

Freedom of the press is the cornerstone of every democratic society, and Canada is no exception. In fact, Canada should be a leader in respecting basic rights, such as freedom of the press.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives are venturing into dangerous territory. They value ideology over facts and refuse to listen to environmental and financial experts. The Prime Minister's Office protects information as though it were the crown jewels.

Never has a government allowed journalists so little access to information. Maybe it is trying to prevent all of its scandals from being exposed.

The NDP is against such a blatant lack of transparency toward journalists and, by extension, the Canadian public.

Oral Questions

The NDP will remain vigilant to ensure that journalists' freedom of expression is respected and protected.

* * *

[English]

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, virtually every day, the NDP makes an over-the-top characterization about government policy, unwarranted personal attacks and exaggerated claims. The NDP's willingness to accuse without proof and without hesitation reflects a deeper rot within that party.

Just this week, the NDP's new leader stood in his place and made a baseless smear about highly trained public servants. He claimed that these highly trained public servants were making immigration decisions based on race. I would ask for the proof behind this baseless allegation but we all know, as always, there is no proof.

The leader of the NDP will do absolutely anything to make the news, even if that means misleading Canadians. Canadians want to know when the NDP's baseless smear campaign will end.

While the NDP is playing its schoolyard games, we will continue to focus on what matters most to Canadians: jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last month, the Conservatives changed their parliamentary report on plans and priorities with regard to the F-35. The first version of the report indicated that the purchase of the aircraft had been approved by cabinet; however, a new version, which they changed retroactively, states that cabinet has not approved this purchase.

Why did the Conservatives want Canadians to think that the purchase of this aircraft had been approved and why did they change their story?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the government has not signed a contract to purchase these aircraft. We have been clear. We will await the results of the improved oversight process, implemented as result of the Auditor General's report, before purchasing such aircraft.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the official excuse is that it was a typographical error. The Conservatives want us to believe that someone typed the word “definitions” when he or she actually meant to type two words “options analysis”.

Are there any other typographical errors about the F-35s that the government would like to make the House aware of? For example, when it told Parliament that the plane would cost \$14.7 billion but cabinet thought the plane would cost \$10 billion more, was that just a typing error?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I think has been made very clear, \$15 billion has been the estimate of the acquisition and maintenance costs. In any case, the government has been very clear and the facts have been on the record for years that the government has not signed a contract and has not bought any aircraft. None of that is even remotely planned until the current aircraft reach the end of their useful life in the later part of this decade.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General showed that the government did not provide information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. The deputy minister of National Defence said today that he provided the full costing of the F-35s to the Minister of National Defence, the full \$25 billion. Why was that information not passed on to Parliament?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deputy minister made it quite clear. If the member were actually reading the deputy minister's testimony she would see that the deputy minister made it clear that the information was presented in the way that it has always been presented over many decades, long before this government came to office.

The more important point in the Auditor General's report is that the Auditor General has questioned the reliability of some of these numbers, which is why the government has committed to re-examining this matter before proceeding.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish the Conservatives cared more about the mental health of the Canadian Forces than about covering their tracks on the F-35s.

A report on mental health services at the base in Petawawa described the situation as a crisis. It says, "They should not have to fight for services, or wait in the desert of their minds hoping help will come soon". The situation will only get worse when the government closes a mental health facility on July 1 and cuts other front line mental health workers.

Will the government reverse this plan and give the members of our Canadian Forces the help they need and deserve?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is relocating a clinic to Petawawa to ensure that soldiers, their families and those in need of mental health counselling will have closer access and better access to that treatment.

In fact, the member opposite, as so often is the case in this place, is simply wrong. Lieutenant Colonel Sean Blundell, a family doctor and commanding officer in the area has said, "We are not under budgetary restraints".

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the report states that the Petawawa mental health system is broken, struggling to provide even basic care, with people waiting four months just to see a medical professional. It reads:

Our soldiers who fought for the freedom of children, mothers, fathers, grandchildren and all others in far away countries...are worthy of quality mental health services.

However, the situation is not unique to Petawawa. After a year in which suicides of Canadian Forces members nearly doubled from

the previous year, and with so many suffering from PTSD, how can the government cut Canadian Forces mental health services with so many men and women requiring this assistance?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will bring this into the realm of reality. The Canadian Forces have in fact increased the number of mental health services. In fact, we now have over 378 full-time mental health professionals. We are working to hire more, to double the overall number since taking office in 2006.

When compared with our NATO allies, studies have told us that the Canadian Forces now have the greatest ratio of mental health care workers of any soldiers in NATO. We will continue to invest in the 24 integrated personal support units across the country and we will continue to work with departments like Veterans Affairs and others. The member and his party have opposed every one of those steps.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the deputy minister of National Defence said that the Auditor General got it wrong. This is consistent with the Auditor General's report that said that both DND and Public Works disagreed with his conclusion that they had shown a lack of due diligence.

Yet in recent weeks five ministers in the front row, including the Prime Minister, said that they agreed wholeheartedly with the recommendation and the conclusion of the Auditor General.

Who is wrong? Is it the deputy minister about the Auditor General being wrong, or is it the Prime Minister who said that he agreed with the Auditor General?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the one who has it wrong is actually the Liberal Party. This is not what the deputy minister said. I would encourage the members to actually fully read his testimony. The thing he has quoted is a very specific item that is not a general comment.

The government has accepted the report of the Auditor General and is acting on those recommendations.

[Translation]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the F-35 secretariat has just been renamed the "new Canadian fighter aircraft secretariat". However, we do not know if there will be an open and transparent bidding process.

On the one hand, the Minister of Public Works said, "we've hit the restart button."

On the other hand, last Tuesday, Lieutenant-General Deschamps, Commander of the Royal Canadian Air Force, told us that only one jet had been considered: the F-35, of course.

Who is telling the truth? Is it Lieutenant-General Deschamps, or will there be an open and transparent bidding process?

Oral Questions

•(1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in response to the Auditor General's report, the government has announced that it will take a number of steps before proceeding. We intend to examine all these facts and options before continuing with the process. We have been clear about that.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report makes it very clear that cabinet had F-35 costing very similar to the PBO as long ago as 2010. The deputy minister of National Defence today repeatedly avoided responding to the question of who authorized the release of the lowball number.

If the Prime Minister now accepts the Auditor General's report and its conclusions, it follows that he authorized the release of the lowball number, he authorized the vilifying of the PBO and he misled Parliament and Canadians. Why?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the preamble of that question is completely wrong. As the deputy minister himself has indicated, the data released is consistent with how the Department of National Defence has treated such data in the past.

However, as we said, as a consequence of the Auditor General's report, we are taking a more careful look at all of this costing. We are committed to providing all of the results of that examination to Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time to put an end to this reign of lies and confusion in the F-35 file. The opposition has denounced it, the Auditor General has denounced it and the Parliamentary Budget Officer denounced it again this morning.

When we asked the Parliamentary Budget Officer whether the Conservatives deliberately provided false costs, he clearly answered "yes". If only the Conservative ministers could provide such clear answers.

I will try again. What is the total cost of the F-35s?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the hon. member and all opposition members are the ones causing confusion in this matter.

[*English*]

We have been very clear. We are responding in a comprehensive way to the Auditor General's report. There will be greater transparency, greater ability to report to Parliament and to the public, more oversight and more independence.

Here are a few facts for the member: there is no contract signed and no money spent.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and fine for the Conservatives to try and change their tune, but the fact remains that they did not tell the truth.

Australia and the United States are deferring their F-35 procurement because it is too risky. Japan is going to pay \$10 billion for only 40 F-35s. The price of the F-35s continues to skyrocket every day, but the Conservatives are causing confusion by trying to have Canadians believe that the price is \$10 billion less than the actual cost.

Why are the Conservatives hiding the truth from taxpayers?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, let us be clear on the facts. This is a 15-year memorandum of understanding which Canada has entered into. The obvious intent here is to replace aging CF-18 fighter aircraft in years to come. We are now looking at a more comprehensive way to ensure that there is greater reporting and transparency to Parliament, to the public. This is what the Auditor General has asked for. There is a difference in accounting in terms of how those numbers are arrived at.

There was no money spent, no contract signed, but we will proceed to ensure that the Canadian Forces have the best aircraft to protect our country in the future.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government's answers are making less sense and getting more convoluted daily. At least there are others willing to tell the truth.

Today, when the PBO was asked if the government was seeking to mislead Canadians about the real cost of the F-35s, he gave a clear and simple answer, yes. Is there any minister on that side of the House who is honest enough to stand and take responsibility?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us listen to what the professional public service had to say about that. Deputy Minister Fonberg, in responding to committee this morning about this issue of reporting and numbers given to the PBO, said the following, "To the best of my knowledge we fully responded to the PBO's request". He went on to say, "I don't believe he raised issues with us on a substantive nature of the response, so I'm not sure what conclusions he", the PBO, "was drawing".

•(1430)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I guess the answer is no. No one will take responsibility for misleading Canadians and no one will take responsibility for suppressing information to Parliament's independent watchdogs. Instead, the Minister of National Defence says that buying a fleet of fighter jets is like buying a minivan and, by the way, he has offered accounting tips to the Auditor General, who apparently has it all wrong.

For how much longer will the government keep up the ridiculous claims that the PBO cannot do his job and the AG cannot count?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I do know is that the no-defence party's mini-me is doing his best to confuse Canadians on this file.

Oral Questions

What we know is that the Department of National Defence is moving toward an important procurement to see that we have CF-18 fighter aircraft replaced in the coming years. We have a more comprehensive process in place now in response to the Auditor General. We have responded in a way that will give greater transparency, greater information to Parliament and the public.

There has been no money spent and no contract signed. Canada's interests are protected and so are the interests of the Canadian Forces.

* * *

[Translation]

MINISTERIAL EXPENDITURES

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, of course ministers have to travel. However, it would be nice if they refrained from doing so simply for photo ops with limousines and F-35s. Furthermore, having a driver is not unusual. What is unusual, however, is keeping a driver on standby 24/7, 360 days a year, as the President of the Treasury Board of Canada did.

Hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars are being wasted. Whenever we ask ministers about their lavish lifestyles, they justify this wastefulness by saying they work hard. Well, Quebecers and Canadians also work hard and want value for their money. They also want their government to act responsibly.

When will the ministers start acting accordingly?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member fails to discuss in the House is that standby does not mean drivers get paid for all of that time. In fact, they get paid for one-eighth of the time, which meant 45 days of overtime, not 260 days, as he is trying to allege in the House.

We have a system in place. We have drivers and cars, just like their colleagues do in Manitoba and just like their colleagues do in Nova Scotia, NDP colleagues. If members are going to complain in the House, they should come here with clean hands.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we in the NDP like drivers and workers, whether they are unionized or not. However, unlike the Conservative government, the NDP does not attack their rights. The Conservative caucus is completely shameless.

While essential public services are being axed, the government is spending more and more money on cabinet's every little whim. The Conservatives brag about their fiscal responsibility, but they do not walk the talk. Their limousine parties and \$16 glasses of orange juice prove it.

Would any Conservative minister agree that having limousines on standby is an abuse of power?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for

Northern Ontario, CPC): Today, Mr. Speaker, those members are defending the workers. Yesterday they were condemning the workers for working overtime. That is the hypocrisy on that side.

I will say in the House that we are looking at some changes and we would like to ensure that we can defend the taxpayer better because we believe that change can be positive. In this place:

And the men who hold high places
Must be the ones to start
To mould a new reality
Closer to the heart.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there those members go, another rush to excuses when they get caught.

Last week it was the minister who refused to stay at a five star posh hotel that was not good enough for her. Then we had the outrageous charges for the government chauffeurs. Then we have the Muskoka minister who not only blew through the \$50 million slush fund, but who has a driver at his beck and call 360 days a year.

On talk radio last night, it was asked how often an average Canadian took a limo. People said maybe once, maybe for their prom. Therefore, is every night prom night for Conservative insiders?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is another fly-by-night question. As I have already reiterated, on this side of the House, we would suggest that the hon. member come here with clean hands. We have the Nova Scotia NDP government, cars and drivers and the Manitoba NDP government, cars and drivers. That is the right thing to do in certain circumstances and with the right Treasury Board guidelines, to which we adhere.

The hon. member has not come here with clean hands. What a *La Villa Strangiato*?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think he thinks it is a joke when the government gets caught for abusing taxpayer dollars.

He needs to understand that we are not asking ministers to shack up at the Paradise Motel when they do travel. We are not asking them to travel like common people on the public transit. However, we do expect them to treat taxpayers with respect, just like the New Democratic government in Manitoba does.

I see ministers who get their limo and ride from the bottom of the Hill up to the top of the Hill every day, and that is five minutes. Those Conservatives might talk the talk about accountability, but when will they step out of their limousines and walk the walk?

● (1435)

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that on this side of the House we are new world men and women.

Oral Questions

What I would say for hon. member is that we are adhering to the guidelines, that we are in fact ensuring the guidelines are better. We want to do some changes. This could be one area of the changes.

The fact is the member stands in the House with righteous indignation, but his colleagues and his cohorts use cars and drivers. It is, in the right circumstances, the right thing to do. When will the member stop speaking out of both sides of his mouth?

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to food is about to begin his first ever official mission to a developed country. That country is Canada.

When the rapporteur on housing came to Canada, the result was a scathing report about third world conditions faced by first nations, Métis and Inuit in our country.

The fact is, for far too many of these communities, there is simply not enough food.

Will the minister do his job and agree to meet with the rapporteur to discuss this crisis in Canada?

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to assist first nation communities across the country to expand their economic opportunities and realize their full potential. Through skills training and employment incentives, we have invested significantly in measures to ensure first nations have access to food, shelter and economic opportunity.

We accepted the UN rapporteur's request to come to Canada. Government officials will be meeting with the rapporteur, and we look forward to his report.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with the help of public funding, the Conservatives have amassed a large volume of data about individual Canadians. It is all in their central database, the Conservative information management system known as CIMS: names, addresses, phone numbers, religion, ethnicity, political activity and on it goes.

The risk of abuse is enormous. Who in the government has access to CIMS, and has that database ever been consulted when the government is responding to an access to information request, a grant application or an immigration file, yes or no?

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has asked a question that is out of order.

That being said, I want to give him occasion to rise and explain the activity of the Liberal member for Guelph who has been forced to admit, after—

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Gotcha. We gotcha.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, you can call the member to order whenever you wish.

He has been forced to admit that his activities in the last election deceived his voters by putting a false phone number and a false message in place. He is the one who is engaged in a roboscandal.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the duplicity of the government knows no bounds. While its ministers spend like royalty it looks for so-called efficiencies by surreptitiously cutting programs to the most sick and vulnerable.

Suicides in the Canadian Forces have almost doubled. The current government cut veteran suicide prevention programs and the specialists who treat post-traumatic stress disorder. PTSD causes a lifetime of mental pain and suffering. Can the Minister of National Defence justify these callous cuts as easily as he defends his bloated perks?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, virtually all of what the member has just said is false. We are not reducing, but are in fact increasing, the support for the Canadian Forces members, veterans and their families, as we have done consistently since taking office. We are working toward doubling the number of mental health professionals available to members. We have opened joint personnel support units across the country. We continue to work with the civilian mental health care workers in associations across the country to see that they are able to help our reservists as well as our regular force members. We are very proud of what we have done. We will continue to make those investments.

* * *

● (1440)

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism expressed support for mandatory bilingualism for officers of Parliament. He said, "Very good bill. I can tell you that, personally, I will support it—".

However, two hours later, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages spoke out against the bill, which he deemed "unnecessary". In committee this morning, he did not know if he was for or against it.

Given that his ministers cannot agree, will the Prime Minister provide assurances that the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism's opinion will prevail?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the House that we will fulfill our responsible commitments with respect to official languages. As to the bill he mentioned, which I discussed this morning at the Standing Committee on Official Languages, the government has not yet made a decision.

However, I want to make it clear that it is our government, with our Roadmap for Canada's Linguistic Duality, our appointments and our commitments, that will continue to protect and promote both French and English within the Government of Canada.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is important to take money laundering seriously.

However, the Minister of the Environment's accusations against environmental groups are insulting. This is an unsubstantiated attack against groups that have the support of millions of Canadians.

Accusing environmentalists of laundering money is simply a political vendetta. Revenue Canada is cutting its budget for the investigation of tax fraud but is going to spend more on attacking environmental groups.

Will the minister do the right thing and apologize?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP members abandoned decorum and civility a couple of days ago. Now they have lost their sense of humour. The opposition members can whinge all they want but the fact of the matter is some charitable organizations have allegedly used funds from outside this country inappropriately in regard to their charitable status. They can call it money laundering, they can call it a financial shell game or they could call it three card monte.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, budgets are used to set priorities, and the Conservatives' priority is to waste millions of dollars harassing foundations while cutting the budgets for tax fraud investigations and the RCMP's proceeds of crime program.

The RCMP estimates that \$5 billion to \$15 billion is laundered in Canada each year by real criminals, not environmentalists.

When will this government stop attacking those who disagree with it and target the real criminals?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, almost everything my hon. colleague said is absolutely wrong. As I said, there have been allegations of inappropriate channelling of foreign funds through Canadian organizations that have charitable status. I am glad we caught the attention of the opposition, the general public and the charitable agencies so they can examine their practices and ensure they conform with their charitable status.

[Translation]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are harassing ecologists and slashing funding for oil spill protection and monitoring measures, but that does not solve the problem.

Yet another oil spill has appeared on British Columbia's northern coast. At one kilometre long and 60 metres wide, this catastrophic spill is threatening the community of Hartley Bay.

In 2003, the Conservatives were warned about the growing risk of oil spills. That oil spill appeared two days ago. Can the Conservatives tell us what they have done so far to clean up the mess?

[English]

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): I would be delighted to, Mr. Speaker.

Environment Canada has been notified of the release of a small amount of oil from a Second World War warship sunk off the coast of British Columbia. The Canadian Coast Guard is the lead agency. Environment Canada's national ice service overflowed the site to observe and to report on the release. It appears that this time the environmental impact will be minor as there appears to be less than one litre of oil on the surface. The leak is being patched by divers.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives promised the people of Hartley Bay two years ago to clean up this mess. They are not just failing to protect coastal communities, they are putting them at further risk, all the while cheerleading for raw export of pipelines and supertanker projects.

The government recklessly closed B.C.'s only oil spill response centre. Now it is gutting environmental laws for pipeline and fast-tracking of new threats. Why is the government putting the health and life of coastal communities at risk all in favour of their friends in the oil patch?

● (1445)

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague clearly misunderstands the operational realities of the environmental emergencies office. Environment Canada staff are not first responders. They very seldom attend the site of a pollutant release. They do support the lead agency, be it municipal, provincial, a federal department, be it Transport Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard or the National Energy Board. We will continue to do that. There will be no negative impact from the consolidation of our six offices to two.

*Oral Questions***SEALING INDUSTRY**

Mrs. Tilly O'Neill Gordon (Miramichi, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House have stood in solidarity with Canadian sealers while opposition members have consistently sided with Hollywood activists who would not know a seal if it bit them.

What is the government's reaction to the Liberal senator's recent admonishment of the cultural significance and economic importance of this traditional hunt?

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is yet again another attack by a Liberal senator to try to undermine this safe, humane and sustainable hunt that is vital to coastal communities in northern and eastern Canada.

Members on this side of the House have been unequivocal in our support for the Canadian seal industry. We will not abandon this industry at the behest of opposition parties or irresponsible and out-of-touch animal rights activists. We will continue to put the livelihoods of hard-working Canadian families first.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Press Freedom Day, but on this day of all days, the Minister of Canadian Heritage's new code of conduct for CBC is forcing journalists to become the government's mouthpiece. That is not good.

The code requires employees to "Loyally [carry] out the lawful decisions of their leaders and [support] ministers in their accountability to Parliament and Canadians". Journalistic independence and freedom of the press be damned. This is serious. Journalists who sign on will have to obey the direct orders of the Prime Minister's Office.

How can the Minister of Canadian Heritage look us in the eye and justify that?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my colleague should take a little time to research the facts before writing and asking questions like that. Maybe he should talk to CBC. The policy is an internal one. It has nothing to do with our government. CBC did not ask us for a policy. That decision was made internally.

If he does not believe me, he can write to Hubert Lacroix, CBC's president and CEO. It was not our choice; it was theirs.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it actually gets worse. Not only do journalists have to swear an oath of loyalty, but the chair of the board of the CBC now has to swear an oath of friendship to the minister. Is it really that hard for him to find a friend?

It is World Press Freedom Day today, and we have to remember that the CBC must remain at arm's length to the government.

Why does the Minister of Canadian Heritage need to force the new chair of the board of the CBC to be his buddy?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an utterly ridiculous question. It is an internal decision of the CBC. It has nothing to do with this government. Let us make better use of this time.

Joining us today in Ottawa are the recipients of this year's Governor General Performing Arts Awards. I am very proud to see that the members of Rush are with us in the House of Commons. We welcome them to our political limelight.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. minister should know that it is not up to him to point out guests in the gallery.

• (1450)

[Translation]

The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

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OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, scoring the tradition of independence of journalists and the CBC is not enough for the Conservatives, who are also attacking parliamentary traditions.

When it comes to honouring one long-standing tradition—bilingual officers of Parliament—the Minister of Canadian Heritage could not care less.

Will the minister honour the French language and our parliamentary traditions? Will he support our bill on bilingual officers of Parliament and will he abide by the recommendations made by the Commissioner of Official Languages?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am always surprised by how the NDP members like to talk out of both sides of their mouths when it comes to official languages.

During the election campaign, the NDP nominated unilingual anglophone candidates in francophone ridings in Quebec. At this time, the head of the Public Service Alliance of Canada is a unilingual anglophone. NDP members are always talking out of both sides of their mouths regarding official languages. Our Conservative government is protecting, promoting and investing in Canada's official languages.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us mention the Supreme Court justices.

Yesterday, the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism said that my bill on the bilingualism of officers of Parliament was a very good bill. A few minutes later, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages flatly rejected it. This morning, that same minister flip-flopped and now he has no idea what he wants.

There are two official languages in this country, and officers who serve Parliament should be able to speak both.

Are the Conservatives going to support Bill C-419 or not?

Oral Questions

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are two official languages in Canada, but as I was saying, the hon. member speaks out of both sides of his mouth.

The first time the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst was elected was under the leadership of Alexa McDonough, who did not speak French. He said she was bilingual enough to be the Prime Minister of Canada, but she could not deliver a speech in French.

To hear him tell members of the House of Commons that we do not respect the French fact in Canada is ridiculous.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, budget 2012 continued its war on the environment by scrapping 50 years of protections.

The environment commissioner recently said that “public consultation has always been a bedrock of environmental policy” and “there will be a significant narrowing of public participation”. He also expressed concern about changes to the Fisheries Act.

Does the government have the courage to send these changes to the environment committee to be studied instead of burying them at the finance committee?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there will be every opportunity for the opposition to participate in the finance committee on the debate. The rationale is to permit people with a direct interest in the infrastructure being proposed, which is consistent with the scope of the hearing, to be heard and express their views, as well as those with the expertise to bring something to the hearing so that it can be considered.

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in response to the massive cuts ordered by this hands-off, fend-for-yourself and good-luck-with-that government, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is preparing to put the onus for food labelling inspections on consumers themselves.

What will the government tell the mother of a celiac child when she contacts the CFIA's website to say that her child is sick because the gluten in his or her yogourt or ice cream was not properly labelled?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we think that Canadians should be able to trust labels. The agency immediately acts to recall any mislabelled product that is a threat to human health.

When nutritional claims on labels are found not in compliance, CFIA works with the company to take corrective action.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today SNC-Lavalin will face its shareholders, engulfed by scandal. Money laundering, fraud and corruption are among the shocking allegations facing the company.

A distinguished member of this House once said, “High ethical standards for Canadian enterprise are not up for negotiation”. Do members know who said that? It was the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Will the government be reviewing its business with SNC-Lavalin?

• (1455)

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are very serious allegations being made against this company, and the government will do everything it can to support this investigation.

Canada is party to a number of international agreements, and we have strict laws for companies in Canada. Other governments expect Canadian companies to respect the rules both here in Canada and when operating abroad.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, problems are resurfacing at SNC-Lavalin. Questions were raised when the company built a prison for Gadhafi. Now we have learned that the problem could be much bigger. There is talk of millions of dollars in bribes to senior managers in North Africa. In addition, Swiss authorities were the first to take action.

My question is simple: were the Conservatives asleep at the switch, or did they have their heads buried in the sand?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, these are very serious allegations being made against this company, and the government will do everything it can to support this investigation.

I will repeat again that other governments expect Canadian companies to respect the rules, both here in Canada and when operating abroad.

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STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, Canada was shocked to learn of the case of Shaima Jastaina, a Saudi citizen who was arrested for the simple act of driving a car. Saudi Arabia remains the only country in the world where women are not allowed to drive, a routine act for most women in any democracy.

Today we have been informed that the 10 lashes sentence received by Ms. Jastaina has been dropped.

Would the parliamentary secretary please update this House on Canada's reaction to these latest developments?

Mrs. Susan Truppe (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are extremely pleased by reports that Shaima Jastaina's sentence has been dropped.

From the outset, Canada has fully supported the cause of Saudi women. In fact, during his trip to Saudi Arabia in March of this year, the Minister of Foreign Affairs raised this important issue with the Saudi foreign minister and the president of the Human Rights Commission.

We continue to call on Saudi authorities to review their position on the driving ban and implement the necessary reforms to ensure equality among all their citizens.

* * *

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the budget's language says to cut funding for research at NSERC but to protect industry collaborations, scholarships and discovery grants. However, there is not much left to cut at NSERC. So, the RTI grants will be cut, the source of funding to repair and purchase medium-sized equipment.

Researchers are furious. It is like sending a carpenter to work without a hammer.

Why did the minister force cuts to funding used to fix and buy needed equipment?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that this government has provided investments for science and technology, including equipment, at record levels. Never in the history of our country have scientists in Canada seen so much funding for research, for the buildings in which they work and for the equipment they use.

We have a brain gain because scientists around the world want to do their research here.

The real question is whether the opposition will vote for this kind of support in the budget.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are increasingly worried about the environmental impact of hydraulic fracturing in the shale gas industry. Even though this is mainly a provincial matter, the minister has confirmed that the federal government has some responsibilities under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. That is exactly what the Conservatives want to eliminate by attacking environmental impact assessments in their budget.

Does the government realize that it has a duty to protect the public from the harmful effects of shale gas?

Hon. Peter Kent (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is false, absolutely false.

[English]

I would remind my colleague that the primary responsibility for shale gas rests with the provinces and territories except, as he said, where it might be found on federal land. We are continuing to accumulate data and the latest scientific information on this

legitimate resource practice. We will continue to work with the provinces and territories.

* * *

● (1500)

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the fair and equitable tax treatment of all Canadians. Our Minister of National Revenue has been working hard to ensure that Canadians are treated in a fair and respectful manner by CRA. It was this government that introduced the taxpayer bill of rights as well as the Office of the Taxpayers' Ombudsman to provide Canadians with a clear statement of their service rights and a venue to voice concerns.

I understand that the minister has recently become aware of some troubling videos that do not meet our high expectations of CRA staff. I would ask her to inform this House of the steps she has taken to address this.

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was recently made aware of some very troubling videos that have been made using CRA resources. I find these videos totally disrespectful to Canadian taxpayers. This is certainly not how CRA officials are trained.

I have asked CRA senior management to investigate and take appropriate disciplinary measures immediately. I have also asked the Taxpayers' Ombudsman to review all CRA training videos and to ensure that they respect taxpayers' rights.

We demand professionalism from CRA employees and this type of behaviour is completely unacceptable.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week, the Minister of Finance said that government would not mandate the use of the banking ombudsman for dispute resolution. This goes against the clear best practices laid out by the World Bank and even G20 consumer protection finance principles that he signed. Instead, banks will be allowed to police themselves, leaving the ombudsman no choice but to close its doors. With this decision, the minister is creating a race to the bottom.

Why are the big banks being put ahead of consumers and small businesses? Will the minister reconsider his decision?

Business of the House

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the requirement now that all federally regulated financial institutions, the banks, have a dispute resolution process. We passed legislation with respect to that. All of the banks do have a dispute resolution process and we are formulating the regulations. As the government, we will make the rules and we expect the banks to follow.

* * *

[Translation]

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, May 3 is World Press Freedom Day. According to UNESCO, it is a day to alert the public and make people more aware of this cause. And so, I am sounding the alarm. A new code of conduct has been imposed on CBC, requiring journalists to support ministers in their accountability to Parliament and Canadians. If journalists fail to abide by this new code of conduct, they may be subject to disciplinary measures up to and including immediate dismissal. This reeks of totalitarianism.

How can the government justify the fact that it is secretly trying to make CBC the new *Pravda*? I am asking the government to allow CBC to maintain its independence. The government already has Sun TV News.

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these allegations are simply false.

* * *

[English]

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 2012 Governor General's Performing Arts Awards: Earlane Collins, Janina Fialkowska, Paul-André Fortier, Geddy Lee, Alex Lifeson, Neil Peart, Des McAnuff, and Deepa Mehta.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would remind hon. colleagues that there will be a reception in room 216 immediately following question period.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hearing the announcement of the reception, I will try to keep this as brief as possible for myself and the government House leader.

We have some questions about what the government plans for the next number of days. First, we would like confirmation from the government on the NDP's next opposition day.

As well, on Bill C-38, the omnibus bill that the government has lumped in a whole suite of quite damaging and fundamental changes, not just to the way Parliament works and the government's procedure of shutting down debate, but also in Canadian life, such as pensions, pay equity and environmental protections, will the five

days remaining for debate be in their full context or is the government planning to introduce other measures of disruption of Parliament's ability to hold the government to account?

● (1505)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the last point, I would say no.

Today we will continue debate on Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, which would implement our budget, economic action plan 2012. As the economy is our government's most important priority, we have ensured that this will be the longest budget debate in the past 20 years. It might have been y much longer than that but that is as far back as we went in our research. This debate will have been longer than every other debate at second reading on a budget implementation bill in the previous two decades. Why is it longer? We think all members of the House should be focused on the economy but we hear very little about it in question period. The economy is our priority. We have ensured that this will be the longest debate in the past 20 years so there will finally be a focus on the importance of the economy, job creation and economic growth.

The bill would implement many important measures from our budget. To recap, the Minister of Finance tabled the economic action plan 2012 on March 29. We then had four days of debate on the budget, three of which, I would remind the NDP House leader, were filled by one member, the NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster who prevented most of his colleagues and all parties from getting a chance to debate the budget. On Wednesday, April 4, the House voted on and approved the budgetary measures put forward by the finance minister. It was then, on Thursday, April 26, that we introduced Bill C-38, the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act, to implement measures that the House approved. On that day, I indicated to the House that we would be having the second reading vote on May 14. We are on track to keep that commitment.

[Translation]

Today is the second of seven days this bill will be debated prior to the second reading vote on May 14. Tomorrow will be the third day. We will continue with the fourth day of debate on Monday, May 7; the fifth day on Tuesday, May 8; the sixth day on Wednesday, May 9; and the seventh day on Friday, May 11.

This ample debate will allow hon. members from all sides of this House an opportunity to put forward their views on this bill, especially since the NDP member for Burnaby—New Westminster will no longer be able to block other MPs from speaking, as he did during the Budget debate.

And finally, Thursday, May 10, will be the third allotted day, for the NDP.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

JOBS, GROWTH AND LONG-TERM PROSPERITY ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the amendment.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to follow my colleague from Welland on this debate. He quite eloquently spoke to the flaws of this bill. I would like to also thank him for his work on the agriculture file and on behalf of farmers.

Just prior to the start of this debate, my colleague from Malpeque and I were discussing how what we are witnessing is a transformation of our country. We were discussing the state of our country, and this omnibus bill, which lumps in all these measures that are chipping away at what many Canadians believe in, is just an example of this. I would go so far as to say that although we speak the same language, we are dividing ourselves into two new solitudes. One is represented by the government side, which represents a minority of citizens in our country, and the other side is represented by this side here, which represents the majority of citizens, citizens who really do not want to see major changes to our social net or to our system.

What are we seeing? We are seeing a government saying that it is all about job creation. At the same time, we are seeing a tremendous loss of public service well-paying jobs. I would like to remind people in the House that especially in our small rural communities, well-paying jobs are the main economic driver. These are the folks who drive the economy. They are the ones who go to restaurants and buy the local cars. They are the ones who keep our communities alive. What we are seeing here is that a lot of these jobs are being cut, and, as I will explain later, it is for no real reason.

Just before I move on, I would like to talk about what I call “union bashing”. We have well-paying jobs in this country, both in the private and public sectors, because we have a labour movement that has worked hard to ensure a high standard. I was talking with some representatives of the Canadian Police Association the other day when they were in town. They told me the reason they have well-paying jobs as police officers is that police officers, with the exception of the RCMP, have unions or associations, and the reason the RCMP has a livable wage is that the bar has been set by people who are represented by unions. At the same time we see Bill C-377, the accountability of unions act, loading a whole bunch of red tape on police associations and other trade unions in the country, which is totally unacceptable.

• (1510)

[Translation]

What are the budgetary consequences of this 2012 budget?

First, there will be at least 19,200 jobs lost in the public service. Second, there will be a total of between 50,000 and 72,000 jobs lost in the economy, including 1,119 jobs lost at the Department of National Defence, 162 fewer trade officers in Canada, 840 layoffs at

Government Orders

Health Canada, 650 layoffs at the CBC, at least 4,800 layoffs in the NCR, 252 layoffs in client service at Veterans Affairs Canada, 100 food inspectors laid off, and I could go on.

[English]

What are we seeing, then? We are seeing that for no reason, the public service, consisting of civil servants who are professionals and do their jobs, is being reduced for what I would submit are ideological reasons. Why are they ideological? I am not sure if people are aware of this, but by the year 2014, the current government, since 2006, will have given the corporate sector over \$220 billion of corporate tax cuts. That is \$220 billion. Let us juxtapose that with raising the age of qualification for pensions to 67 and the hardships that will cause to a lot of seniors on marginal income. Let us juxtapose that with other cuts to the public sector and to the environment.

I would like to also say that choices are made by government. It appears the choice has been to make these drastic cuts to not only the public sector but to our way of life. There is a choice in spending billions of dollars on F-35s or even \$30 million to somehow glorify the War of 1812, which nobody really cares about. We can tell that to pensioners who are trying to make ends meet and see what they have to say about it.

We talk about economic recovery. We talk about the fact that Canada supposedly has led the world economic recovery, whereas research that has been done has shown that two countries have been stronger than Canada in recovering from the economic downturn. One is Sweden, the other Australia.

Let us talk about Sweden, a country where there are no strikes, where everything is done by collective agreement and where the law mandates that labour is represented on corporate boards so that there is a working relationship between government, corporations and labour. Let us talk about a country where there is free tuition, free care for seniors, free child care, over 400 days of paid parental leave per child and full benefits for part-time workers.

If my colleagues in the House are not sure of these statistics, I urge them to see the film *Poor No More*, narrated by Mary Walsh. In the film she takes us to Sweden and compares what is happening here. I know that the argument will be that we want to raise taxes; well, Sweden is a country that has high taxes and provides services, and it is a country where people are working and there is virtually no unemployment.

In a March 29 article entitled “A budget that screws the planet for short-term profits”, Marc Lee, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, stated:

This is a colonial vision of the economy as a quarry for foreign interests. Instead of ensuring development of resources in a manner consistent with real long-term needs like energy security, the [federal government] is open to any foreign investor who wants our resources, and Canadians will politely have to clean up the mess afterwards. While there will be some Canadian jobs in all of this, most of them will be of short duration in the construction phase, but the budget also increases the capacity to bring in temporary foreign workers.

Government Orders

Let us talk about the short-duration jobs.

We here are against the northern pipeline that will send raw bitumen through our territory and to the waters off the coast of British Columbia to Asia. One of the reasons we are against the pipeline is that the jobs that will be created are short term. We are shipping jobs outside of the country. It is interesting to have a government that says we need to create jobs and that at the same time, through its policies, will be shipping jobs outside of the country.

Mr. Lee goes on to say in his article:

Our penchant for planetary destruction just cannot happen fast enough. Under the mantra “one project, one review” environmental considerations will get lumped in with everything else, meaning that review processes for destructive mining and oil and gas projects will be fast-tracked.

Therefore, instead of having a review that looks at and ensures proper oversight of these projects, we will get this fast-tracking.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

I am going to say a few words about the environment as well. At least a third of Bill C-38 is devoted to environmental deregulation. The government is doing everything it said it would do, and more.

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent speech.

The weakening of the Auditor General’s oversight powers is one of the very important elements of this bill.

I would like my colleague to tell us what the consequences of reducing those powers will be.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question and I would like to thank my colleague.

Obviously, if the Auditor General does not have the authority or capacity to do his work, there will be less oversight of what the government is doing. There will not be as much oversight. Less oversight amounts to interfering in the democratic process, and that is what we have already seen, since 2006, with this government.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his speech, which I appreciated enormously.

In this budget, everything possible is being done to exploit natural resources and send them out of the country as fast as possible.

Is the bottom line that this country is for sale? Why are we not doing any primary processing? Why are we not creating value-added jobs?

How would the member answer that question?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague for her question.

The key is pressure from multinationals. This is the government’s policy in response to pressure from multinationals, which do not want us to do any processing in this country and do not want us to have a strong economy in Canada. It benefits them when we send our resources elsewhere, to other countries, where they will be processed at a lower cost because decent wages are not paid there.

● (1520)

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his excellent presentation.

If I recall correctly, the government party’s slogan in the last election was “power to the regions”.

I would like my colleague to go into more detail for us about the consequences this budget will have for the regions, rural communities and the north, because many of the measures being proposed in this budget at present will have a significant impact on those areas.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question and I thank my colleague for it.

What we are seeing here is an attempt to transfer powers to the regions without there being enough money to support what the regions want to do. That means that the responsibility will fall to the provinces, the regional districts. This puts a great deal of pressure on our small rural communities, including the ones I represent.

That is irresponsible, in my opinion.

[*English*]

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House today to speak in support of Canada’s economic action plan 2012. I am pleased to be sharing my time today with my hon. colleague, the member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, who I know is a hard-working and effective representative for his constituents.

A year ago today, during a time of immense global economic challenge, Canadians from coast to coast to coast were asked to make a choice about who would lead them on a path toward jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. On May 2, 2011, they made that choice. They chose our Prime Minister and this government to lead and chart Canada’s path.

Canada’s economic action plan 2012 is a forward looking, dynamic and exciting plan to increase Canada’s competitiveness in a swiftly changing global economy to create jobs for today and those as yet unimagined, to open doors to stable growth and long-term prosperity, all of this while keeping taxes low and returning Canada to balanced budgets over the medium term.

Budget 2012 takes significant steps to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation and world-class research. Budget 2012 improves conditions for business investments and investments in training. Budget 2012 provides for needed infrastructure and vital social programs and services and is there for Canadians.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the residents of Vancouver South, to congratulate our Prime Minister and our Minister of Finance on the careful and considerate measures in the budget. I am excited by what this budget means for Canada. My neighbours, friends and colleagues are also excited about what this budget provides for our province, our communities and our families.

Government Orders

British Columbia is a province of immense potential. We have abundant natural and energy resources. We are culturally diverse and blessed with the potential of an educated and innovative workforce. Through our ports, roads, rail lines and airports, we are the gateway to the Asia Pacific. B.C. is in many ways vital to Canada's future, and Canada's economic action plan makes that future even brighter.

For British Columbians, the budget would increase access to support for business innovation by creating the western innovation program, or WINN, a new program that would provide financial support to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in western Canada. This is exciting news for entrepreneurs and the many new and inventive projects on which they are working. This new program will spur innovation and create jobs for the future.

The people of British Columbia are also excited to note the government's commitment to responsible resource development in the budget. The government is taking steps to modernize the regulatory system for project reviews. By streamlining the review process for major economic projects, projects can proceed in a timely fashion, while still protecting the environment. The realization of one project one review is welcome.

The government, through this budget, has renewed its commitment to the major projects management office initiative by proposing \$54 million over two years to continue to support effective project approvals. Through this initiative, the approvals process for major natural resource projects will become more effective, as the average review will occur within two years instead of the archaic and project killing process currently in place taking 4, 7 or 14 years.

However, the budget is not just about moving projects; it is about effectiveness and balance. This means ensuring that the voices of people who may be affected by potential projects are heard and that the environment is protected. That is why our government is also taking important steps to ensure that the rights and interests of aboriginal peoples are respected and that they benefit from the economic development opportunities. Budget 2012 proposes \$13.6 million over two years to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to support consultations with the aboriginal peoples related to projects assessed under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act.

Furthermore, our government has committed to responsible energy development and to that end will invest \$35.7 million over two years to further strengthen Canada's tanker safety regime and ensure that pipelines in Canada are carefully monitored, environmental consequences are understood and emergency response is improved.

Budget 2012 also proposes \$13.5 million over two years to the National Energy Board to increase the number of inspections of oil and gas pipelines, from approximately 100 to 150 inspections per year, and double from 3 to 6 the number of annual comprehensive audits to identify issues before incidents even occur.

• (1525)

Members of the House should know that the natural resource sector is of vital significance to British Columbians. It is therefore crucial that we move projects forward in a timely, responsible manner. Undue delays cost money, time, lost opportunity and, most

important, jobs. However, what is most important is that the projects can anticipate a consistent approvals process which is conducted in a timely manner, that the rights of our aboriginal ancestors are understood and respected and that our environment is protected and safety regimes strengthened.

Budget 2012 accomplishes all of this as it strives to update Canada's regulatory systems and processes, while balancing Canada's economic and environmental needs.

Canadians and British Columbians are also excited to see our government take direct action to create jobs. That is why, since 2006, the government has placed a strong emphasis on access to skills training, support for post-secondary education, building a fast and flexible economic immigration system and developing untapped potential in the labour market.

Budget 2012 builds on this foundational work with an enhanced labour market focus and a number of targeted investments that will help respond to current labour market needs and challenges and meets longer-term labour market needs as well. The government will introduce measures to streamline processes and increase funding to better integrate and enable access for certain under-represented groups in the labour force, including immigrants, persons with special needs, youth, aboriginal peoples and older Canadians.

As an example, for young Canadians our government has committed to enhancing the youth employment strategy by investing \$50 million over two years to assist more young people to gain the skills and work experience that they need. In addition to enhanced skills, this funding will also help to connect these young people with jobs in areas with skills shortages.

In addition to measures for under-represented groups, our government has also made a commitment to create an advisory council to increase the participation of women on corporate boards. With leaders from the private and public sectors, this council will link organizations to a network of skilled and experienced women and empower them to step into leadership roles and participate at the highest levels of all Canadian sectors.

Furthermore, we are taking important action to create jobs by extending the hiring credit for small business for an additional year. Almost 650,000 Canadian businesses are eligible for this credit. In my province, this is important, as small and medium-sized enterprises in B.C. are thriving and account for over 38% of the total value of goods exported from B.C., a value of \$29.3 billion in 2010.

Government Orders

I have consulted with small business owners in my constituency and they are unanimous in their support for this action. They know the difference it will make for their businesses and for those whom they will be able to hire. They know that for every job that is created, there is a positive ripple effect for businesses, families and for our communities.

It is clear that budget 2012 is excellent news for Canadians and British Columbians. As I have already outlined, the comprehensive measures it contains will grow our economy, create jobs and prosperity, but budget 2012 also provides a stable framework for federal and provincial programs.

Canadians and British Columbians have come to depend on provincially administered services like education and health care. During the last election, our Prime Minister committed to protecting these important programs by not cutting and, in fact, increasing federal transfer payments to the provinces. Unlike the former government, our government is balancing the need for economic growth with strong programs.

For British Columbia, major transfer will total over \$5.6 billion in 2012-13. This long-term, stable and increased support helps ensure that British Columbia has the resources required to provide essential public services and contributes to shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education and other key components of Canada's social programs. The federal government will contribute over \$4 billion through the Canada health transfer, an increase of more than \$1.2 billion since 2005-06, and almost \$1.6 billion through the Canada social transfer, an increase of \$393 million since 2005-06.

• (1530)

British Columbia will also benefit from continued direct targeted support in 2012-13, including \$67 million for labour market training and \$33 million for the wait times reduction fund. This is all significant support for British Columbians and the people of Vancouver South. I understand their enthusiasm and echo their appreciation of the commitment from our federal government to our province—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I am sorry, but the member's time has expired.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her remarks.

There is one thing I would like to know regarding the environment. Why does a third of Bill C-38 focus on environmental deregulation?

[*English*]

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, the bill does not provide for deregulation. It provides for a modernization of existing regulations. The bill provides a process. People will know the consistent, ongoing process for getting through the system.

The bill also provides more environmental protections as well as more checks and balances.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talked about tax cuts and lower taxes. It seems to me that the Conservatives believe that almost every problem can be solved with lower taxes.

Canadian mining companies up north want to hire some local skilled labour and even train the local folks to take the skilled jobs, but they cannot do it because not enough people finish secondary school. No amount of tax cuts will allow young people to get the skills and education they need to get good jobs. There is a problem. This is an example of where we cannot simply lower taxes and fix a problem.

We need to help young people get the skills and education they need so they can get good jobs and good wages. They then can pay taxes and lower the tax burden for everybody else. I do not think the Conservatives ever think about future tax burdens.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with the hon. member on the opposite side. This government has lowered taxes for the average Canadian to the tune of \$1,000 per family. That will put more money in their pockets for the additional credits they can do in arts and other areas.

At the same time, we have also increased transfer payments to the provinces. This is a consistent formula that the provinces can depend on and it provides an excellent framework for educational institutions, health sectors, et cetera to plan on.

• (1535)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the theme of the budget is about creating jobs, wealth and opportunity for all Canadians. Could the member tell us why we need to implement these changes now, so that we can provide a future for our young people?

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, in the fragile global economy, our country needs to look toward Asia-Pacific countries to expand our markets. In doing so, there will be some historic changes in how the world's economy will be restructured.

It is so important for us to invest in skills training, education, entrepreneurship and innovation, so we can then direct these areas of the different sectors in Canada to work toward expanding our trade for a stronger economy in the future.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend claims the bill would strengthen the environment. I would like her to find a single section in the bill that could be considered strengthening the environment. All I find is gutting.

Ms. Wai Young: Mr. Speaker, I already noted in my speech that we are going to be increasing environmental protection by checking on pipelines not only 100 times but 150 times. We are also going to double the number of inspections from three to six. These are tangible, precise and specific safety features. We are also demanding the use of double-hulled oil tankers down the coast.

These are specific safety features in the bill that would strengthen environmental protection.

Government Orders

Mr. Mark Strahl (Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver South for splitting her time with me. It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in favour of our government's economic action plan. Allow me to start by quoting just one of the many positive assessments of our recent budget.

David Frum of the *National Post* wrote that under this Prime Minister, "...Canada can fairly claim to be the best-governed country among advanced democracies in the world" and that the recent "federal budget locks up Canada's lead". He explained that the world's major economies share a common economic problem. How do we nurture a fragile economic recovery while returning to a balanced budget?

In the United Kingdom we see the danger of moving too quickly: the economic recovery falters. In the United States we see the danger of moving too slowly: dangerous debt levels and the loss of the country's AAA credit rating. Canada has the pace just right. We are on track to balance the budget in the medium term. The Canadian economy continues to grow. In fact, Canada's economy has expanded in nine out of the last ten quarters. Since July 2009, the Canadian economy has created nearly 700,000 net new jobs, the strongest job growth record in the G7.

Contrary to the assertions by the members opposite, these employment gains have been in high quality jobs, with 90% in full-time positions, and over three-quarters in high-wage industries and in the private sector. For the first time in more than three decades Canada's unemployment rate is well below that of the United States.

Among major industrialized countries Canada has an enviable economic record. The world has taken notice. The World Economic Forum has ranked Canada's banking system as the soundest in the world for the fourth consecutive year. *Forbes* magazine ranked Canada number one in the world for business to grow and create jobs. Our economy outperforms our major trading partners. Canada is well ahead of other G7 countries in returning to balanced budgets. The International Monetary Fund projects that by 2016, Canada's total debt-to-GDP ratio will remain at about one-third of the G7 average and more than 20 percentage points below that of Germany, the G7 country with the next lowest ratio.

This afternoon I will speak to three reasons why I believe MPs should support our economic action plan.

First, the economic action plan continues our focus on creating jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

Second, our action plan will ensure Canada's social programs are sustainable in the long term so that they will be there for future generations when we need them.

Third, we will return Canada to balanced budgets by achieving fair, balanced and moderate savings.

Our action plan proposes a number of measures to create jobs and opportunities for Canadians. I will focus on one measure, our responsible resource development initiative. Here are some important facts. In 2010, natural resource sectors employed over 760,000 workers. In the next 10 years, new investments of more than \$500 billion are planned across Canada. The problem is that those

who wish to invest in our country have been facing an increasingly complicated and cumbersome set of rules that add costs, delay projects and kill jobs.

In my home province of British Columbia, in the government's 2010 Speech from the Throne, it was noted that some \$3 billion in provincially approved projects were "stranded in the mire of federal process and delay." The B.C. Minister of Finance, Kevin Falcon said, "We have many projects on the table today that are in the billions of dollars that could have important ramifications for jobs and employment and revenues."

There are numerous examples of economic opportunities missed and jobs lost due to needless bureaucratic duplication and red tape. I will provide one such example. There is a proposal to develop a 396 megawatt offshore wind energy project in Haida Gwaii in British Columbia. The proponent estimates that the project would have a capital investment of \$1.6 billion and would create up to 200 construction jobs. The federal decision to approve the process came 16 months after the provincial decision.

Our action plan 2012 proposes to remove these impediments that are unnecessarily delaying responsible resource development and costing Canadians jobs.

● (1540)

The Conservative government would focus on four major areas to streamline the review process for major economic projects. We would make the review process for major projects more predictable and timely, we would reduce duplication and regulatory burden, we would strengthen environmental protection, which is very important to note, and in British Columbia, as across the rest of the country, it is very important that we would enhance our consultation with first nations people.

As has already been established, Canada's financial situation, compared to other advanced democracies in the world, is enviable. Our government is not content to rest on our laurels and ignore the challenges that will face Canada in the coming decades. Our action plan is proposing necessary changes to our retirement system to ensure that it will be there for all Canadians.

Here is the challenge that we will be facing in the not too distant future. In the 1970s, there were seven workers for every one person over the age of 65 collecting old age security. Today, there are four workers for every senior collecting OAS, and in 20 years the number will be only two. In addition, in 1970 life expectancy was age 69 for men and 76 for women. Today it is 79 for men and 83 for women. At the same time, Canada's birth rate is falling. Given these demographic changes and realities, the cost of the old age security system will grow from \$38 billion in 2011 to \$108 billion in 2030. This program is funded out of general revenue every year and this increase is simply unsustainable.

Government Orders

Our action plan 2012 would put the OAS program on a sustainable path by proposing legislation to raise the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS benefits gradually. The phase-in period would begin in April 2023 and it would not be fully implemented until January 2029. Let me be very clear. These proposals would not impact those currently collecting benefits or those nearing retirement. An 11-year notification period followed by a six-year phase-in period would ensure that individuals have significant advance notification to plan their retirement and make necessary adjustments.

At least 34 other countries are increasing the age of eligibility for their programs. They all realize that they need to ensure the sustainability of those programs for future generations. Our actions would ensure that OAS remains strong and is there for future generations when they need it and is available for all seniors today who are currently receiving the benefits.

Finally, our action plan 2012 would keep Canada on track to a balanced budget over the medium term. We would not raise taxes. Doing so kills jobs. We would not cut transfers to individuals, nor would we cut transfers to other levels of government for health care, education and social services, as was done by previous governments. Our government would return to balanced budgets while continuing sustainable increases in transfers for health, education and social programs. Federal transfers to my home province of British Columbia would total over \$5.6 billion in 2012-13. This represents a 23% increase, over \$1 billion more, than the province received from the former Liberal government.

Canada is a very blessed country. Due to the leadership of our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, our country has avoided the worst of the global economic storm and is on a sound financial footing. The measures I have discussed today—responsible resource development, long-term sustainability of our social programs and modest cost savings to return to a balanced budget—are part of our action plan that will create jobs, economic growth and prosperity for all Canadians.

I would ask all hon. members to join with our government and support economic action plan 2012.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, regarding the environment, several times today in the House, I have heard that certain organizations are to be targeted because they are a thorn in the side of the multinationals and the oil companies.

I have trouble with this concept. I would go so far as to subscribe to a conspiracy theory because I find this strange. I think that the members across the way think that way. However, as far as I know, the organizations are made up of Canadian citizens, volunteers, people involved in our communities who see the impact of the decisions made by multinationals. The multinationals and oil companies, on the other hand, are made up of people from abroad, and the majority of these companies do not necessarily care about our future.

I am trying to find a balance. I get the impression that the government tends to forget that the social contract for the power that it holds comes from Canadians. Why attack the Canadians who are

identifying these problems? They are the ones we should be listening to, not the multinationals.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is standing up for Canadian citizens and for Canadian jobs, 760,000 jobs in the natural resources sector.

We know the NDP members oppose any development of the oil sands and have called for a moratorium on the development. They oppose any hydrocarbon, fossil fuel development at all. So it is no surprise that they are also opposing the Canadian jobs that result from these projects.

We have seen that they oppose Keystone XL which created over 140,000 jobs. They opposed the northern gateway pipeline, right off the top. They are also opposing the private sector unions which are clearly onside with natural resources development, and have said they support our regulatory reform because they know that these projects give good jobs and good benefits to Canadians. That is why we will continue with our responsible resource development plan.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure if I got this right from the member. He mentioned British Columbia getting more in transfers from this government than the preceding government. I think that is based on a formula which is called equalization and has been in existence for quite some time.

As a matter of fact, Newfoundland and Labrador, where I come from, is actually getting less money. No, let me correct that, we are actually getting no money from the federal government. That is because of the resources that are off Newfoundland and Labrador's coasts and because of what we have done. I would go back to the fight, what happened between Danny Williams and the Prime Minister.

I want to ask the member about one thing. He keeps talking about skills and development. Small towns across this country just lost the community access program which delivers high-speed Internet for the smallest communities. It is an issue of poverty. People making below the median income of \$30,000 cannot afford these large bills for high-speed Internet. The local library decided to provide that service for all citizens, and now it is gone. It is a little disingenuous for a member from rural Canada to be talking about the fact that they are losing this essential service.

• (1550)

Mr. Mark Strahl: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's question was all over the map, from British Columbia to Newfoundland. I will try to focus on equalization and transfers to the provinces.

I do not know the hon. member's electoral history or if he was here during the time when the Liberal government cut \$25 billion in transfers in health and social transfers to the provinces. Certainly, we did fix the equalization program to ensure that it was fair for all Canadians.

Government Orders

I also have no problem discussing the small-town impacts of our bill. I toured a local production facility, Britco in Agassiz, British Columbia. It produces housing units for natural resource development projects. The company sees a direct link between our plan to have regulatory reform and its business model. It has increased the number of its good, high-paying, high-skilled jobs, because of our program to ensure that we have responsible resource development.

I will continue to support the budget, as people in small-town Canada do.

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to address Bill C-38 on behalf of my constituents in Mount Royal.

While my constituents might understandably assume that the bill relates to the budget, in fact this 400-plus-page omnibus bill actually has very little to do with the budget. Many of the proposals therein have particularly deleterious consequences for the environment. Accordingly, I will be splitting my time with our environment critic, the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

A related problem is that while this budget implementation bill is supposed to flow from the budget speech, which itself is not only a financial statement but a statement of values and a reflection of priorities, this budget, in its reflection of priorities, does not note or even utter the words “social justice”. It does not note or even speak of “fairness” or “equality”. It does not note or even reference the Charter whose 30th anniversary we celebrate this year, nor does it reference or note anywhere the word “humanitarian”.

While the budget speech did outline certain measures that we see legislated in Bill C-38, this budget implementation omnibus bill goes above and beyond anything we have seen and beyond any of the enabling authority of the budget itself.

In its 400-plus pages, there are amendments to more than 60 statutes. It covers everything from fisheries to nuclear safety, from territorial borrowing limits to air transport. It is an enormous hodgepodge, bundling together legislation not unlike Bill C-10 that does not allow for the necessary differentiated parliamentary discussion and debate, let alone the necessary oversight of the legislation. It imbues the executive with arbitrary authority to the exclusion of Parliament, thereby serving as a standing abuse to the canons of good governance, transparency and accountability. Indeed, this alone should be cause for its defeat.

As Andrew Coyne has put it, and I quote, “The scale and scope is on a level not previously seen, or tolerated”. He notes that this bill makes “a mockery of the confidence convention” and that there is no “common thread” or “overarching principle” between the legislative items therein, let alone its standing contempt for Parliament in matters of process and procedure.

Moreover, and again on the crucial issues of parliamentary process and procedure, which are principled concerns, while the bundling together of disparate pieces of omnibus legislation as a confidence bill is problematic enough on its own, this bill is slated to go to the finance committee in its entirety. Accordingly, the review of the environmental regulations therein, which overhaul, weaken and undermine the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act and environmental protection as a whole, will thus not be reviewed by

the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, where it belongs. The provisions that abolish the First Nations Statistical Institute and make changes to the First Nations Land Management Act will not be the subject of examination and study by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, where it belongs. I can go on with numerous examples in this regard.

If circumventing proper and thorough parliamentary review in committee was not enough, the government, as we saw earlier, has invoked time allocation to limit the amount of time and discussion on this bill.

I am not suggesting that invoking time allocation, as the government has done again and again, or the use of an omnibus vehicle, as has occurred with Bill C-10, are against the legislative rules. What I am suggesting, as have many commentators, is that its use here and now on this particular omnibus bill is unnecessary, prejudicial, suprisingly undemocratic, in effect, unparliamentary and otherwise unsubstantiated and unwarranted.

Surely if Parliament had to debate something like going to war, it would be easy to see why we might time-allocate to ensure we get to the most pressing debate first, or if there were court decisions that affected many statutes, we might easily welcome an omnibus bill that would make the same change to many statutes. What is so disconcerting with Bill C-38 is that the government need not be in a rush. There is no coherent or compelling theme to the omnibus proposals contained in the bill.

The opposition is not opposed to some of what is in Bill C-38. For example, the proposed changes to the custom and tariff rules sound reasonable. What we are opposed to is the take it or leave it, one size fits all omnibus approach to legislating that does not allow the necessary differentiated and deliberative oversight or review, or review by the particular and appropriate parliamentary committees. The government and the opposition can co-operate if the government would simply respect the opposition and be responsive in debate.

● (1555)

Again, I will remind my colleague that the government assumes that its legislation in every instance is perfect and, in so doing, believes there are no amendments that need even be tendered let alone adopted. This occurred in the case of Bill C-10 when, in response to amendments I introduced at the time, the government summarily rejected them because they came from the opposition, it seemed. It reintroduced the amendments on its own, a matter that could have been avoided, as the Speaker then noted in terms of the procedural complications that then ensued. Moreover, while I will be voting against this bill in large part because of the way it was introduced and how it is being pushed through Parliament, in terms of matters of process and its abuse, I will use my remaining time to outline some of my objections to the substance of the bill. Regrettably, time is limited and I therefore cannot address every flaw of this legislation.

Government Orders

First, Bill C-38 marginalizes low-income seniors by increasing the qualifying age for OAS from 65 to 67. While the government claims this change is necessary, and it did so just now in debate, for the sustainability of OAS, this contradicts Canada's chief actuarial officer and the PBO, who agree that the change is unsound and unnecessary as the current situation and system is sufficiently sustainable.

Second, the government proposes to close the files of federal skilled workers who applied prior to 2008, without any chance on their part to review or appeal this decision. It is not surprising that some have announced plans to take the government to court over this as a matter of fundamental fairness and due process. Indeed, all who apply to Canada should have their applications judged on their merits, not an arbitrary deadline set by the minister and applied in a retroactive fashion.

Third, cuts are being made to various food inspection agencies. These agencies keep Canadians safe and secure while ensuring the food chain is not contaminated. The government has yet to explain how these cuts would not prejudice the health and safety of Canadians or how food safety would be maintained in the absence of complete and adequate funding.

Fourth, the true nature of public service cuts in this bill still remains unknown. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates that in addition to the 19,200 positions being eliminated in budget 2012, there will be a further 6,300 jobs cut as a result of the government's previous strategic reviews that have yet to be implemented, and a further 9,000 cuts as a result of the government's budget operating freeze. That would create a total of 34,500 federal public service job cuts associated with this budget cycle alone. As well, the Parliamentary Budget Officer agrees that the government's figure of 19,200 public service jobs being cut does not represent the full number. He said, "...additional job losses will be required. ... we're actually talking about cuts on top of cuts".

I raise this in particular to note that we are being asked to rubber-stamp the government's agenda without the necessary information, in a manner that precludes the necessary oversight and review and when it is clear that there are inconsistencies with what the government is saying and what independent experts assert. Parliamentarians must be afforded the facts and figures upon which they are being forced to pronounce, as was the case in Bill C-10. We did not receive it then and we are not receiving it now. This, in effect, amounts to a kind of standing contempt of Parliament.

Fifth, and my colleague from Etobicoke North will speak further to this in a moment, this bill rewrites Canada's laws on environmental assessment and repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act, weakening our environmental regulations but with consequences far beyond this.

In an email just this morning, a constituent wrote this. Considering that when environmental damage is caused, it has a domino effect on our food and water and thus affects Canadians' health and livelihood, these issues are actually also human rights issues. We have the right to safe clean water, safe accessible food and the myriad of other essential benefits we get from a properly functioning ecosystem.

Sixth, we have the elimination of a series of libraries and archives throughout different departments as part of the latest budget cuts, including the Canadian Council of Archives, which may close as soon as this Friday. This would affect historians, researchers, the media, Parliament and the public who deserve to have information preserved in addition to access to this information.

While I do not have time to elaborate on what this bill includes, I will close with a note about what is not in this bill. This bill does not address that which must be addressed. First and foremost is job creation, not just loss of jobs. Nor does it address the issues that matter most to my constituents in terms of social justice, access to justice and the promotion and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

● (1600)

Accordingly, and with this I close, whether it is marginalizing low-income seniors by increasing the qualifying age for OAS or cutting funds to regional development programs that create jobs or not announcing any new funding for affordable housing when the existing program funds are set to expire soon, this budget is simply wrong-headed, misguided, prejudicial and disconnected from the needs of Canadians and from my constituents.

In short, Bill C-38 marks a sad chapter in Canadian parliamentary history.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his remarks. There is a lot of talk about the environment, which is a hot button issue.

We know that the Liberals signed and ratified the Kyoto protocol. But why did the Liberal Party not do anything to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, in truth, we did reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We also introduced a bill in the House to this effect, but it was defeated by the government.

I think that my colleague from Etobicoke North, an expert in the field, will answer that question.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleague did not have time to talk about the effects of the closure of libraries and archives, and the lack of access to libraries and archives.

I would ask my colleague to speak briefly about the impact that this loss of knowledge and history will have.

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, it will be very damaging in terms of both the teaching and appreciation of history. However, this is not just about history; we are also talking about getting rid of all the sources of information and every source that has to do with history, science and knowledge. Both members and the public need this information. The public is affected by this decision.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government thinks it is promoting oil internationally, the tar sands, yet it has taken such a retrograde attack on anybody who asks questions. It is so militant about dismantling the process.

Does my hon. colleague not think good luck to poor Enbridge trying to sell its products internationally, when it has to explain that it is coming from a country that has stripped environmental standards down to third world conditions, that in the end what the government has created is a situation where it will be considered an environmental pariah on the international stage because of its continual militant attacks on basic public process, basic public participation, and vilification of anyone who speaks out, that at the end of the day the last thing big oil wants is to have friends like that?

•(1605)

Hon. Irwin Cotler: Mr. Speaker, what is disconcerting is not only the overall approach with respect to environmental protection, or the absence regarding environmental protection, but the prospective chilling effect that the critiques of critics have on the overall discussion of this issue as a whole.

We saw the same thing with regard to Bill C-10. We see the same thing with regard to Bill C-26.

There is a pattern here in which those who criticize the government, if it is in matters of criminal justice, are said to be on the side of the criminals and not on the side of the victims, or on the side of the child pornographers and not on the side of those who seek to protect children.

This kind of indictment, and it is not even by innuendo but indeed indictment, by chilling debate, by silencing dissent, does credit neither to the substance of the legislation, which should be allowed to be debated on the merits, and there is no more compelling concern in that regard than that which relates to the environment, nor to the democratic process itself, which should allow for all forms of discussion, debate, dissent, critique and the like.

We are missing this, not only in this debate but on other bills as well.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a profoundly sad time for Canada. The government is gutting 50 years of environmental oversight and threatening the health and safety of Canadians, our communities, our economy and our livelihoods.

We need to be very clear that when the government came to power it inherited a legacy of balanced budgets but soon plunged us into deficit before the recession ever hit. It is absolutely negligent and shameful that the government would gut environmental safeguards to fast track development rather than promote sustainable development, development that meets the needs of today without compromising those of the future.

The government did not campaign in the last election on gutting environmental protection. Canadians should, therefore, rise up, have their voices heard and stop the Prime Minister's destruction of laws that protect the environment and the health and safety of Canadians. In fact, Maurice Strong, a prominent Canadian who spearheaded the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, just this week urged people who are

concerned about the future of the environment to do an end run around the federal government. He urged grassroots groups to mobilize and make full use of social media, saying that there was still some time to bring the pressure of people power.

Instead of understanding the gravity of the situation and standing up for the environment, the Conservative government returns to tired talking points and trying to score political points by attacking the former Liberal leader, saying that the Liberals took no action on climate change, when it knows that is absolutely false. The Liberals implemented project green, which would have taken us 80% of the way to meeting our Kyoto targets. The Conservatives killed project green, reduced our greenhouse gas emissions target by an astonishing 90%, walked away from Kyoto, having just repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act and continue to ignore the fact that failing to take action on climate change will cost Canadians \$21 billion to \$43 billion annually by 2050.

Maurice Strong says that the government may be totally negative when it comes to being a constructive force in mitigating climate change. For example, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment continues to rail against Kyoto. Is she aware, however, that her own minister has, for the second time, said that Kyoto was a good idea in its time? He first said it to *The Huffington Post* and has now said it to the BBC.

Norway's former prime minister, former chair of the World Commission on Environment and Development and former director general of the World Health Organization, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, recently said that Canada was moving backward on the issue of climate change and warned Canada not to be naive on the issue. She recently told delegates in Canada that despite the weaknesses of the Kyoto protocol, the world could not afford to push it aside without an alternative, as emissions are continually rising. When questioned about the link between human activity and climate change, she said, "Politicians and others that question the science, that's not the right thing to do. We have to base ourselves on evidence".

While the Conservative government claims a balanced approach to protecting the environment and promoting economic growth, when has the parliamentary secretary or the minister actually ever stood up for the environment? Was it through cuts to Environment Canada, cuts to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency or cuts to ozone monitoring? The list of cuts goes on and on.

Canadians should not be fooled by mere snippets of environmental protection but should in fact pay attention to the government's reducing budgets at Environment Canada and other investments on environmental protection and research by hundreds of millions of dollars while maintaining several tax incentives for the oil and gas sector that the Minister of Finance's department recommended eliminating in a secret memo.

Government Orders

After we vote against this kitchen sink budget, a budget that devotes 150 pages of a 400-page budget to environmental gutting, the Conservative government will stand up and say that the opposition voted against some good things for the environment. However, the government gives us absolutely no choice, as we simply cannot vote for the wholesale destruction of environmental legislation and 50 years of safeguards.

● (1610)

If the parliamentary secretary, the Minister of the Environment and the Minister of Natural Resources really believe that Bill C-38, the kitchen sink bill, is good for the environment, they should have the courage to hive off the sections on environmental protection and send them to the relevant committees for clause by clause study under public scrutiny, and end their affront to democracy.

I have a list of cuts to Environment Canada and just some of the changes on the environment to be found in Bill C-38. There are cuts of 200 positions at Environment Canada. Last summer the government announced cuts of 700 positions and a 43% cut to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. There are cuts to research and monitoring initiatives, air pollution, industrial emissions, water quality, waste water and partnerships for a greener economy, cuts of \$3.8 million for emergency disaster response, and consolidating the unit that responds to oil spill emergencies in central Canada, namely Gatineau and Montreal, far from where emergencies, including those involving diluted bitumen, might occur on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts and along the proposed route of the northern gateway pipeline project.

The government has repealed the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. It has repealed the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, which allows the federal government to avoid environmental reviews of many potentially harmful projects and to do less comprehensive reviews where they still occur.

Canada's environment commissioner says that the changes are among the most significant policy development in 30 or 40 years and that there will be a significant narrowing of public participation.

While the Minister of Natural Resources complains:

...our inefficient, duplicative and unpredictable regulatory system is an impediment. It is complex, slow-moving and wasteful. It subjects major projects to unpredictable and potentially endless delays.

Premier Jean Charest says:

In Quebec, we've very well mastered the ability of doing joint assessments. ... I have learned, through my experiences, that trying to short circuit to reduce the process will only make it longer, and it is better to have a rigorous, solid process. It gives a better outcome, and for those who are promoting projects, it will give them more predictability than if not.

There are more changes: the weakening of several environmental laws, including species at risk and water; the near-elimination of fish habitat in the Fisheries Act, putting species from coast to coast to coast at increased risk of habitat flaws and population decline; the authority of the federal cabinet to approve new pipeline projects above the National Energy Board; and the elimination of the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, the independent think tank with a direct mandate from Parliament. The minister has never said what will replace it. The head of NRT does not know either, as what it does is unique. As well, we see the

silencing of government critics through changes to the Canada Revenue Agency and the attempts to seize control of the university research agenda.

The government should be able to stand on its own merits. It should be able to withstand criticism. Instead of making its arguments, it is just looking to eliminate dissent.

For decades, Canadians have depended on the federal government to safeguard our families and nature from pollution, toxic contamination and other environmental problems through a safety net of environmental laws. This bill shreds this environmental safety net to fast-track development at the expense of all Canadians.

Instead, the government could have implemented my Motions Nos. 322, 323 and 325, which focused on Canada's commitment to sustainable development, recognizing that it was not a choice between saving the economy and the environment and, therefore, working with the provinces, territories and stakeholders to develop a green economy strategy and a national sustainable energy strategy to build the jobs of the future for our communities and for Canada.

When we compromise the air, water, soil and a variety of life, we steal from the endless future to serve the fleeting present.

● (1615)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I fundamentally disagree with all of the member's speech this afternoon, but I did enjoy listening to her dissertation on what she believes may happen and to the farm mongering that goes with it.

Assuming that the member for Etobicoke North believes in balanced budgets, what would the member and her party do to balance the budget? Would there be any cuts that she would recommend be made to the Government of Canada?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am always evidenced-based, fact-based. This was a well-researched piece of work.

I will present the evidence for the hon. member. The environment is not a Conservative priority. In 2008, the climate change performance index ranked Canada 56th of 57 countries in terms of tackling emissions. In 2009, the Conference Board of Canada ranked Canada 15th of 17 wealthy industrial nations on environmental performance. In 2010, SFU ranked Canada 24th of 25 OECD nations on environmental performance. Most recently, the environmental performance index ranked Canada 102nd out of 132 countries on climate change. In 2006, the Prime Minister remarked, "Canada's environmental performance is, by most measures, the worst in the developed world. We have big problems".

This budget should have taken action to protect the environment, not gut it.

*Government Orders**[Translation]*

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her charming speech.

When we talk about sustainable development, we are talking about development that we will be leaving to future generations. I have one daughter who is 26 years old and another who is 21. It is our young people who will be here tomorrow and who will look after our country's future.

When we talk about the environment, we are talking about the security of these young people. When we talk about oil development, about big businesses that exploit and export everything abroad without considering the cost to the environment, we are putting future generations in debt.

Yes, the budget is balanced, but by bringing down a balanced budget, the government is putting future generations in debt. They are the ones who will have to clean up the environmental mess we are making today. What does the member think of that?

• (1620)

[English]

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree with the hon. member. Climate change is our most pressing environmental issue. It requires moral responsibility and intergenerational responsibility. The government does not appreciate that. While it says that it is financially accountable, if it does not take action on climate change today, the costs annually by 2050 will be \$21 billion to \$43 billion for our children.

I just returned from Bangladesh, which has a population of 160 million. It is twice the size of New Brunswick and it produces less greenhouse gases than Manhattan. With the one-metre sea level rise, that will affect 20% of its land mass and affect 20 million people.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an area in my riding of Kingston and the Islands is contaminated with heavy metal from about 100 years ago. It is pretty much unusable. We cannot touch the land. We cannot disturb the soil.

This is an economic burden on my riding of Kingston and the Islands today. It is a tax, really. Is that not an example of how lax environmental regulations from 100 years ago have an effect for decades afterwards on the local economy?

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely correct. What scares me most about this budget is that it will not affect a few years; the gutting of environmental legislation will affect our country for decades to come.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Scarborough-Southwest, Public Transit; the hon. member for Manicouagan, Aboriginal Affairs; the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Fisheries and Oceans.

[English]

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Burlington.

I am proud to rise today in support of our Conservative government's 2011 budget plan. This plan is a cornerstone of our continuing unwavering commitment to provide Canadians with a stable economic road map within a thoughtful, comprehensive economic action plan.

The budget showcases a long-term prosperity vision for Canada through reasonable, pragmatic measures designed to maintain our enviable economic record and demonstrate our faith in the vibrant Canadian spirit, forged out of hard work, faith, common enterprise, ingenuity and compassion.

What is our focus? What is our agenda? Our focus, our agenda, is a stable stewardship of our economy to maintain and increase our prospects for success in the short term, in the medium term and in the long term. It is to foster a future Canada that works efficiently for us now and for our children and grandchildren, a Canada that is welcoming and productive and allows all Canadians the opportunity to live full and rewarding lives, a Canada that is prosperous enough that we can continue to support those of us in need and those around the world who need a hand up.

All of these noble ambitions require a foundational economic and financial strength for which our economic action plan sets a solid framework.

We cannot foretell all that is ahead of us. We cannot foretell, most assuredly, the actions and consequences of the decisions of other countries with whom we are interdependent in a global economic balance, but we can do our part and more within our sovereign borders to ensure that we are in a position to weather the storms that may come. We can ensure that we are flexible enough to deal with contingencies in an intelligent and caring manner and solid enough to plan ahead, so that a prosperous future does not have to include taking Draconian overnight steps because we have no choice but to raise taxes and overburden Canadian families and businesses.

It supports a future built on bold ambition that has at its core the certain belief that Canadians are capable of all things: of worthy endeavour in the arts and in business, of global competitiveness, of innovation that will amaze us and save lives, of all the stuff that dreams are made of.

We will improve Canada's labour market through employment programs and skills training for young Canadians, older workers, Canadians with disabilities and first nations; building a fast and flexible economic immigration system that responds to labour market demands; improving the employment insurance program; and better integrating high-quality researchers in the labour market. We will boost economic growth and job creation through supporting and fostering innovation, investment, education and skills.

How will we do this? Among the many initiatives outlined in the budget, I would like to highlight a few.

Government Orders

We will invest over \$1 billion to support science and technology and we will provide \$500 million to encourage innovative start-up companies.

Our government will ensure responsible resource development by streamlining the review process, something provincial and territorial governments and industry have been requesting for a long time. This streamlining will ensure reasonable timelines and clarity around the process requirements without compromising, and in fact strengthening, environmental oversight and while meeting strong federal standards.

We will expand free trade, which our Prime Minister and cabinet have been hard at work promoting.

The hiring credit for small business will be extended, something that will particularly help many in my riding.

The budget will provide \$150 million over two years for the new community infrastructure improvement fund, \$5.2 billion over 11 years to renew the Canadian Coast Guard, a vital resource in our coastal communities, and \$275 million over three years to support first nations education and schools.

Specific programs will be aimed at attracting skilled immigrants to match our country's economic needs.

Our government will change our old age security delivery to ensure that younger workers today will also have this social program available when they are older, and we will phase in a proactive enrolment regime for both OAS and GIS, which will be warmly welcomed by the elderly and their caregivers.

We are also promoting more active lifestyles for all ages and enhancing the victims fund to continue our quest to better acknowledge the voices of victims in our federal justice and corrections system.

To my mind, the great news from this 2011 budget is that we will achieve all of these improvements without raising taxes and without slashing transfers to health, education or support for seniors.

• (1625)

In fact, we Conservatives have cut taxes over 140 times since forming government. From cutting tax rates and increasing tax credits to making our tax reporting system more reasonable and supporting families with both able-bodied and disabled members, we have provided savings for a typical Canadian family of over \$3,100 per year.

Due in part to our government's low-tax approach, a stark contrast to the NDP and Liberals' higher-tax programs and philosophies, and the amazing fact, verified by the International Monetary Fund, that our net debt to GDP ratio remains the lowest in the G7, *Forbes* magazine has ranked Canada number one in the world—let me repeat that: number one in the world—for businesses to grow and create jobs.

Canadians do not need the federal government to hold their hands every step of the way, as we are a nation forged on resiliency and a desire for freedom, but Canadians do need us to clear a path. If that path can be well defined and well lit, all the better, but the fact that

such a pathway exists is all that some Canadians need to move forward.

We need to show ourselves as partners of Canadian enterprise and achievement, not as an extra burden. Everyone must contribute, of course, but confidence to achieve and to have the ability to help others whose time has not yet come often requires the incentive that a prudent, caring government can provide.

This is such a budget. This is such a time. This is Canada's century. We are being noticed as never before around the world. We are being recognized as never before as leaders out of the despair and confusion of runaway debt. We are the true north, strong and free, and I am proud to be a part of it, proud of who we are and who we intend to be.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her contribution to the debate and I want to come back on one of the points that were mentioned.

We know that the environmental assessment and review processes in this country may be viewed by some as a burden for any development project. However, I think this is what allows the balance between the economic, environmental and social aspects of any development. The government talks about consultations with aboriginal peoples in this country. I would like to know what it means by “consultation with aboriginal peoples” in this budget, because the Supreme Court already has determined that “consultation” may mean, at times, “consent” of aboriginal peoples in developing projects.

Is the government talking about consultation with aboriginal peoples in the constitutional sense of the word, or is it talking about consultation in the expediency sense of the word?

• (1630)

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I think there were two questions in there.

First, certainly, we do not see the environmental assessment process as a burden. We see it as a necessity. However, we also see the need for clarity.

For those who wish to move forward or who may not, in fact, be able to move forward because of an environmental assessment, we are streamlining that process. We are continuing with the exacting and high standards of the federal assessment process, but it will be administered through the one level of government. We are quite confident that would add more clarity to the process.

As to the meaningful consultation with aboriginal peoples, we know, of course, what the Supreme Court of Canada said about that with respect to first nations.

I am a British Columbian member of Parliament. First nations are always consulted with respect to any development programs. Their input is welcome and in fact necessary to bring all peoples together with respect to the future of that province and Canada.

Government Orders

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member talked about the pathway that the Conservatives have created. What one person may call a pathway another person, certainly me, would call tunnel vision, because in this particular case what we have is a lot of ideology being infused into the policy. The policy is somewhat understated by the government, but nonetheless it needs to be fleshed out.

That said, I do have a question. In all honesty, what I find is a little disconcerting. Time and time again through this debate—and up until the end of the debate, and going way back as well, even to the last budget—the Conservatives talked about the strong systems now in place that allow Canada to be number one out of seven when it comes to debt to GDP ratio. There are other markers out there that refer to Canada as being a leader in that particular area. Whether that may be the Conservatives or the preceding government is a whole other issue.

However, the question remains. Why would the government raise the age of eligibility for OAS and GIS from 65 to 67, citing that other countries are doing this, when those other countries do not have the financial strength that we do? Why would the government do that? What would be the impetus? I doubt if the demographers are really winning the argument over themselves who are saying that we have a strong enough economy to support that 20 years down the road.

Ms. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, yes, we have an economy that is the envy of the world, and that was the point of my remarks—that we have been doing extremely well—but we are still in a fragile time, given our interdependence with other economies in the world. That is why sound stewardship and having the kind of focus our government has are so very important.

With respect to the specific changes to old age security, we have said time and again in this House that the funds for OAS come out of general revenue. It is not handled the same way as CPP, which we all know is sustainable and will continue. We need to be realistic about the future and we need to ensure that future generations will have the ability to access old age security.

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the budget bill. I want to thank the member for Delta—Richmond East for sharing her time with me today.

We are dealing with a budget implementation bill. As members know, the budget is normally broken into two bills: one in the spring and one in the fall. We did not get a chance to talk about the budget in general because the NDP filibustered when we first introduced it, which took up all of the time.

I will talk about a few other things that are in the bill and put on the record how I feel about them. I will start with the jobs, balanced budget and future prosperity aspects of the bill. The budget, the bill, the plan is about this.

People ask me all the time what the major issue is that I hear about in Burlington. The major issue in my riding is that we need to get back to balanced books at the federal level. Our government has to get rid of the deficit spending that we did during the recession. That is what we are doing with the budget. That is why we need to

proceed with what we are doing. The budget brings us back to what we promised.

I know it is hard for the opposition members to believe that we can actually promise to do something and then deliver it in our budget and policies. It is very difficult for them to understand that. During the election we committed to bringing back balanced books by 2015, and this budget puts us on the road to do that.

The Minister of Finance has been clear in the House that the budget will get us back and end the deficit spending we have had to do to overcome the worldwide recession. We are coming out better than any other country in the world. Those members know it, the public knows it and the people in Burlington know it. They are telling me that we need to get back to balanced books, and that is what we are doing. It is an election commitment.

Part of that commitment, and I make no apologies for it, is that we need to reduce some of the federal government spending, and that is about a \$5.5 billion reduction. That sounds like a lot of money, but let us look at the whole picture.

If people follow along and are able to figure it out, the government spends \$260 billion. We spend about \$40 billion to \$45 billion on interest charges on debt, which will still be there. That is why we have to get back to balanced books: so that we can start paying down debt in the way we were doing before the recession. We need to get that under control.

We transfer a whole bunch of money to the provinces for health care and social services, which are all important things. It is also an important support for the provinces. We did make changes to the equalization payments, as was mentioned earlier. We are committed to providing the provinces the money that we committed to provide. This is not like what happened in the past when we had deficits. What did the government of the day do? It cut its spending and assistance to its provincial partners. In this budget and in the campaign, we refused to do that. We said we would do it on our own.

That leaves us about \$80 billion of federal spending over which we have control. Therefore, we are looking at about \$5.2 billion and a few percentage points. If we cannot find a few percentage points to reduce the cost of government out of \$80 billion, we are doing something wrong. Yes, it means that the public service has to come to the table with it.

We are also looking at programs and at what we are doing right. When we do a program evaluation, we look at what its mandate is and whether it has fulfilled that mandate. Is it over, or do we need to continue to fund it?

The ministers did not get together one night and decide on this. They had the departments come to them with suggestions of what was feasible, what could be done and what was reasonable. That is what we are implementing through the budget.

Government Orders

There are some great things in the budget, and members can ask me questions about what is in the implementation bill. I am happy to answer, but there are a few things for my riding of Burlington that I would like to highlight.

For example, we are spending \$1.1 billion in research and development, including improvements to the IRAP program, basically doubling the money. This is a jobs budget.

• (1635)

We have heard the opposition ask us how we will create jobs. We will create jobs through innovation and research—not jobs necessarily for today, but jobs that will be there tomorrow if we commercialize research and development, if we take a leadership role on the industrial level and deliver not just to Canadians but around the world. Our country, like many others, is a trading country. That is why we need free trade agreements. That is why we are working so hard on them.

I am the co-chair of the Canada-Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group. I have some relationship with Japan. Japan's government is coming to the realization that it needs partners, that it cannot do it all on its own and that it actually needs free trade agreements. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, we started discussions with Japan. We are moving forward. We already know as a country and as a government that we need to be traders in the global marketplace or we will get left behind. We deal with that in the budget.

Today, in this part of the implementation of the budget, there is discussion about what will do on the environmental side. I want people to read the legislation. It talks about substitution. It does not talk about elimination. If there is an environmental assessment at the federal level and another one at the provincial level, we can substitute one for the other, but they have to be at least equal. For those who do not know, most federal EAs have more restrictions and layers than provincial ones. Therefore, if the province takes it over, it has to meet the environmental assessment standards at the federal level. At the end of the day, the federal minister will make the final decision on it. All it is doing is reducing the layers of assessments.

When I was a municipal councillor, environmental assessments could be bumped up to the province. It delayed many projects, including one in my own ward. There were minor changes being made to save the bank of a creek that was running behind the homes of people. One person did not like how the environmental assessment worked out and how the problem was to be fixed, so it was bumped up to the provincial level. It took months and months to get that resolved. The bank deteriorated but was finally fixed.

The environmental assessment changes that we are making do not eliminate the requirements of assessment. However, why have two processes when there can be one? Why are people concerned about the timing? I would be surprised, and that is a pleasant word, if anyone could find new information after two years of study on a project. It is taking two years for environmental assessments to be completed. It is not like we are eliminating them. Just because an EA takes two years does not mean it will be approved. There is no automatic approval. It does not say that anywhere. It is a substitution, so instead of having the province do it and having it bumped up to the federal government to do it, we would be using the same criteria to do it once and get all the facts on the table. There is nothing wrong

with those implementing the environmental assessment to look at the people who will have input into it and ensure they have professional experience and knowledge to add value.

There was a question from the previous speaker about the role of the aboriginal community. The aboriginal community is noted in our plan. We will be proactive in communicating with those individuals who will be directly affected, including the aboriginal communities.

On a personal note, there are some other changes in the budget implementation bill. As someone who has been recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, nothing to be too worried about, there are some changes in the bill that will affect those who test their blood sugar every day.

• (1640)

As someone who thought he was very healthy and had no issues, I would urge everyone to ensure they see their doctor on a regular basis. Issues like type 2 diabetes, if we do not get them early, will be a big burden on the health care system, not today but in the future.

I thank the government for the changes in the budget.

• (1645)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the government member for his very eloquent speech. He is always very passionate and very expressive.

I think he sits on a committee, perhaps even on two committees. As a committee member, what does he think of the fact that this huge document will be studied exclusively by the Standing Committee on Finance, depriving him of his role in conducting an in-depth study of the important portions of this massive document that he mentioned in his speech? What does he think of the fact that it will not be studied by a number of committees and that it will in fact be reserved exclusively for the Standing Committee on Finance?

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, I know the member is new to Parliament. I have sat on the finance committee for five years. We had budget bills in the past that had a lot of different aspects to them. On our side, we have the ability to substitute members who have an expertise or knowledge in an area when we deal with a certain section of the bill. They can sit in the finance committee and discuss those issues there. That is the process.

Government Orders

Why would we break up the bill and send it to a whole bunch of different committees? It is much better to be focused on finance. It is a financial bill. If there are issues within the bill that members feel they need to discuss and have expertise in, it is up to their party to substitute individuals on the finance committee for those meetings to discuss those issues. It is much better focused. If we were to spread all over the committees, it would not be an efficient and effective way and a good use of members' time.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish the member was here in 2005 when the Conservatives railed against the idea of including the Atlantic accord in the budget. The very things that he said were the things that they railed against. However, I digress.

He said earlier that he would talk about the inclusion of aboriginals in this debate. Taseko Mines Ltd. is trying to sway the way the Conservative government into excluding aboriginal peoples from participating in the environmental review of a project that would affect first nation communities. What does he say?

Mr. Mike Wallace: Mr. Speaker, we have committed to our aboriginal peoples that on issues of environmental assessments, they will be consulted. I do not know how much more black and white it needs to be for the member across, but it is there. It is in the legislation.

If he read the legislation, even the summary, the summary page lays it out. We are committed to discussing these EA issues with those directly affected, including the aboriginal people. I assume the member across will support that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, journalists at *Le Devoir* are calling this bill a “mammoth”. I would go even further and say that it is a horse, it is an airplane, it is a brick. We can call it all sorts of things.

It is illegal for companies or individuals to use computer viruses—so-called Trojan horses—to install software on computers when users want nothing to do with it. This is exactly what the Conservative government has decided to do. It has transformed its budget implementation bill into a Trojan horse and opened up the Canadian telecommunications market to foreign companies while Canadians are worrying about their old age security and their shattered retirement dreams.

Quite frankly, the government has buried enough legislation in Bill C-38 to block a whole server.

Why has the industry minister decided to bury his amendments to the Telecommunications Act in the budget implementation bill rather than sending them to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology?

In March, the government announced rules for an auction that would have a significant impact on this country's digital future and its economy. We had a unique opportunity to promote competition in the wireless telecommunications market and ensure that all Canadians, including those living in remote regions, can participate in the digital economy of the 21st century. The government missed the mark.

Auctions for the radio frequencies used by our old analog televisions will allow the telecommunications companies that buy them to set up next generation wireless networks.

The promise made to the people of LaSalle—Émard and every other Canadian was that they will soon have access to much faster wireless networks. Far too many Canadians who live in remote regions still do not have access to high-speed Internet. For them, we had the opportunity to increase access to broadband Internet and to fully include them in the digital economy. The government had the opportunity to bridge the ever-growing digital gap that is currently dividing Canada in two: on the one hand, urban Canada, which is connected to high-speed wireless networks, and on the other hand, the regions, which are connected, but at speeds that are much slower than those available elsewhere in our country.

The promise was that we could correct the imbalance between urban and rural areas and promote competition in the industry in order to lower costs for consumers. The Government of Canada failed to keep that promise.

The proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Act contained in Bill C-38 will allow foreign telecommunications companies to operate in Canada if they have less than a 10% share of the Canadian market. These foreign companies will not be able to increase their share of the Canadian market through acquisitions, that is by purchasing rival companies, something that Canadian companies can do.

We therefore find ourselves in a situation where telecommunications companies in Canada will compete under rules that do not apply equally to everyone. Canadian companies will have one set of rules; foreign companies will have another. Here in Canada, we are used to arguing about hockey or soccer games, where everyone plays by the same rules. However, that is not the approach used by this government. We already knew that.

Many Canadian telecommunications companies have concerns about these developments. Ironically, the company that stood to gain the most from these changes immediately responded that it would boycott the auction.

The government was not transparent with Canadians, who have the same questions we do.

● (1650)

Will the government stand by its decision to open only part of the Canadian market to foreign companies? Are these changes simply the first step in a process that goes much further?

Does the government plan to continue to gradually lift restrictions on foreign companies' participation in the Canadian telecommunications market?

Will this government try to take advantage of the fact that it has created a two-tiered market with different rules for different players in order to completely open the Canadian telecommunications market to foreign competition?

Government Orders

The reality is that we have no way of knowing. Canadian are still waiting for the Minister of Industry to reveal his strategy for the digital economy. An initiative was launched two years ago, almost to the day. Then it was radio silence. The government's approach is hard to follow. It is behaving like a CEO without a business plan. It decides to hire staff without knowing what positions need to be filled. It launches a new product without knowing if it has any clients or if people are even interested in the product.

It is as though the government decided to sell off its most beautiful beachfront property without telling shareholders whether it wants contractors to build condos, houses, apartments, hotels or businesses. CEOs who do not have a business plan do not get very far, as we know.

The fact that the industry minister has decided to push through his amendments to the Telecommunications Act by including them in a budget implementation bill, where they will be all be debated together over a very short period of time and along with a heap of other bills, only adds to the sense that the government is just making things up as it goes along.

Resorting to a catch-all omnibus bill gives the impression that the government is like a tired chess player who is improvising with every move. It is playing a game without having a plan. We feel that the government introduces legislation first and asks questions later.

These amendments to the Telecommunications Act should have gone to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology for in-depth study by parliamentarians from the opposition parties. This is a fundamental breach of democracy.

Is the industry minister afraid that the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology might discover that the changes to the act will not really promote competition in the Canadian wireless market?

Is the government afraid of hearing experts and even some of its own partners say that the proposed changes will not bridge the ever-widening gap between rural Canada and connected Canada?

Is the government afraid of hearing from wireless network operators that are dissatisfied with the auction rules that have been announced?

• (1655)

[English]

The lifting of foreign ownership requirements and the piecemeal approach to regulation the government is offering are not going to solve the problem of the digital economy. What Canada needs is a plan, a digital strategy. Canadians have already been waiting too long. We need a comprehensive approach to ensure competitive prices in the telecommunications industry, an approach that takes into account the needs of telecommunications operators, consumers and urban and rural Canadians. Rather than choosing dialogue and involving opposition parties in the legislation process, the government has chosen to ride the Trojan horse to hide changes to the Telecommunications Act from the scrutiny of Parliament and the industry committee. That is undemocratic and unacceptable.

[Translation]

Once again, I urge the industry minister to send the amendments to the Telecommunications Act for study by the appropriate committee and the opposition parties. We have a unique opportunity to bridge the digital divide and build next generation wireless networks to ensure the sustainability of Canada's digital economy, so that no one is left behind.

Let us not squander this important opportunity. Let us work together.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for her presentation. I hope she will forgive me for using this as a moment for a comment.

I have been subjected to speeches on Bill C-38. A number of claims have been made by government members. Having read the bill, a number of the things that have been said are simply not in the legislation.

For example, it is not required in the legislation that the Minister of the Environment be satisfied the provincial process is equivalent before a substitution occurs. The language is completely discretionary, and merely says the minister must decide it is an appropriate substitution. "Appropriate" is not defined. Then there is a mandatory duty on the federal minister to turn the project over to a province if the province requests it.

Tanker safety regulations are not put forward anywhere in Bill C-38. That may be something they intend to do, but it is certainly not in Bill C-38.

Bill C-38 is not a budget bill, it is the decimation of environmental laws.

• (1700)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to have this opportunity to respond to the comments made by my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands.

The bill certainly does cover a lot of ground. My colleague mentioned just one of the issues that deserves our attention. I would like to reiterate my belief that the Standing Committee on Environment should thoroughly study the section of the bill relating to its mandate, just as everything I talked about should be studied by the Standing Committee on Industry.

[English]

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is really important to note the work that is happening in the industry committee right now, of which she is a member, and where there is time to be able to go through government legislation properly. My colleague ably noted that process issue that we are losing.

Would the member expand upon the foreign ownership issue with regard to what has taken place in the past? We have seen the industry adjusted twice in recent years: the first time led to less competition in some urban areas, and the second time the minister actually put the Government of Canada into a lawsuit.

Government Orders

I would like to ask the member about due process. Why it would be more advantageous to go to committee and avoid those problems? These changes were in previous budget bills, at least one was, and that was the end result: no due diligence.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. We work very well together as a strong team committed to carefully studying every file that comes before us.

With respect to the section on changes to the Telecommunications Act, we found that none of the proposed scenarios intended to increase competition so that rural regions can benefit from the high-speed wireless network met the policy objectives.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question from my colleague from Windsor West. We certainly do have time in the industry committee to engage in studies on this bill.

Would the member for LaSalle—Émard comment on changes in the budget that are coming up on the Investment Canada Act, changes that have been put in by the government before the industry committee has had the opportunity to actually study those questions?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard for a brief answer.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. Once again, my colleague mentioned another issue—the bill is a brick and covers all sorts of things—that the Standing Committee on Industry should have studied.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House today to oppose both the form and the substance of Bill C-38.

This bill is a jumble of dangerous legislation rolled up into an omnibus bill. In the time allotted to me, it will be impossible to identify the multitude of problems this bill contains, but I will nonetheless try to address as many of them as possible, because these legislative changes will hit my constituents in d'Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel hard.

Among other things, this bill raises the eligibility age for old age security and guaranteed income supplement benefits; repeals the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act; weakens the environmental assessment system and the measures to protect fish habitats, to expedite approval of large projects; changes the definition of interested parties, to narrow the scope of public participation in the environmental decision-making process; eliminates the Auditor General's oversight of a number of agencies; repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Work Act, which will allow employers to circumvent the wage rates set by unions for construction workers hired on projects funded by the federal government; amends the Employment Equity Act so it does not apply to federal contracts, which is a direct attack on women, aboriginal people, persons with a disability and visible minorities; and amends the Seeds Act so that private businesses can then be allowed to perform food inspections.

This bill does a lot of other things, but these aspects in particular are really going to hurt my constituents in Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

I want to talk in greater detail about the fact that Bill C-38 repeals the Fair Wages and Hours of Work Act. That act has protected construction workers who work on federal projects since 1930. It guarantees them reasonable hours and a decent wage. But the government is now attacking these workers and their fair and equitable wages. Without that protection, we will be going back to the standards that were in effect in the 1930s.

As well, the Employment Equity Act will no longer apply to federal contracts. The role of that law is to protect the rights of women, minorities, aboriginal people and persons with a disability. Even with that legislation, those groups continued to suffer discrimination. And now, the government wants to take away what little protection there is.

I very much hope for the day when we live in a world where that act is no longer needed, but that is absolutely not the case. In 2002, in fact, it was recommended that this House strengthen the act, not narrow its reach.

These changes to the rules governing government subcontractors can be based in nothing other than the Conservative ideology that wants to demolish Canadians' rights by allowing discrimination and unfair wages.

The federal government should be an exemplary employer. How can Canadians trust a government that attacks the rights of workers and its subcontractors when it comes time to protect them from the abuses of faceless megacorporations?

The current government loses on all fronts when it attacks its own employees and does nothing to protect others from brutal layoffs by companies chasing huge profits overseas.

This omnibus bill is not only dangerous for our institutions and for workers, but it also attacks the health and safety of all Canadians. Environmental deregulation and cuts to food safety are similar in their impact and, accordingly, the entire food production chain will be affected.

With environmental deregulation, we will no longer be able to protect our air, our water and our soil. Opening the door to privatizing the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will open the door to having seed inspections done by a subcontractor. That means less control and less information for the government, which could always deny knowing anything if things go wrong. This could also apply to food inspection. The government keeps offloading its responsibilities.

● (1705)

Ultimately, this deregulation and whittling away of checks and balances could have an effect on the health of Canadians. What is more, the government is weakening transparency and responsibility within government in the area of health.

Government Orders

This bill is bad for the Canadians in my riding. From Oka to Montpellier, Canadians want environmental regulations that protect them. From Mirabel to Ripon, farmers want to be able to count on the government to have regulations and inspections that are solid, fair and meaningful. From Morin Heights to Thurso, Canadians are fed up with this government, which has shamed us by withdrawing from the Kyoto protocol and is now waging a full-blown war on all the sectors of government that are responsible for providing a healthy environment for all Quebecers and Canadians.

And just when we thought that the government could not stoop any lower, in the same bill it is attacking pensions by raising the retirement age from 65 to 67. As elected representatives, we cannot reduce the deficit by stealing Canadians' pensions. The OAS and the GIS are crucial to our public system because they help to fight poverty. The Conservatives are stealing two years of Canadians' pensions for reasons that do not make sense. There is no old age security funding crisis in Canada.

The government's most recent actuarial report indicates that the OAS and the GIS accounted for 2.37% of GDP last year, in 2011. This percentage will rise modestly to 3.16% in 2030, but will then fall below the current level to 2.35% of GDP in 2060. Clearly, there is no problem with long-term viability, and yet the Conservatives are trying to fool us by saying that these changes are intended to ensure the long-term viability of the program. However, these programs are efficient and economically sound, and the government's statements are unfounded.

In closing, the Conservatives are claiming that this budget focuses on job creation. In reality, however, a third of this bill is dedicated to scrapping regulations that protect the environment. Moreover, the Parliamentary Budget Officer has indicated that the legislation will result in the loss of 43,000 Canadian jobs. And on top of all that, we are going to have to vote on a bill without having an opportunity to engage in a proper debate on it.

I would like to draw the House's attention to what H el ene Buzzetti wrote in *Le Devoir* on April 27:

Yesterday the Conservative government introduced a mammoth budget implementation bill.... Everything will be examined as quickly as possible by a committee that specializes in finance.

Each of these issues could have been dealt with in a separate bill and analyzed by the appropriate parliamentary committee. Instead, the government lumped them all together in one document that will be studied all at once...

A mammoth bill, that is what the media is calling it. I would remind the Conservatives that the mammoth is an extinct species. I hope the members across the floor realize that this omnibus bill should suffer the same fate and die when it comes time to vote.

• (1710)

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Industry and Minister of State (Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I heard the member talking about her riding.

I also travelled around her riding and saw young people in Mirabel who were very happy with the support we are providing, particularly for the aerospace industry, and with the fact that we are funding research and development, innovation, and science and technology, in order to be able to stand out and market innovative ideas, in other words, to create wealth.

In order to provide quality services, we need to create wealth. This means reducing red tape, helping our industries and stimulating the economy, as we did during the recession. We were able to create 700,000 net new jobs. The member's party voted against all of those initiatives at the time.

Frankly, if we had followed the NDP way of thinking, the recession would have hit Canada much harder. We would be facing a debt crisis, just as the rest of the world is right now.

I do not understand how she can talk about people in her riding when we have a positive record, particularly in the Mirabel area in the aerospace industry.

Ms. Myl ene Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote my colleague from Hamilton.

[English]

My colleague from Hamilton just said that if the government were so proud of it, why did it not send it to the industry committee?

[Translation]

I live in Saint-Augustin-de-Mirabel, and I spend a lot of time talking to the people of Mirabel. The issue that the people of Mirabel are most concerned about is the environment. In fact, at least one-third of Bill C-38, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on March 29, 2012 and other measures, is about environmental deregulation. The government is implementing everything it said it would and more. My constituents had already completely lost faith in the government for attacking the environment, doing nothing and withdrawing from the Kyoto protocol. Now things are even worse.

• (1715)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. I would like to talk to her about a specific issue.

We are both members of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. The member for Burlington, Ontario, spoke in committee a little while ago. He must be in the lobby. He must understand.

I know that the Standing Orders prevent me from saying where a member is, so I apologize. Still, I know he is there.

During a meeting of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the member mentioned that the budget will help aboriginal communities. Fortunately, a professor from First Nations University of Canada in Alberta told us that, among other things, the budget was cut by 100%. I hardly dare say it.

If that is what they call helping aboriginal communities, what more could they do to hurt them?

[English]

Ms. Myl ene Freeman: Mr. Speaker, this gives me another chance to talk about my riding.

Government Orders

The community of Kanesatake in my riding is concerned about the consultation that is being done with first nations when it comes to a wide variety of things, but especially the environment. Bill C-38 would cut back on the community's ability to be consulted with respect to its concerns on environmental issues.

I would remind the member that Kanesatake is on the St. Lawrence River near the Ottawa River and on Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes. Those waterways have wide implications for federal waters and things like that, yet up until now there has not been enough consultation and not enough has been done to protect those waterways. Now the people who really care about them will not be consulted as much.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Fredericton.

It is my honour to be here today to speak to the budget and budget implementation. It is something that is actually very easy to speak to, because it makes so much sense and it actually sets Canada up for a future that will be very strong.

We will not raise taxes. We will not be balancing our books on the backs of the provinces. We actually have a game plan that will create a Canada that we will love into the future, a Canada that will be prosperous into the future and a Canada that we all can be proud of.

We will have low taxes, growth and proper prudent fiscal management, which will, as I said, bring about strong economic growth. I see a bright future not just for us sitting here today, but for our kids, our grandkids and our great-grandkids. It will be a great time to be a Canadian, and we should all be proud of it. We should compliment the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance on how great a job they have done on the budget.

In the past two years, our government has already cut Canada's temporary planned deficit from the recession in half, a deficit that all members of Parliament agreed was necessary to stimulate the economy through investment in infrastructure. Since then, our economy has created some 700,000 net new jobs, placing Canada in one of the strongest fiscal positions in the G7.

Thanks to the government's strong fiscal management, Canada's budgetary balance will not be reached through the type of harsh fiscal and economic shocks now being implemented in parts of Europe, but through a building of Canada's successes by implementing moderate restraint in government spending. The majority of savings in spending will come from eliminating waste in internal government operations. We will make government leaner and more efficient. By doing this, we will be able to stay on track to balance Canada's budget by 2015.

The economic action plan 2012 will also not cut transfers to the provinces or senior levels of government. We will not balance our books on the backs of seniors and we will not balance our books on the backs of the municipalities or the provinces. We will balance the books through a combination of growth and finding efficiencies within the federal government that are there right now and that we can find with the departments. Unlike the Liberal government, which balanced its books on the backs of seniors and the provinces and created incredibly long wait-lists for medical attention and doctors'

treatments, we will actually be increasing the transfers for health care and education. This budget is doing something that the Liberals never could do: it is taking responsibility for its own spending and ensuring that the use of taxpayer money is done in a proper fashion.

My province, Saskatchewan, will receive close to \$1.3 billion in transfers in 2012-13. This long-term, growing support helps ensure that Saskatchewan will have the resources required to provide essential public services and contributes to the shared national objectives, including health care, post-secondary education and other key components of Canada's social programs.

Saskatchewan will also benefit from continued direct targeted support in 2012-13. It includes \$14 million for labour market training as part of a commitment of \$500 million a year in new funding to the provinces and territories, which began in 2008-09, and \$8 million for the wait times reduction funds, part of the 10-year plan to strengthen health care across Canada.

We are working to strengthen the financial strength of workers, businesses and families to help create good jobs and long-term prosperity from coast to coast to coast. To help do this, for instance, we will extend by one year the hiring credit for small businesses, a measure we already know works to encourage employers to hire more workers. Furthermore, we will increase our funding for skills training for students, older workers and those Canadians with disabilities.

In Saskatchewan, our unemployment has been staying around that 4% to 5% range. It is actually a province that is doing very well. It is a province that came from an NDP background where we were shipping our kids to Alberta and everywhere else across Canada to get jobs. All of a sudden, we changed to a government that actually knew how to embrace the economy and let business do what business does, which is create jobs. This budget also does that.

When we look at the results in Saskatchewan, with a 4% to 5% unemployment rate, there is growth. We are looking for trades, skills and people. It is such an amazing success story. That is something we want to see continue right across Canada. We can never let the NDP get a foothold here in Ottawa because it would do what it did in Saskatchewan and it would actually break the country.

Another part of our plans for jobs, growth and long-term prosperity includes investing in innovation and world-class research. In response to the Jenkins report, economic action plan 2012 includes substantial funding to help create value-added jobs through innovation. We will better support the National Research Council and the industrial research and development internship program. We are also committed to additional funding to support advanced research at universities and other research institutions. We are making Canada the best place to invest.

• (1720)

We need to ensure that Canada is the place in which businesses want to invest in the long term. In the next 10 years, more than 500 economic projects representing \$500 billion in new investments are planned across our country. In Saskatchewan, natural resources, from potash to oil, gold, coal, diamonds and uranium, offer huge potential and create even more jobs and growth.

Government Orders

To reach our country's full economic potential, we will implement reasonable, responsible development and smart regulations for major economic projects, respecting provincial jurisdictions and maintaining the highest standards of environmental protection. We will also streamline the review process for such projects according to the following principles: one project, one review, completed in a clearly defined time period, which will ensure that Canada has the infrastructure we need to move our exports to new markets.

That is very important for the province of Saskatchewan, because we have so many resources that are in the process of being developed. These guys go out, stake their claim, develop a mine and prove that it is financially viable, and then they sit there and wait, and it is not one year, not two years, not three years, not four years: they are waiting five or six years in order to get the environmental process completed, an environmental process that is stacked upon province and federal.

If we look at the situation now, these projects will get completed in two years, or three years at the most. They will have some bankability and know that when they invest big dollars, millions and millions of dollars, it will have a huge impact in ensuring the project is viable and can become a mine. However, what is very important, and something that we have stressed throughout, is that we will not shortchange or short-cheat the environment. We are ensuring that all the environmental requirements are met and we are working with the provinces to ensure those environmental standards are up to a standard that Canadians expect and deserve. We are not taking any shortcuts. Again, we are just getting rid of duplication, waste and bureaucracy.

One thing this government has done very well over the last few years is on international trade, and I congratulate the Minister of International Trade for the work he has done on this file. We will have a low corporate tax rate of around 15%. We have a market already through NAFTA that has roughly 300 million consumers, and then, with the Canadian-European trade agreement that we are working on, we will have another 500 million consumers.

Canada will be the only country in the world that will have market access to not only of the U.S., Mexico and other trading partners that we have agreements with already, but we will have market access to the European Union once the Canadian-European trade agreement is done. I cannot tell members how huge this is will be for Canada. It will create so many jobs it is unreal. We will have access to 500 million more consumers. We will have access for companies that would have low tax rates to locate here in Canada. They will know that just by locating here, they will have 800 million consumers they can trade with, and that is not counting the other trade agreements we have with Chile and Peru and the possibility of the Trans-Pacific partnership that we are working on and hopefully will be involved with in the future. Canada gets it. The Minister of International Trade gets it. We are an exporting country.

I come from a province of agriculture producers. We make our money from trading. We need to ensure we have market access. Our minister understands that and is doing everything he can to ensure that we have it. That is one of the things that will make this country a bright country in the future.

There are so many things we can talk about in the budget and how it will impact families, pensioners and long-term prosperity. However, I cannot stress enough that when we combine low tax rates, we create jobs.

When companies have a low tax rate, they create jobs. I know the NDP thinks that companies are these huge multinationals, but there are companies like Ted Matheson Men's Wear in Prince Albert. When his tax rate is a little lower, he can hire another employee to work in his store. It is the manufacturers that we see out in St. Brieux, like Bourgault Industries, which is not a small manufacturer by any means, but when they have low tax rates, they are reinvesting in that small town of St. Brieux and in the areas of Melfort, Tisdale and Humboldt. That is what happens when we have low tax rates. It is better to leave that money with the companies and have them invest it in their communities than to send it to Ottawa and have it wasted somewhere else.

I think that if businesses are wondering where they should set up a business to manufacture and grow, it is right here in Canada. This budget helps implement and put in place the solid rooting for proper businesses to grow in the future throughout the world.

It is an amazing budget and one that I am proud to support. I cannot imagine how somebody could not support this budget. If they do not support this budget, then they do not have Canada's long-term interests at heart.

● (1725)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for that information.

Bill C-38 contains many provisions, in particular, division 49 of part 4.

Why eliminate the First Nations Statistical Institute? By doing so, I believe the government is eliminating an independent source of statistics on first nations. In my riding of Joliette, there is the Manawan Atikamekw community.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, it is classic NDP spending priorities. We can take that money, put it on statistics and hire people who will study and study more things, or we can actually take that money and put into more education for aboriginal students, because that is what they are asking for in my riding. They are asking for more spaces to go to school, to take on a trade or get a university degree. They are asking for better funding for their elementary schools and high schools.

When we have a dollar to spend, I know the NDP would rather spend it on some theory or some professor doing some theoretical work. The member should not get me wrong; I am sure the statistical work is very important work, but if we only have a dollar to spend in a lot of situations, we need to ensure that dollar is used in the most effective way. I think it is more effectively used getting direct impact help to the aboriginal kids and students who require it than going to some other areas.

Government Orders

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member for Prince Albert has been working hard in his riding representing the agricultural community. A lot that is in the budget really does help out agriculture. It helps out our municipalities. It really does address a lot of the concerns and needs that we have in rural Canada.

I was wondering if the member wanted to talk about some of the changes that we are making to the way we are handling the permit process for clean ditches, drains, municipal projects and helping farmers deal with excess water.

In my riding of Selkirk—Interlake, we have dealt with excess moisture for three out of the last five years. There have been delays in getting permits from DFO to do something as simple as cleaning out a culvert or building some drains on some farmland. We are backlogged because of DFO as well as the Manitoban government's permit processes. I would like him to talk about how important that is for his agriculture producers to deal with issues in a real time situation so that they can get a crop into the ground and develop better opportunities to advance their productivity.

● (1730)

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Selkirk—Interlake had a lot of input in this budget because, if we look at his situation, these are areas where he had a lot of concern for his constituents. He wanted to ensure they had the tools and resources they needed to get the job done on their farms and ensure they can produce a good, healthy crop and have a good lifestyle.

What we were seeing in Saskatchewan with my riding and in the municipalities was just silliness. People would go to put in a culvert and all of a sudden DFO representatives would come and say that they could not do it. They would actually say, “You've got to park that backhoe for three weeks until we come back and look at where you're going to put that culvert. You're going to have to maybe change it by two feet or three feet or you're going to have to put a whole pile of stuff in there.”

What was interesting was that in a lot of these waterways, there was no water. They were waterways where maybe for three weeks water would flow during the spring runoff, and then there would be no water in them for the rest of the year unless we had a torrential downpour. There was silliness going on on the Prairies in terms of DFO, the navigable waters and Fisheries and Oceans.

That is one thing the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans got correct. He understands what is important to maintain a proper vibrant fishery. He also understands the balance of ensuring that what is represented and what is done on the Prairies is actually taking care of the fisheries and also taking care of the needs of farmers and the rural municipalities that work in the area.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the hon. member's remarks.

I would like to ask him how this budget will promote employment or the type of industry that will add value to our natural resources. This is a problem. The government wants to take our primary resources and export them. We do a lot of trade with many partners.

But how does this budget add value to our natural resources to ensure that we have many high-paying jobs?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Hoback: Mr. Speaker, I could go on for hours on what the response will be from the manufacturing sector and the resource development sector on this budget because of what we have done. Right off the bat I can say that having a low corporate income tax rate is an incentive for companies to locate for value-added here on the Prairies, and that is in the budget. The ability to have markets to sell their products to is something that we are working on through the Minister of International Trade and the trade agreements. Setting the stage so business can go out and employ people and locate here in Canada is important.

That is what we are doing in this budget. We are making it so that government is not creating jobs, business is creating jobs. They will create thousands of jobs, perhaps millions of jobs, based on the good foundations that are being set in this budget.

Hon. Keith Ashfield (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to address some vital and sensible changes proposed by the jobs, growth and long-term prosperity act.

I would like to first acknowledge and thank my colleague, the Minister of Finance, for putting together a visionary, thoughtful and thorough budget.

I am proud to be part of a government that is taking much-needed steps to help Canadians address the challenges of today's global economy. Our government recognizes that Canada is lucky to be the steward of a vast and abundant array of natural resources. We want to ensure they can contribute to our economic growth and job creation in a sustainable and responsible way now and for future generations.

One of Canada's traditional resources is our fishery. As part of our government's commitment to jobs, growth and long-term prosperity, we have introduced changes to the Fisheries Act that would put a focus on protecting Canadian fisheries. These proposed changes to the Fisheries Act would shift the Department of Fisheries and Oceans from managing all impacts on all fish and all habitat to focusing on protecting Canada's fisheries and the habitat that supports it.

The current Fisheries Act's provisions are indiscriminate. They require that all projects and all waters, regardless of the fish species present or their contribution to fisheries, be considered in the same way.

Under the current rules, an irrigation canal on a farmer's field is valued the same way as the Great Lakes. We frankly do not think that makes a lot of sense.

Government Orders

The role and responsibility of Fisheries and Oceans Canada is indeed to protect this marvellous historic important resource, our fishery. We believe that Canadians want their government to make good, common-sense changes to the system so we can minimize or eliminate restrictions on routine activities on non-protected waterways and, at the same time, maintain appropriate, reasonable and responsible protection for Canada's fisheries.

In short, our government believes that fish protection policies should focus on Canada's fisheries, not on farmers' fields and flood plains.

Contrary to what some opposition members have been saying, the habitat that supports Canada's fisheries includes areas where these fish live, grow and reproduce along with the fish they eat.

We are in good company in our belief that Canada's fish protection policies should focus on fisheries instead of non-productive areas like drainage ditches or irrigation channels.

Berry Vrbanovic, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, has said that the changes "...will allow governments to spend less time processing paperwork for small, low-risk public works...".

This is good common sense, and a very conservative approach to boot.

He went on to say that:

These reforms will make it easier for governments to set clear, sensible priorities for protecting fish habitats. Currently the Fisheries Act applies the same protections to rivers and streams as municipal drains and farmers' irrigation canals. That doesn't make sense.

We agree with him and the countless other municipal leaders who have been calling for these types of reforms for many years.

Opposition parties should spend more time listening to Canadians about the countless tales of the current rules protecting ditches, man-made reservoirs and flood plains while they should be protecting rivers, lakes and oceans that are home to our fisheries.

Unlike the opposition, we are listening to Canadians. This government will ensure that decisions regarding Canada's vital waterways are made by Canadians in the interest of Canadians.

These proposed amendments would allow us to manage a range of threats, including the killing of fish, the permanent alteration and destruction of fish habitat, and aquatic invasive species.

To manage the threats to the fisheries, we would be able to identify ecologically significant areas for fisheries and ensure higher levels of protection for these areas. We would be able to enforce conditions through the Fisheries Act authorizations. Currently, DFO can set conditions but, believe it or not, cannot enforce them.

These changes would allow us to crack down on those who break the rules and they would align penalties under the Fisheries Act with those in the Environmental Enforcement Act, resulting in much stiffer penalties.

Now that we have set the direction, we will consult with interested groups, conservationists with expertise in protecting waterways,

fishermen who benefit from the resource, aboriginals, provinces and territories and municipalities.

• (1735)

These consultations would inform us as we develop the regulatory and policy framework that would support and better define the changes. We will continue to build partnerships with those committed to preserving and protecting fisheries, with the hope that they can play an even larger role in the future.

In fact, we want to enhance partnerships with provinces and territories, industry and conservation groups. Where provinces and territories have laws or regulations for fisheries protection that are at least equivalent to our own, we would now recognize the provincial laws to avoid an unnecessarily duplicative process. We would now be able to incorporate best practices fisheries protection standards established by provinces or industry. The amendments would enable the government to allow other regulators to issue authorizations under the Fisheries Act, such as a province or a federal agency.

We would also be able to enter into agreements with third parties, such as conservation groups or professional organizations, to carry out and further the protection of our fisheries and the habitat that supports it. We want to work better and smarter with our partners and we want the rules to work more sensibly and practically for Canadians.

We would clarify situations where development poses the highest risk to fish and fish habitat and those areas of limited risk. We would establish a new framework, in conjunction with stakeholders, to make it easier for people to comply with the Fisheries Act while working in or near water. This would include identifying classes of low-risk work, such as installing a cottage dock, and classes of water where project reviews would not be required. For medium-risk projects, standards would be established allowing Canadians much-needed clarity while they carry out those projects.

Federal pollution protection laws would continue to protect Canada's waterways as they have in the past. We do not believe it is sensible or practical to treat all bodies of water the same way, and our government is making long-overdue changes to our rules to focus DFO on what is important to Canadians. It makes good common sense that the government should be able to minimize or eliminate restrictions on commonplace activities that pose little or no threat and, at the same time, maintain appropriate, reasonable and responsible protection for Canada's fisheries.

Other Canadians also believe that the Fisheries Act is in need of an update. Ducks Unlimited, for example, has noted that:

...the [Conservative] government announced that it commits to the responsible protection and conservation of Canada's fisheries. Ducks Unlimited...supports this direction and understands that laws and regulations must be updated at interval to ensure that they address evolving social, economic and environmental systems, as well as support efficient process to achieve desired outcomes.

It went on to say:

DUC supports the federal government in updating the federal fisheries legislation and taking a targeted approach that would support the conservation and sustainable use of our fisheries resources. Also, the proposed changes will make it easier for the fisheries legislation and regulations to be enforced.

Let us take a look at what these changes can mean for Canadians. For anglers, the proposed changes would provide specific protection for recreational fisheries and support their ongoing productivity. For conservation groups, the proposed changes would enable the identification and protection of ecologically significant areas. Under the new rules, we would also be able to enter into agreements with these and other groups to undertake enhanced fisheries protection. This could include innovative approaches to protect habitat, support for aquatic invasive species outreach and development of standards for fish protection or other matters.

These proposed changes also include enhanced compliance and enforcement tools such as enforceable conditions, duty for proponents to notify in the event of serious harm to fisheries and penalties aligned with the Environmental Enforcement Act.

In conclusion, our recreational, commercial and aboriginal fisheries are important to Canadians. We want our rules that protect this resource to be sensible, clear and practical, and we want to ensure that they focus on the priorities of Canadians.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really enjoyed the Conservative member's speech because it brought back some happy memories.

That being said, I disagree with him. I am an agronomist and I worked on agricultural watershed projects to improve water quality.

I know that farmers are concerned about water quality, not only in waterways but also in ditches. They are looking for ways to improve it. Changing the legislation is not going to help them in this regard because water flows everywhere. It leaves a ditch and travels to a stream, which flows into a river that leads to the ocean. Everything is connected and interconnected. We have to find solutions to protect fish habitats—solutions other than those proposed by the hon. member.

We have to think about conservation and about compensating farmers.

I would like to know whether the hon. member has anything to suggest that will help farmers while protecting ditches and waterways.

[English]

Hon. Keith Ashfield: Mr. Speaker, the waterways that maintain our resources and aboriginal, commercial and recreational fisheries are of the utmost importance to us as a government.

The member opposite talked about farmers' fields. I have heard numerous stories across this country about some of the obstacles

Government Orders

farmers face each and every day. A gentleman, the other day, was telling me that he had a drainage culvert that was plugged and he could not get DFO authorization to unplug it. It went on for years and flooded his fields. In the end, what did he have to do? He built a road down the middle of his farm and ditched it on both sides so he could drain the water away from his fields. Those types of things are happening across this country, on the east coast and the west coast and in central Canada.

• (1745)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for his speech as well as his service to Canada and Canada's fisheries. I know he works hard on behalf of all Canadians.

His speech was about the protection of Canada's fisheries in general. The committee, in recent weeks and months, has been looking at the Great Lakes fisheries, particularly the potential threat that aquatic invasive species pose to what is about a \$7 billion or \$8 billion fishery, both recreational and commercial. The witnesses have pointed out there are some gaps in both the law and the regulations about how aquatic invasive species are managed, their transportation and importation and those matters.

Can the minister tell us if the changes in the Fisheries Act that are in this piece of legislation would address that regulatory gap?

Hon. Keith Ashfield: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question because there is a major gap in the current fisheries legislation when it comes to aquatic invasive species. Whether it be Asian carp, zebra mussels, lampreys or others, we have to be very aware of it. There is nothing in our legislation now that allows us to address that. The changes in the act would address those issues. It would establish a list of aquatic invasive species and regulate the way aquatic invasive species are controlled to prevent their spread. It would also address the transport of live fish across borders. There is a huge market in Canada for Asian carp and we have to end that type of policy. Therefore, yes, the changes would address the regulatory gaps.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to Bill C-38. We New Democrats oppose the bill for content and process. I will get into both of those themes during my deliberations this afternoon.

I would like to carry on with a little discussion with regard to the Great Lakes. People in Windsor live along the Detroit River. There has been a lack of action by the government on the Great Lakes despite the U.S. Obama administration addressing some of the issues. The Americans recently made a \$500 million investment into the Great Lakes, and in the budget prior to this one, put \$800 million into it. In fact, because so little was put into our Great Lakes system, the fake lake in Muskoka got more per capita contribution than any of the Great Lakes did.

Government Orders

That is important, because we are deficient not only in terms of environmental practices but also in services. We do not have some recovery services for men and women in distress on the Great Lakes. Our Coast Guards do a very good job of responding when they can, but at the Ambassador Bridge, for example, there is no recovery immediately available there when work is being done, and something needs to be done about that in case somebody falls off, a worker in particular. We had another death recently when a worker fell off into the Detroit River.

I want to move toward some of the content of the cuts that are taking place with regard to the budget. I will start with the OAS and the GIS, and in particular the raising of the age from 65 to 67.

Just so the public is aware, individuals have to apply for the GIS, the guaranteed income supplement. It is not automatically provided, so if people do not know this—and we deal with this situation all the time—they would not automatically receive that additional supplement. I would encourage the viewing audience out there to look at their pensions and, if they are past the age of 65, to inquire of their members of Parliament as to whether they are eligible for the GIS. It is a very important supplement that does not always get moved through to them.

Similar to that is the disability tax credit. If people do not actually apply for it, they will not get it. Both the GIS and the disability tax credit could be retroactive. It is important to know that, and people should contact their local members of Parliament.

A number of years ago I had the opportunity to go across this country on what was called the seniors charter of rights. It was a motion that was put forth to this House for a number of years, and it built up enough support over that time that it was eventually carried by another member, the member for Hamilton Mountain. The motion was then passed, but sadly, this has not been brought to fruition.

Many of the elements of the seniors charter of rights called for increasing the government's contributions to the pensions. It noted that we had to look at this issue because many seniors were in poverty. It called for housing as an adequate strategy to deal with poverty and issues like that, and for more inclusion in society by making sure that seniors were not left out of government policy. It even looked at a seniors minister as a potential solution to making sure seniors' voices would be heard as the demographics of the aged increased. As well, there were provisions related to pharmaceutical and other costs that we identified.

We heard quite clearly across Canada that seniors were very concerned about all of these issues, and never would I have imagined at that time that the government would be looking at increasing its date for acquisition of benefits.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer and other experts have noted that we are not in a crisis with regard to that issue. With proper prudent fiscal management, we will be fine.

Second, we are opposed to a corporate tax cut. Right now, a corporate tax cut basically goes to the corporation. There is no guarantee it will actually be spent in Canada. In fact, some corporations are taxed on worldwide profits, so Canada does not actually benefit from some of the taxation on those corporations that takes place in other countries.

We still have continuation of subsidies to the oil patch. That is unacceptable and should be stricken right away. As well, the OAS and the GIS supplements, in the vast majority of cases and unless individuals leave the country with the money, are generally spent in the country, providing a multiplier effect much higher than the corporate tax cut.

I know it has been argued many times that the corporate tax cut is a job creation strategy; it is not. It could be used as one of several tools to try to spur investment, but the reality is that it has not. It is actually counter to what has been happening in the manufacturing sector. Over the years that the Conservatives have been reducing corporate taxes since coming to power in February 2006, we have lost around 365,000 manufacturing jobs. That is shocking.

• (1750)

It is shocking because it also speaks to the Conservative trade policy, which has failed this nation significantly and continues to do so. I especially want to note the auto industry. What we have seen, counter to that, is higher corporate taxes in U.S. states, as well as higher federal taxes, and the United States has been growing its manufacturing jobs. The Obama administration has a job strategy to win back jobs, including jobs from Canada, and we have done nothing on that.

The auto industry was again ignored in this budget. The automobile is the number one value-added item traded throughout the world. Sadly, the government is looking at some trade agreements that actually threaten the auto industry. I would note, on the Canada-European trade agreement, that right now the EU has a \$20 to \$1 trade surplus with us, so they are dumping autos into Canada.

South Korea has a potential trade agreement. South Korea sells literally hundreds of thousands of vehicles in Canada, and we barely sell any at all—maybe 50, I am told—in South Korea. They have tariff and non-tariff barriers. We also have the potential of a Japan agreement, where again we cannot enter their market.

Japan, Korea and Germany have state-supported auto industries. They are actually involved in crafting policy, providing resources and making sure the jobs are going to stay local. Some of these countries actually have shares in the companies.

The government originally ran away from the auto bailout, the auto loans that were needed. Thank goodness for the public pressure to reverse that decision. Now we have success, but it is still very fragile. The auto industry is very fragile right now.

Government Orders

I would point out the government's lack of interest in the auto industry and the fact that the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council has not met in years. Only the executive has met. There have been very few meetings, and they have not been very robust. It is very unfortunate, because that model brings in the suppliers, the auto workers, the companies, the tool and die mold makers and the dealerships. They crafted a plan that provided a benchmark system to cherry-pick the top items we could actually work on to create a robust auto strategy.

The government's response to the Bush administration's \$25 billion auto and energy act was basically a \$250 million fund over five years, which is virtually an empty tank right now. That is a big problem.

I do want to talk a little bit about process, as much of that legislation did not come to the chamber. One of those pieces of legislation is a shiprider program. A shiprider program is going to allow United States officers to participate and actually arrest and detain Canadian citizens. That is actually not going to go to committee. A similar bill went to the Senate. It was very extreme. It did not distinguish the new teams. We do not have the details on it. It is sad.

Right now 1,100 jobs at CBSA are being affected through the cuts that are taking place. It is \$143 million cut from our Canada Border Services Agency. We are now going to be doing more work with less resources. It involves the investigators, who take drug smuggling, child pornography, human smuggling and all those things very seriously.

The government is actually cutting 25% of the dog teams; 19 dog teams are being eliminated. They cost \$100,000 for the investment in training for the human and the animal. Those are going to be sunsetted. That is unfortunate, because they are very specific and get the things that got past the original set of border officers.

It is very important that those positions remain. By allowing this to happen, we are certainly going to see more guns on the streets and more drugs on the streets, and organized crime will benefit. It is terribly unfortunate, because the evidence is there.

The government is cutting a number of the investigators who work with U.S. and other officials to break these cases open. They are undercover, in many respects. They are going to be affected as well.

As I conclude here, it is rather unfortunate that this is taking place, because it is not acceptable for Canadians.

•(1755)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his dissertation this afternoon. I am not sure I understood most of it. He was all over the map.

My question for the member is based on his last few comments. The member is not in favour of the government finding the \$5 billion in savings. The math is simple: to balance the books, we either raise revenue or cut expenses. In this case, that is what we are doing: cutting expenses.

What taxes would the NDP raise to be able to balance the books? Does the member have that answer?

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the member did not understand my speech.

There are many things we could cut. We could stop the corporate tax cuts to the oil and gas industry.

We have to improve our revenue stream. Under the Conservatives' rule, the manufacturing deficit has gone from \$16 billion to \$80 billion. That is costing our revenue stream. Those companies provided important value-added jobs and paid taxes. They were not just shipping out logs or oil and gas or other resources. Value-added jobs have been lost in these sectors, and those revenue streams need to be recovered.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Windsor West, with whom I serve on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology

He spoke about the process for this bill. I would like him to comment on the importance of studying the different parts of this bill in committee, especially the parts that deal with the Investment Canada Act and the Telecommunications Act, which will bring about major changes.

•(1800)

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, starting with the Martin administration, the government started to add different pieces of legislation into budget bills. When that happens, the normal process does not take place. Those different pieces of legislation are not independent. They are not tabled in the House or debated in the House. They are not passed on to committee, where they would be studied and sent back to the House, possibly with amendments. They would be looked at again and possibly passed.

There is an improvement process. In the previous Parliaments the parties actually co-operated, and some amendments were made to certain bills that made them more important and better. The Investment Canada Act is a good example. That legislation was thrown into a budget bill, so the entire improvement process was missed. That act is coming back in another budget bill because it is still broken.

That is the problem. We are not going to hear witnesses with respect to this legislation and we will not have an opportunity to improve it.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, putting all of these bills into this one omnibus bill is an attempt by the government to speed up legislation and avoid scrutiny by elected officials. It moves Canada closer to a dictatorship.

I wonder what the member thinks about that.

Mr. Brian Masse: Mr. Speaker, the OECD has best practices for budgeting. It has suggested that a budget be tabled three months in advance of the beginning of the fiscal year so that people can debate it and digest it.

Private Members' Business

We do not do that here in Canada. In fact, we do not follow any of the OECD's best practices for budgeting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 6:01 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]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from December 13, 2011 consideration of the motion that Bill C-307, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (pregnant or nursing employees), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in the House today to talk about this issue of great importance. I want to congratulate my hon. colleague, who is new to the House, for bringing this forward. It is always nice to see members bring their private members' bills into this particular place to argue and debate. One of the greatest acts we can do as parliamentarians is to bring our own legislation into the House. I congratulate him for doing that.

By way of background, Bill C-307 is an act to amend the Canada Labour Code, which would allow pregnant or nursing employees in the circumstances of a preventive withdrawal and working for a federally regulated business to opt out of the Employment Insurance Act and receive benefits under the provincial regime. At the present time, this would only create equity between pregnant and nursing employees in Quebec working for federally regulated businesses or not. Quebec would be the only province benefiting from the provisions of the bill since other provinces rely on the Employment Insurance Act to obtain compensation.

However, the bill contains a provision in the eventuality that other provinces would want to mirror Quebec's regime and create a compensation scheme in the case of preventive withdrawals. Indeed, pursuant to subsection 132.1(5) of the bill, the Minister of Labour can enter into an agreement with the government of a province or its agent to determine the administrative and financial implications of certain measures. A province could probably refuse to enter into such an agreement because of the costs related to implement such a regime and since the provinces outside of Quebec have been relying for numerous years on the Employment Insurance Act for compensation for pregnant and nursing women in the circumstances of a preventive withdrawal from work.

The bill entirely mirrors the provisions of Bill C-380, which was an act to amend the Canada Labour Code for pregnant or nursing employees, that was tabled in 2005, in the first session of the 38th Parliament, by a member of the Bloc Québécois, Robert Vincent. At the time, the NDP and Conservatives voted in favour of the bill and, of course, the Liberals voted against it.

Taking a look at the Canada Labour Code, under subsection 132 of the code, a pregnant or nursing employee who is subject to the code may apply to be reassigned to another position if her work constitutes a danger to herself or her child. If the worker cannot be

reassigned by the employer to another job, the employee can obtain leave without pay under the code. Compensation will then be granted under the Employment Insurance Act or the collective agreement.

In Quebec, the program for maternity without risk of La Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail offers benefits to women who must leave their jobs for that particular reason. However, employees working for federally regulated employers in Quebec are not eligible for this program. It is noted that no other Canadian province offers compensation as Quebec through its health and safety at work measures. Consequently, in provinces outside of Quebec and in the circumstances of a preventive withdrawal, the employee will have to refer to her current collective agreement to receive compensation, the Employment Insurance Act or the employer's private insurance plan.

Therefore, the rationale behind this is one that is meant to be in good measure. I understand that, as anybody in the House would certainly agree, the bill as presented certainly does seem reasonable. The same benefits that are available provincially, in this case mainly referring to Quebec, would be applied to women who work in the federal area under the federal Canada Labour Code if those benefits are better. The problem is that no other province has the kind of benefits available to pregnant women that are available to workers in Quebec. If the bill were to be adopted, only women in Quebec who work under the federal labour code would benefit from this particular legislation, as well intentioned as it may be.

The bill, therefore, creates two categories of workers: workers in Quebec and workers in other provinces. It creates a precedent, where an employee subject to the Canada Labour Code could opt out for the provincial program if she deemed it more generous, essentially cherry-picking the jurisdiction and laws that would apply in her case. The bill would allow employees to choose their effective jurisdiction, which is no way to run a federal country or administer a federal code.

• (1805)

Therefore, as well intentioned as it may be, because of the problematic nature of that in one province and not the others, we vote against the bill in its present form.

In effect, through the Canada Labour Code, the bill forces the federal government to live by present and future labour laws of the provincial governments without having any say in exactly what one has to live up to, even though the federal government has jurisdiction in its own area. In this case, the provinces would be dictating what is happening to the Canada Labour Code with respect to federal undertakings. This would be costly for the federal government, which would compensate the provinces under the terms of an agreement provided under proposed section 132.15 of the bill, which would create two payment systems under the provincial legislation and the Employment Insurance Act.

Private Members' Business

Again, I would like to remind members that when we bring private members' bills to the House and the principle is to help affected people, we believe that this should be looked at. However, sometimes we take the principle of a particular bill and vote accordingly. However, if we look at the bill and the flaws within it, sometimes they become too overbearing and we therefore vote whichever way we must. In this case, the flaws contained within it would certainly be overbearing to the system.

The bill would create a regional inequality in the Canada Labour Code that does not currently exist, which is what we put forward in 2005 when the bill first came into the House under Bill C-380 under the Bloc Québécois. It would create a separate system for employees under federal jurisdiction. The practical effect of Bill C-380 would create a separate system for employees, those working in Quebec, and those under federal jurisdiction who are working in other regions or other provinces and territories across the country. We certainly do feel that these arguments stand, as well intentioned as the bill may be.

If the proponent of the bill was concerned with pregnant and nursing mothers, the bill would have been drafted with those concerns in mind. As much as we compliment the member on the particular intentions within the bill, we certainly have to look at it on a national basis. In 2005 these were the arguments that we brought forward. These are the arguments that we adhere to in this situation. Therefore, we vote against it as a party.

As I mentioned earlier, under section 132.15 of the code, a pregnant or nursing employee who is subject to the code may apply to be reassigned to another position if her work constitutes a danger to herself or the child. If the worker cannot be reassigned by the employer to another job, the employee can obtain leave without pay under the code. Compensation will then be granted under the Unemployment Insurance Act or the collective agreement itself.

In Quebec, the program for a maternity without risk of the CSST offers benefits to women who must leave their jobs for that reason. It is also called preventive withdrawal. However, employees working for federally regulated employers in Quebec are not eligible for this program. We agree with the principles that I outlined before. It is noted that no other Canadian province offers compensation as Quebec through its health and safety at work measures. Therein lies the reason why the party votes against it.

Again, I congratulate the hon. member for bringing this into the House as it is certainly a pertinent issue. Hopefully, we can rectify these problems and get back to looking after the people who need it the most.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to support Bill C-307 sponsored by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Bill C-307 would amend the Canada Labour Code to allow a pregnant or nursing employee to avail herself of provincial occupational health and safety legislation.

More specifically, this bill would affect pregnant or nursing employees who work in a job that comes under the Canada Labour

Code. It would allow these women to benefit from applicable provincial laws, making it possible for them to request preventive withdrawal, a transfer to another position, or financial compensation under provincial legislation. The last subclause of this bill makes a very important point: an employee who decides to exercise the rights conferred by this bill will not be subject to sanctions or reprisals of any kind. This subclause, which highlights the importance of the absence of prejudice, is an important addition, and I congratulate my colleague for thinking of it.

My colleagues on the other side of the House made a number of arguments for not supporting this bill. I listened carefully to the arguments. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour is concerned about the cost of these measures.

After giving the issue a great deal of consideration, I believe that the health of women, fetuses and infants is well worth the \$11 million that this bill will cost. The sum of \$11 million seems to me to be very little when you think of all that can be accomplished with this increased protection for Canadian workers. What my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie is proposing is to protect the health and safety of mothers and future mothers.

In fact, this bill tackles a major problem in our laws. Currently, a pregnant woman or a nursing mother must incur the costs of leave without pay in order to ensure her own safety and her child's. The employment insurance program is not much help, either. Each week of leave taken before the birth of the child is a week that is not taken afterward.

This means that a woman must choose between spending less time with her baby while she is on maternity leave and ensuring her safety and her baby's safety while she is pregnant. In my opinion, this does not make sense. We ought to support pregnant or nursing Canadians. Why should a woman bear the economic burden of her own safety at work? It is not fair.

In Quebec, there are provisions that entitle women to preventive withdrawal from the workplace and allow them to receive 90% of their salary. Since 1981, pregnant women are protected if their job entails dangerous tasks, such as carrying a weight of more than seven kilograms, interacting with people who might be potentially dangerous for her or her child, working in an environment that is too noisy or standing for more than seven hours.

These provisions can make all the difference between a happy pregnancy and a stressful pregnancy. In my riding, there was a report that one couple expecting a baby were surprised to learn that the pregnant woman was not entitled to preventive withdrawal. As a trucker, a job that is covered by the Canada Labour Code and therefore under federal jurisdiction, the woman was not entitled to the preventive withdrawal benefits which her counterparts covered by the CSST enjoy. This means that, despite the dangerous conditions, the long hours of work and the continuing vibrations, she is not entitled to preventive withdrawal. She must take unpaid leave and pay for it herself, or find a safer job, perhaps losing her seniority.

Private Members' Business

This situation is totally unacceptable. For this couple, a provision like the one proposed in my colleague's bill would mean peace of mind for the future mother about her financial situation, her baby's safety and her own well-being.

Another job that is potentially affected by this bill is that of flight attendant. I cannot imagine how a pregnant flight attendant must feel when she finds out that she must take leave without pay to ensure her own safety and that of her child.

• (1815)

Imagine being pregnant. As your pregnancy progresses, you realize that a job that involves standing for seven hours in a plane shaken by turbulence could have a negative impact on your health and that of your fetus. So you have to make a decision, and it is not an easy one: continue working, putting your pregnancy at risk, or make the financial sacrifice and take leave without pay to protect your health. That is totally unfair. Women should not be punished because they have chosen one career over another.

This bill is exactly what CUPE has been fighting for. Nathalie Stringer, a flight attendant and president of the Air Transat component of CUPE, said:

CUPE has long been demanding this equal treatment for Quebec female workers under federal jurisdiction. In the airline sector, for example, a number of flight attendants have had to make the difficult choice between their financial situation and health risks. Since it is the health of pregnant women and unborn children that is at stake, we are counting on all MPs in the House of Commons to support this excellent initiative and leave partisanship out of it.

This is about the safety of women, fetuses and babies. This is about women's equality and a social safety net that supports a just, fair and healthy society.

If the government really wants to help Canadian families, it has to walk the walk. It has to stop penalizing pregnant women. I encourage all of my colleagues to support this bill, make a real difference in the lives of millions of families, and make our society more just.

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here today to speak to Bill C-307, which amends the Canada Labour Code to allow female workers to avail themselves of the provisions of provincial legislation regarding preventive withdrawal when those provisions are more beneficial.

I am very pleased to support the bill introduced by my NDP colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. This important bill promotes the full integration of women in the labour market as well as access to a healthy and safe working environment, which I believe is a fundamental right.

We also know that integrating women into the labour market is good for the economy. Consider access to child care, for instance. It is in everyone's best interest to ensure that women have access to a safe working environment that allows them to have children and to work.

At present, only Quebec has a preventive withdrawal program to protect pregnant and nursing women. Under the Quebec program, which was created in 1981, women receive 90% of their salaries if their working conditions are considered dangerous for them or their

children, without having to give up their employment insurance benefits.

In 2008, 32,500 Quebec women benefited from the CSST program *Pour une maternité sans danger*, at a total cost of \$208 million.

The problem is that while these women can use preventive withdrawal for medical reasons, thousands of Quebec women with jobs governed by the Canada Labour Code cannot take unpaid leave or go on employment insurance.

Given that only 33% of women who contribute to employment insurance are eligible for benefits, often because they have not accumulated enough insurable hours of employment to qualify, most Quebec and Canadian women subject to the Canada Labour Code must use preventive withdrawal at their own expense.

The current program requires pregnant women subject to the Canada Labour Code to mortgage their weeks of maternity and parental leave because weeks used before the birth are deducted from their total weeks of benefits. Every week of benefits shortens their maternity leave by one week. Thus, preventive withdrawal is a form of unpaid leave.

In addition, the few women who are entitled to employment insurance benefits receive only 55% of their gross salary. By comparison, Quebec's CSST pays future mothers 90% of their net salary. That is a huge difference.

This bill is important because in Quebec, 250,000 people work under the Canada Labour Code.

In fact, female workers in Quebec who work in broadcasting and telecommunications, banking, postal services, airports and air transportation, marine transportation and navigation, and in other sectors, do not have access to a preventive withdrawal program. We can also mention other sectors where women do not have access to that type of program, for example, in penitentiaries, marine transportation and longshoring, in band council governance activities, in certain crown corporations, and in countless other sectors.

I could talk about hundreds of cases, but I would like to give a more concrete example, that of a woman who works in Quebec, whose name is Isabelle Landry. She is from Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu and earns her living in the trucking industry, which is a non-traditional job. In 2009, at age 26, she became pregnant. As hon. members can imagine, it is not possible to continue trucking for the entire duration of the pregnancy.

She thought she, like some other female workers in the goods transportation sector, could benefit from a preventive withdrawal through the CSST when her doctor asked her to stop working for the health and well-being of her baby. However, she learned that she was not eligible for the program because she was driving a truck between Quebec and California, which meant she was subject to the Canada Labour Code.

Private Members' Business

● (1820)

As strange as it might seem, if she drove a milk truck on Quebec roads, she would have been entitled to preventive withdrawal at 90% of her salary.

Isabelle's situation is deeply unfair. Pregnant women working in federally regulated jobs who have to stop working for health reasons must do so at their own expense, while workers in jobs under Quebec's jurisdiction can count on financial support from the CSST.

This disconnect creates two classes of workers in Quebec: those who get the help they need and those who are left to their own devices.

I would like the Liberal and Conservative members who oppose this bill to tell us how they can tolerate a system that is so unfair to women.

I listened to the debates in the House with great interest, and I heard many criticisms. Some members said that the proposal was not feasible, that it could not be done, that it was not possible.

However, in the past, the CSST has frequently been allowed to handle workplace accident claims for federally regulated employees.

All it would take is a simple agreement for pregnant women subject to the Canada Labour Code to be entitled to true preventive withdrawal.

In Quebec, probably because women realize how lucky some female workers are to have access to such a progressive preventive withdrawal program, support for this bill is unequivocal.

According to Nathalie Stringer, a flight attendant and president of the Air Transat component of CUPE:

CUPE has long been demanding this equal treatment for Quebec female workers under federal jurisdiction. In the airline sector, for example, a number of flight attendants have had to make the difficult choice between their financial situation and health risks. Since it is the health of pregnant women and unborn children that is at stake, we are counting on all MPs in the House of Commons to support this excellent initiative and leave partisanship out of it...

Furthermore, Alexa Conradi, president of the Fédération des femmes de Québec, supports my colleague's bill and reminds us that:

Preventive withdrawal, as it exists in Quebec, is a fundamental benefit that all women need. It is a cornerstone of the policies on workplace health and safety and work-family balance, and it is high time that the federal government followed in Quebec's footsteps on this fundamental status of women issue...

The Conseil d'intervention pour l'accès des femmes au travail has also applauded the bill introduced by the NDP member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, stating that if this bill is passed, the working conditions of 10% of female workers will improve.

...this bill will make it possible to finally properly compensate, at 90% of their salary, women working as flight attendants, postal workers, truck drivers, armoured car service workers and dock workers who currently do not have the right to a proper preventive withdrawal measure...

It is also important to remember that Quebec's National Assembly unanimously adopted the following motion in June 2010:

That the National Assembly ask the federal Government that all Québec women working under federal jurisdiction have the right to preventative withdrawal as provided in the Act respecting occupational health and safety.

Access to a healthy and safe workplace is a fundamental right for women in the labour market. If it is impossible to offer a pregnant or nursing woman suitable working conditions by modifying her duties, adjusting her workstation or temporarily assigning her to another position, then that woman should be entitled to paid leave. In our opinion, this is a fundamental right.

● (1825)

As we speak, many pregnant women who work for employers that are subject to the Canada Labour Code are continuing to work during their pregnancy in potentially hazardous working conditions because they cannot afford to take unpaid leave.

That is tragic. It is unacceptable. They are putting their pregnancy, their health and the health of their unborn child at risk. This practice must stop.

I hope that we can correct this injustice to the women of Quebec and that other provincial governments will be inspired by these progressive measures to promote women's equality and their integration into the labour market.

● (1830)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to speak to this bill. As a number of my colleagues know perhaps, I am a nurse by training. At the end of my nursing degree, I wanted to specialize my training. I started working toward obtaining a certificate in occupational health and safety. I chose to pursue this area of expertise because I found it to be especially important.

Also, as a young woman of childbearing age—as most of my colleagues have probably figured out—this bill affects me personally. Many of my friends have experienced or are experiencing pregnancy and childbirth. To me, having the opportunity to speak to this type of bill was especially important.

I want to point out that the purpose of this bill is to amend the Canada Labour Code to allow a pregnant or nursing employee to avail herself of provincial occupational health and safety legislation.

Some jobs may present risks to a pregnant woman or her unborn child. From a medical standpoint, this can occur in several sectors: some jobs are not recommended for pregnant women. This can also depend on the person's health and the state of her pregnancy.

Right now, in Canada, some female workers have no choice but to temporarily leave their jobs because of the risk to their health and that of their unborn child. The problem is that, if they have a job governed by the federal legislation, they must do so without any compensation. They leave their job because of risks to their health or that of their baby without the right to any sort of compensation. It is not right. It does not respect gender equality at all. I think men would agree. Would a man accept being told that, for the good of his health, he has to leave his job but that he will not be given anything in exchange? It does not make any sense.

Private Members' Business

Right now, in Quebec—and unfortunately only in Quebec—women who are subject to the provincial legislation have recourse that is much appreciated by Quebec women: the *Loi sur la santé et la sécurité du travail* du Québec's preventive withdrawal provision for pregnant and nursing women, which states:

A pregnant worker who furnishes to her employer a certificate attesting that her working conditions may be physically dangerous to her unborn child, or to herself by reason of her pregnancy, may request to be re-assigned to other duties involving no such danger that she is reasonably capable of performing.

Of course, this provision in the law also applies in the case of an employee who is breastfeeding her child. For example, where dust or chemical emissions might be passed into the mother's milk, a woman could claim the protection of the same provision. There is also provision for stopping work if reassignment is not possible. When a woman is pregnant, the first thing that is done is to see whether she can be reassigned elsewhere, or whether a method can be found for her to be able to do her work safely. The first thing that is done is not to send the woman home; it is to try to find solutions. If, unfortunately, there is no solution possible that would enable the woman to have a pregnancy that is free of risk for herself and her child, the employee will be allowed to take preventive withdrawal and still receive 90% of her wages.

What this means in concrete terms is that she will be able to continue to eat nutritiously and take care of herself during her pregnancy. This is entirely reasonable. When a woman is pregnant, she has to look after herself and take care of the child she is going to have. It is therefore entirely reasonable for women to be compensated financially so they are able to continue in the role they have chosen.

The NDP and I think this is reasonable. Protecting pregnant and nursing women when there is danger on the job allows them to stay afloat financially until they are able to resume their work in the usual way; this is a reasonable, justified and entirely appropriate measure.

• (1835)

The problem is that this provision of Quebec's occupational health and safety legislation does not apply to women working in federally regulated jobs, such as those in government, air and rail transport, banks, ports, and armoured car services. In such cases, the Canada Labour Code applies and it is much more restrictive.

Subsection 132(4) of the Canada Labour Code states the following:

the employer may, in consultation with the employee, reassign her to another job that would not pose a risk to her health or to that of the foetus or child.

So, it can happen if there is a solution. It is an option, but it is not an obligation.

Also, according to the federal legislation, the only period of leave with pay the worker is entitled to is the period between the time she ceases to work and the time a doctor gives her a medical certificate. As soon as she receives a medical certificate stating that she can no longer carry out her duties, she stops getting paid. That makes no sense. Families have changed over the past few years. More and more women are single parents and go through their pregnancies alone.

What is a woman to do when she is the only breadwinner in the household? Either she jeopardizes the safety of her baby by continuing to work, or she goes without an income, again jeopardizing her baby's safety. Without money, she will no longer be able to buy food and will have trouble paying for rent and electricity. Personally, I find that incredibly illogical.

Turning back to the medical situation. If a doctor considers the work to be dangerous for the health and safety of the future mother and of the fetus, the employer can reassign the employee. However, if reassignment is not possible, the employee in question has two choices: she can take leave without pay or remain in her position and risk the health and safety of her future baby or, indeed, her own health and safety.

As I mentioned earlier, the family's financial situation is often such that there is only one choice, and that is to continue to work and risk the baby's health. There is no justice in this.

In these situations, the Canada Labour Code places the financial burden of the pregnancy on the pregnant or nursing woman and her family. When a child is expected, the financial burden automatically becomes greater—I think that everybody understands that.

Right now only Quebec has a program of preventive withdrawal to protect pregnant and nursing women. However, women who work in federally regulated companies, who are governed by the Canada Labour Code and are not subject to provincial laws, have only the choice of continuing to work or requesting leave without pay.

This bill is intended to correct the injustice that separates those employees in Quebec who can take advantage of the aptly named preventive withdrawal from everyone else.

I listened to the speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour when this bill was introduced. Two sentences caught my attention.

She began by speaking about the relatively lower health and safety risks presented by most jobs under federal jurisdiction. In my opinion, there is something here that does not make sense. It is true that certain jobs do not pose much of a risk. The women in these jobs will not get a medical certificate, and will not be affected by this legislation. In other cases, there is a risk associated with the work performed. For example, in the case of postal workers, truck drivers, people who transport valuable goods or those who work in air transportation, it is clear that there is some risk associated with these jobs. It is important to encourage these women to have children and to help them juggle those responsibilities with their work.

In the second sentence that caught my attention she said that employees could try to take advantage of either their federal or provincial rights or remedies, choosing whichever system seemed to be the most advantageous under the circumstances.

I hope that everyone understands that our goal is not to toss money to pregnant women, but rather to restore justice. Women simply want to be able to keep their jobs and not have to make that decision. This is an important point to understand.

Private Members' Business

I would like to conclude by quoting Alexa Conradi, president of the Fédération des femmes de Québec. Personally, I think what she says makes a lot of sense.

Preventive withdrawal, as it exists in Quebec, is a fundamental benefit that all women need. It is a cornerstone of the policies on workplace health and safety and work-family balance, and it is high time that the federal government followed in Quebec's footsteps on this fundamental status of women issue...a situation that strips employers of any responsibility and forces too many women to stay in jobs to the detriment of their health or that of their child.

• (1840)

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his bill.

I also thank my colleagues for so brilliantly expressing their opinions about this bill to allow pregnant or nursing women who are subject to the Canada Labour Code to avail themselves of provincial preventive withdrawal provisions when they are more beneficial.

The Quebec program known as “Pour une maternité sans danger” allows a pregnant or nursing worker who believes that her job poses a risk to her pregnancy or the health of her child to ask her employer for another assignment. She must obtain a doctor's note, which is submitted to her employer. If it is impossible for the employer to eliminate the risk or to assign the worker to other duties, she can use preventive withdrawal and receive compensation.

Quite by accident, I recently came across an article indicating that all pregnant American women have many chemicals, including some that have been banned in Canada since 1970, such as DDT, in their system. I am talking about the United States, which is not very far from us. We know that pollution has an impact on the environment and that it crosses borders.

Chemicals are used to manufacture non-stick cooking utensils, in industrial foods and in beauty products. Think of all the women who work in hair salons, spas and nail salons. They are constantly in conditions where they are breathing in chemicals. We know that these women who work for minimum wage cannot afford to leave their jobs.

This was the first time anyone had counted the number of different chemicals that can be present in the body of a young woman, one who is pregnant to boot.

The purpose of the study was not to link chemicals and their effects on health, but a number of chemicals were measured in concentrations that have been proven to be harmful to children, causing reproductive problems in boys, delayed neurological development from mercury poisoning, altered neurological development and thyroid problems.

These chemicals are able to pass across the placenta and reach the fetus. They can be found in the amniotic fluid, the umbilical cord blood and the meconium. Exposing a child to chemicals during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage and premature birth and also has an impact on the child after birth, not to mention the mother.

The point here is to protect pregnant and nursing women. People are perhaps not aware, but I live in a province, the only one in the country, where women have access to this kind of program. I can give many examples where this program has been extremely useful

and has protected a pregnant woman and her baby. I am thinking of a particular woman who was expecting not just one, but two babies. For a first pregnancy, twins are already quite difficult, but in addition, this young woman worked in a rehabilitation centre for violent adolescents. So there was an additional potential danger that she might be hurt when one of the adolescents was aggressive. I can tell you that this was a familiar scenario.

In this kind of situation, there are two options: either the person withdraws from her employment because of the danger that it represents, or she is reassigned to other duties, for instance, administrative duties where she is not in danger.

There was another woman who had to spend the last four months of her pregnancy on bed rest. I am giving examples that I have come across in the various jobs that I have held. That decision was not particularly exciting, but it was necessary in order to prevent the woman from giving birth at a stage when the fetus's vital organs, such as the lungs, are not fully developed.

I could also talk about all the women who work standing up in banks or other businesses, and God knows there are a lot of them. They have to stand up all the time. Their legs are tired. Being pregnant is tiring.

For these women and hundreds of others in Quebec, the special provisions on preventive withdrawal have enabled them to carry their pregnancy to term in a safe environment. This is a provincial program, administered by Quebec's occupational health and safety commission, the CSST.

• (1845)

The Canada Labour Code stipulates that an employee who is pregnant or nursing may cease to perform her job if she believes that, by reason of the pregnancy or nursing, continuing any of her current job functions may pose a risk to her health or to that of the fetus or child. The employee can request reassignment, if the medical practitioner determines that a risk exists. While waiting for the medical report, the employee continues to receive the wages and benefits that are attached to that job. If reassignment is not possible, the employee can take an unpaid leave of absence. I took these notes from a speech that was given previously by a member of the Bloc Québécois.

This bill is fair for all pregnant and nursing women in Canada whose workplace could be hazardous to the proper development of their fetus. For now, only Quebec has a preventive withdrawal program to protect pregnant and nursing women. This program allows women to receive up to 90% of their salary if their working conditions are deemed hazardous for them or their babies. Other Canadian women are only entitled to unpaid leave. We believe that this situation is unfair to women who do not live in Quebec.

This is a good example of a two-tiered system. It is completely unfair to nursing and pregnant women in Canada who live outside Quebec. The NDP is of the opinion that the federal government must meet its responsibility toward these pregnant and nursing women by offering them the same conditions as women in Quebec.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Continuing debate, the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. However, I must inform her that I will have to interrupt her at about 6:55.

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to support Bill C-307, which will allow pregnant and nursing women who work under the Canada Labour Code to avail themselves of provincial legislation providing for preventive withdrawal. I would like to thank my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for this excellent bill. All legislation that improves the balance between work and home life will have a favourable impact on the status of women in Canada.

In 2006, Quebec assumed jurisdiction over the parental leave program. The province has given mothers more money, more flexibility and easier access to preventive withdrawal. The other parent also receives five weeks of parental leave, which is non-transferable. Less than two years later, the poverty rate among women in Quebec has declined by 15 points. This is not a coincidence. The most effective way to reduce inequality between the sexes is to make both motherhood and economic security possible, and put the emphasis on parental leave. This is our role as parliamentarians, and it is our duty, not only for women and mothers but also for men and fathers, and for children's well-being and the economic future of Canada.

This bill is of crucial importance for two reasons. First, it ensures employment equity for women who work in an environment that may be dangerous to their pregnancy. Second, it promotes the idea that women must not be threatened by poverty if they decide to have children.

Bill C-307 protects women who work in jobs that are completely safe in ordinary circumstances, but may be dangerous to a pregnant or nursing woman. Bill C-307 gives women in those occupations the fundamental right to have children if they want to. Why would a woman truck driver or postal worker or flight attendant, or a woman firefighter or plant worker, have to choose between her and her child's health and poverty or the option of not having a child? The answer to the question is obvious: she should not have to make that choice. No one should have to do that.

Reproductive justice is more than simply having access to safe, legal abortion. It is also a woman's right to decide whether or not to have a child. I therefore oppose any element that would systematically prevent women from exercising that choice, including poverty, discrimination and, in this case, barriers that women face in the workplace.

It makes no sense that this government recognizes that certain working conditions are dangerous to pregnant or nursing women, yet it refuses to recognize their need to receive their salaries when they cannot work. Women in these situations are forced to go on leave without pay. This is the height of hypocrisy.

Quebec is the only province that has a preventive withdrawal program to protect pregnant and nursing women. It allows these women to receive 95% of their salaries if working conditions are considered dangerous for them or their children.

However, women who work under the Canada Labour Code do not have the same luck. I therefore call on this House to support the bill for the well-being of all these women.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

• (1850)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): You have five minutes.

Ms. Mylène Freeman: Mr. Speaker, I thought I had a total of five minutes. In that case, I can present many more arguments.

I will take this opportunity to say that several aspects of the parental leave program do not make sense. This House should dispense with partisanship and improve the program.

First of all, parental leave benefits are inadequate with respect to income. Almost all other industrialized countries pay women much more than 55% of their income. In Europe, depending on the country, benefits range from 70% to 90%, and some countries even pay 100%. It is not surprising that the gender gap is significantly smaller. Common sense tells us that a woman with a young child needs more income to meet her needs and those of her child, not less.

The current parental leave system in Canada sends a message to women. It says that if they have a child, they must be supported by someone richer, and that if their family is having financial difficulties, she should not have children.

This message reinforces the model of a traditional family, which does not work for everyone and which is not always desired. The number of single parent families has been on the rise since the 1970s, and 80% of these parents are women. The current system discriminates against non-traditional family units and the bill introduced by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie will ensure that Canadians living in these situations get better support.

The other inconsistency with the current program is that it includes parental leave of up to one year. However, most child care centres only accept children over the age of 18 months. Moreover, child care services are prohibitively expensive and difficult to access in most of Canada.

What is a woman without an income to do for six months, assuming that her employer is generous enough to keep her job open? Does she have to be wealthy enough to employ a nanny, or live for six months without an income? That is why I said that it is absolutely crucial that we fix the parental leave system in this country.

This bill will ensure that women working under the Canada Labour Code, who are pregnant or nursing, and who are in unsafe working environments, will have access to provincial programs. This is important because women and men are different—primarily due to the fact that women are mothers.

Consider the statistics: 60% of poor Canadians are women and 52% of single mothers with young children live below the poverty line. Statistically, women with children earn half what men do. Not only are these statistics regrettable, they have remained stagnant for a long time.

That is why we need a bill like the one introduced by my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. Bill C-307, along with other parental leave measures, will help to close the gap between the sexes in Canada. The proof is in the pudding: consider Quebec and Europe where such parental leave programs exist.

• (1855)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for his right of reply. The hon. member has five minutes.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to take a few seconds to thank my NDP colleagues for their eloquent speeches in support of the bill that I had the honour to introduce in the House. I use the term “eloquent” because these members were all young women, and I do not think that this was a coincidence. I would therefore like to thank the hon. members for Berthier—Maskinongé, Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles and Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for their excellent speeches.

I would like to continue—my voice is scratchy today—by saying that, basically, this bill seeks to protect pregnant or nursing women and their children. It seeks to put an end to an injustice, an inconsistency that exists simply because these women are working in jobs under federal jurisdiction.

When a woman accepts a job, she does not necessarily think about this, but then she gets a nasty surprise when she realizes that the provision of the provincial legislation does not apply to her and that she thus does not have the same rights. This is therefore a matter of justice, rights, equality and consistency in our society. It will allow women in every province of the Canadian Confederation to avail themselves of the best provincial provisions available.

Quebec is at the forefront, but I urge all of the other provinces to step up because the safe maternity program works. It helps women. It helps workers. It saves lives. It prevents premature births. It is good for fetuses and future babies. It protects our children. This measure is necessary and should be completely normal in 2012 because we respect pregnant and nursing women. We respect their safety and health and that of their babies.

This issue will reveal how serious the parties are about supporting families. All of the political parties in the House say that they support women and families. This is an opportunity to really help them. Those who support family values will support Bill C-307. Those who want to help pregnant women will support Bill C-307. If the Conservatives and the Liberals are really serious, they will vote for this bill to protect women and children.

I urge all my colleagues in the House from all parties to support this bill because we can take action, make a difference and truly help people. This is not a far-fetched idea. It takes a doctor's note. There are criteria for determining whether the health of the woman or her baby is in jeopardy. The woman just has to go the doctor and get a note. Then she negotiates with her employer to see whether the employer can find her another job, another position in the company where she could continue to work without jeopardizing her health.

Adjournment Proceedings

This is entirely reasonable and consistent with occupational health and safety. Practical measures can be taken in the field. We have to move forward. This is not unreasonable.

If a woman's job puts her health and safety at risk, why should she have to take leave without pay? That is what currently happens under the Canada Labour Code. The financial burden rests on the shoulders of the female employee and not on society as a whole. That is the problem and that is what this bill seeks to change.

To us, it is impossible to ask female workers to take on that burden. There are concrete examples. I was happy that members talked about trucking, young women who drive ten-wheelers, big trucks. It is unusual. It is not traditional, but these women are out there and they are not getting the support they need. They are basically not entitled to anything. It is the same for flight attendants. Members spoke a little bit about CUPE flight attendants, about Ms. Stringer, whom I worked with before. If you are a flight attendant, you do not become a mechanic or a pilot overnight. Pregnant women cannot be expected to be on their feet for hours in an airplane with a big belly.

If the members in this House want change and if they want to help the women and families of this country in tangible ways, they will unanimously support Bill C-307.

• (1900)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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. Bruce Stanton): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, a recorded division on the motion is deferred until Wednesday, May 9, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing 38 deemed to have been moved.

Adjournment Proceedings

[English]

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians face long commutes stuck in traffic and smog. Across Canada, urban mayors are asking for federal leadership in assisting them to establish better public transit. Sadly, the government refuses to act.

Investing in public transit would create jobs, reduce harmful emissions and save billions in lost economic productivity. For years, the NDP has been leading the way in calling for a national public transit strategy. Our bill, introduced by my colleague, the member for Trinity—Spadina, is designed to ensure fast, accessible, affordable public transit in cities across the country. It calls for a permanent investment plan for transit systems and innovation research. It calls on different levels of government to work together to ensure quality transit under the leadership of the federal government.

It is time to get moving on transit. We see the need in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and even in Fort McMurray. Cities and towns, big and small, need permanent, strong, stable, national transit funding so that Canadians have access to reliable, frequent public transit to get to and from where they live, play and work.

We need to put public transit back on the national agenda. Canada has been falling behind, and that is holding us back economically. We are the only country in the G8 without a national transit strategy. Federal leadership and investment in transit is vital to a healthier economy and a healthier environment. It is vital to our cities, large and small, and everyone who lives in them.

Canada's big city mayors have been calling for such a strategy since 2007. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Urban Transit Association, the Canadian Construction Association and, yes, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce have all come out to support a national public transit strategy.

In February I rose in this House and asked the Minister of Transport why the government is ignoring this growing crisis. When will it finally give cities like Toronto the stability they need? It had a chance to address this crisis in the federal budget. Unfortunately, the budget set no money aside for transit. In fact, infrastructure funding took a big hit.

I understand that the minister is working on developing a long-term infrastructure plan to take effect after the Building Canada Plan expires in 2014, and will be consulting with stakeholders. In light of the recommendations emanating from the Standing Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communities' report on a national transit strategy, how important is public transit as a key foundation to the long-term infrastructure plan?

• (1905)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for his interest in this important issue.

Here are the pertinent facts. Federal support for investments in public transit infrastructure has been and continues to be an

important national priority for our government. Since we took office in 2006, we have committed close to \$5 billion to public transit projects across the country. In addition, public transit is a major beneficiary of investments through the gas tax fund, which our government increased to \$2 billion annually and recently made a permanent source of long-term sustainable funding for municipalities. Since 2006, municipalities have used approximately \$1.5 billion of their federal gas tax fund allocations toward transit investments.

An important portion of these investments has been made in the greater Toronto Area. In fact, the City of Toronto has chosen to invest all of its gas tax fund transfers in public transit. This means an investment of close to \$500 million in public transit in the city of Toronto alone. The Cities of Edmonton, Ottawa, Vancouver and Calgary have made similar decisions.

The Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities has been very clear that our government will continue to be a supportive partner of municipal needs, but we believe that cities are best positioned to identify and make decisions about their infrastructure needs.

The greater Toronto area is also a very important beneficiary of federal investments in public transit through the government's infrastructure programming. Since 2006, the government has committed over \$1.86 billion toward public transit projects in the greater Toronto area, such as the construction of an 8.6 kilometre extension of the Spadina subway, improvements to the GO Transit network and an important revitalization project at Union Station.

Through the infrastructure stimulus fund, the federal government has invested more than \$100 million in public transit projects in the greater Toronto area. Examples of projects supported through this program in Toronto include a transit station modernization program, the renewal of subway tracks and overhaul of subway escalators and elevators and various transit infrastructure improvements identified by the Toronto Transit Commission.

This unprecedented level of federal support for public transit in the greater Toronto area and across the country for projects such as the Evergreen transit line in the greater Vancouver area, the expansion of the light rail transit systems in Edmonton and Calgary as well as the light rail transit project in Ottawa, demonstrates that the government understands the importance of public transit in making our communities more prosperous.

In budget 2011, and again in our recent budget 2012, our government committed to work with provinces, territories, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other stakeholders to develop a long-term plan for public infrastructure that extended beyond the expiry of the building Canada plan in 2014.

Adjournment Proceedings

While expressing an interest in discussing public transit infrastructure as part of the government's engagement process to develop this long-term plan, both the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Urban Transit Association have praised the levels of investments provided by the Government of Canada for public transit. We are pleased to be working closely with both these important stakeholders as part of our development process of a long-term plan. In fact, the discussions over the development of a new long-term infrastructure plan will be taking place on the foundation of the unprecedented levels of investments provided by the government for public transit in the greater Toronto area and across the country.

● (1910)

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, there have been investments put in, but that is to make up for the huge deficiencies that have existed for years. When we look at what a lot of the money is spent on, it is state of good repair things, maintenance and replacing tracks. It is that aging infrastructure. What the cities need is that long-term stable funding. All these projects that the member mentioned are one-offs. It is a bit of money here, a bit of money there. We applaud the fact that the gas tax money goes to the cities, but the cities need more of it. This is why the NDP called for an additional 1¢ of the gas tax to go to public transit, and the Conservatives voted against it.

For years and years, I have been a loyal public transit rider in Toronto, taking it to work, to play, to everywhere. However, the moment we get out of the downtown core, there are problems that abound. It does not serve the people well and it harms the economy, which is the biggest thing.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised to hear the member opposite make light of \$5 billion for public transit projects through our infrastructure programs. From our point of view that is a significant investment. I hope he can appreciate that.

He talks about federal stable, predictable funding. In fact, that is coming through the federal gas tax fund, which we have now made permanent. It provides that dedicated funding for our municipalities, which enables them to direct financial support to environmentally sustainable municipal infrastructure projects, including transit infrastructure.

In conclusion, our government's infrastructure programming is supporting a number of large scale transit projects, both in the GTA and across the country. These investments are contributing to more efficient transit systems in the Greater Toronto Area and in fact across Canada.

[*Translation*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain (Manicouagan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am going to take advantage of this adjournment debate to say something a little more concrete than the rhetorical games that have been taking up our time in this chamber.

My earlier question concerned the government's duty to provide a constant level of funding for first nations education.

Those who follow my speeches in the House religiously know that my trademark is sticking to the empirical and concrete. I shall continue to do so today.

The media in my riding told us barely a month ago about the dismissal of four teachers and the subsequent sudden resignation of two principals, of the primary and secondary school in a community within my riding. I will refrain from mentioning the name of the community because it is all rather defamatory. I also do not want to do anything to further stigmatize the residents of the community. However, if you search the Internet, it is easy to find the information.

From my subsequent discussions with the band chief in question, I learned that the dismissals of the teachers were the result of the band's budget adjustment plan that was drafted jointly with—and with the approval of—the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 2011.

This information was brought to my attention on Facebook. I make effective use of this social networking site. People in my community and neighbouring communities know that they can reach me through Facebook.

The parents of these elementary and high school students were quite concerned and naturally contacted me to tell me that the situation was problematic and that their children's school year was in peril. I therefore made the necessary effort to find the cell phone number of the band chief in question. I contacted him when he was in Montreal and we had a good discussion. During the course of that conversation, the chief indicated to me that these teachers were laid off or dismissed—whichever term applies here—as a result of financial recovery measures. I took the chief at his word. He told me that Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada was involved and that these recovery measures had been approved and were meant to target a deficit that, today, is approaching \$20 million. Ultimately, he almost avoided being under federal government supervision. I was rather shocked by what he said.

I believe it is worthwhile to present this matter to the people of Canada and that is what I am doing today.

This situation is now rectified. I would like to point out that these measures were simply abolished and the teachers kept their jobs. The students can therefore still go to school today. However, this situation is worrisome, to say the least, if we consider the draconian nature of the measures being considered and the negative impact they would have on the education of young people living on reserve. Some confrontations resulted from this situation and the police had to intervene. One young person was possibly even injured. It can all be seen on YouTube.

In the member's opinion, is this kind of measure that compromises the academic advancement of young aboriginals consistent with the principles that came from the national panel on first nation elementary and secondary education?

Adjournment Proceedings

•(1915)

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Manicouagan for his intervention and his interest in this issue. I am pleased to hear that the specific situation that caused his concern has been resolved. Therefore, I will not attempt to respond to that, but I will simply comment on the general issues raised.

Here is the key point I would like to make. Our government is taking action to improve the education of students in first nation communities. Our ultimate goal, which he probably shares, is to provide first nation students with a quality education that enables them to realize their aspirations and develop the skills they need to be full participants in a strong Canadian economy. Canadian aboriginals form Canada's youngest population, so it is in the interest of all of us to see aboriginal people educated, skilled and employed.

We know there is work to be done to ensure first nation students achieve the same educational outcomes as other Canadians. That is why our government has been making continual investments in first nation education. In budget 2008, for example, our government launched the reforming first nation education initiative and invested in two new programs, the first nation student success program and the education partnerships program, to help set the foundation for long-term improvements in education. We have continued to build on that foundation.

Budget 2012 confirms our commitment to education reform through new investments of \$275 million for first nation education over three years, aimed at improving school infrastructure, addressing literacy and improving educational outcomes. We would also work to explore mechanisms to ensure stable, predictable and sustainable funding for first nations elementary and secondary education.

We also committed to working with willing partners to introduce a first nation education act and have it in place by September 2014. I hope my colleague will help us in that regard. The act will be aimed at establishing structures and standards to support strong and accountable education systems on reserve. This is a direct response to the final report of the independent national panel, which provided the government with valuable feedback and recommendations on the next steps that could be taken to improve educational outcomes for first nation students living on reserves.

In the coming months, the Government of Canada will be working with first nation and provincial partners to determine the path forward on first nation education, including government structures. In fact, partnerships across the country are helping to develop stronger relationships among provincial governments, first nations and the Government of Canada. As a key component, our government has signed several tripartite agreements focused on putting the building blocks in place to ensure better outcomes for first nation students.

It is evident from our commitments that our goal is to provide first nation students with quality education that provides them with the opportunity to acquire the skills needed to enter the labour market

and be full participants in a strong Canadian economy. We are committed to reaching that goal.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for the hand he extended to me. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that when this recovery plan was drafted, the panel had still not submitted its report. I trust that this will not happen again in future, because I will always remain on the alert, at least in my riding. I am going to stay close to the communities. I can assure you that I will work together with my colleagues from all the other parties, because this is a problematic situation, one that has little to do with pure partisanship and making political capital. I believe that the important thing is the welfare and education of young people. I am prepared to work with all the authorities.

As I mentioned, I could not support such a measure. I hope that the chief was making assumptions when he told me that it had been developed in co-operation with the community. I will simply have to take his word for it. I did not do any further checking. In my view, the government is in a position to deal with this situation in a more enlightened fashion.

•(1920)

[English]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his commitment to his community and his interest in working with us on these important goals.

Certainly, improving the educational outcomes of first nation students is a shared task. It is a shared priority among governments, first nations, educators, families, students and members here. That is why we continue to invest roughly \$1.5 billion annually in elementary and secondary programs for about 117,500 first nation students across Canada. With budget 2012, we are investing an additional \$275 million for first nations education over three years, \$100 million of which would be used to provide early literacy programming and other supports and services to first nations schools and strengthen their relationship with provincial school systems.

We intend to continue to work with our provincial partners to ensure that first nations have in place the necessary programming, structures and resources that will allow them to transfer between first nation and provincial schools without academic penalty.

Without a doubt, our government is making progress toward ensuring first nations have access to the same educational opportunities as other Canadians.

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for staying at this later hour and attending these proceedings. It is appreciated.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Commercial fishing and the fish processing sector are an economic engine not only in my riding, Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, but also in neighbouring ridings.

The people in the coastal communities of the Gaspé in the Magdalen Islands make their living from fishing and have done so for hundreds of years. As a result of the policies on fleet separation and owner-operators, fishers in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands continue to use their own fishing boats and have licences issued in their name. They can earn a living from fishing. They invest their profits in the coastal regions where they live.

These policies protect the fishery economy, which in return creates thousands of secondary jobs in the fisheries sector and in adjacent sectors within the region. The elimination of independent fishing would be harmful to the coastal communities of the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, as well as to other adjacent ridings, and towns and villages that have existed for hundreds of years would be at risk of disappearing.

The Conservative government talks about “modernizing” the fisheries. It also talks about modernizing the Fisheries Act by revoking section 35. Apparently, this means getting rid of the independent fishing fleets and leaving the coastal fishery in the hands of large corporations. Indeed, the Conservative government plans to eliminate the policies on fleet separation and owner-operators to allow the large corporations—the processors and others—to take control of the coastal fishery on the east coast.

Many fisheries groups and associations in Atlantic Canada are opposed to these changes. These groups and associations represent fishers in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Quebec.

Signatories from Quebec include the Alliance des pêcheurs professionnels du Québec, which includes the Association des pêcheurs propriétaires des Îles-de-la-Madeleine, the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels du sud de la Gaspésie, the Regroupement des pêcheurs professionnels de la Haute et de la Moyenne Côte-Nord and the Association des capitaines-propriétaires de la Gaspésie.

These groups of Atlantic fishers represent the vast majority of permit holders and crew members in Atlantic Canada's fishing industry. In 2010, fleets of Atlantic owner-operators harvested \$1 billion worth of lobster, snow crab and shrimp, or 63% of the total value of fishing activity in Atlantic Canada for the same year.

By eliminating both the owner-operator and fleet separation policies, the Conservative government will be handing over almost \$1 billion in economic spinoffs to major corporations, to the detriment of our coastal communities.

Why is the Conservative government turning its back on Canada's coastal communities?

• (1925)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and for the Asia-Pacific Gateway, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-

Madeleine for his interest in this issue and other fishery-related issues. I appreciated his occasional involvement in the fisheries committee and was pleased when he was made a permanent member just recently. I look forward to working with him on issues such as this one.

First and foremost, no decisions have been made to eliminate any part of the current fisheries management policy regime. What we are doing is listening to views about how to give the fishing industry the tools it needs to operate in an environment that is more sustainable, stable and economically prosperous.

It is for these reasons that we went out to speak with Canadians with an open mind to hear their views on what works and what does not. We have heard from my colleague and his constituents, but we wanted to hear directly from those who make a living in this business about what they need not only to survive but to thrive in an increasingly competitive and global marketplace.

During this process, we did receive thousands of comments through regional face-to-face meetings, online submissions and even via fax. The opinions expressed were as varied and diverse as the policies and management measures that we are speaking to today. They share many common values: a deep-rooted respect for the sea and fellow fishermen, a duty to their communities and a strong sense of perseverance and entrepreneurship. Although differences in opinions have emerged, all expressed a passion and commitment for the fishery, which my colleague has reflected today, and we must appreciate and respect these.

Many expressed the need for change. Just as there are fluctuations in resources and shifting market demands, policies and management measures must work to meet the needs of today's harvesters. Many of the rules currently in place were established decades ago in response to issues that emerged under then new management regimes. This is not to say that they are all outdated, but there is a valid need to examine these management measures to see whether they are helping or hindering those who work in the fisheries and to continuously improve how we do business.

The concerns raised by the hon. member have been raised before. They have been raised when visiting with members of the fishing industry, stakeholders and representatives from various governments. These people and Canadians in general are concerned about the future of many fisheries, the challenges that exist and the opportunities for change.

When we went out to speak with and, more important, to listen to Canadians, it was our intention to get feedback and input on ways to improve the sustainability of the resource. We wanted to hear people's thoughts on how the complex web of rules currently governing fisheries management could be streamlined.

To be fair and objective, we set no preconditions on what could be suggested. We wanted to hear all views. When someone suggested that we change a specific policy, our reaction has been, “Why?” and not, “Sorry, we cannot consider that”.

Adjournment Proceedings

In examining an issue as complex as Canada's fisheries management regime, we cannot arbitrarily exclude key elements in our analysis. We have to look at the whole system and all of its rules, policies, practices, management measures and regulations, and we need to look at how each of those parts interacts with the others, and that is what we did.

In general, the response to this process was very encouraging. It is now up to us as a government to review and analyze all of the submissions, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I again thank the parliamentary secretary. His words are certainly well considered.

I appreciate the efforts of the government to seek out and consult with local populations. However, I would like to know specifically what form those consultations have taken and to whom they have spoken, because the people with whom I have been speaking consider that the changes being proposed and circulated at this point would hinder local communities, not help them.

I have not heard any fishing association at this point tell me that it is looking forward to the elimination of fleet separation policies. I have heard from larger companies, such as those who do fish processing, that they would like to see a leveling out of the platform so they can access these fishing permits and transform the product afterward. For them it would be very economical and profitable.

However, the economic spinoff of spreading that wealth among all the communities on the Atlantic coast would certainly seem to be much more beneficial for local communities and for the federal

government because we would actually raise more revenues this way.

● (1930)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I assure the member that we did not go out there to discuss any particular policy—not owner operator, not fleet separation, not any one of the complex web of policies that exist out there.

Our commitment is to improve Canada's fisheries, so we went out there to talk to those who are involved in the fisheries. It is our sense that the fisheries can contribute more to the Canadian economy than they are currently doing. If we continue with the status quo, we will probably not get to that point. Therefore, we went to ask them whether there were policies that were hindering them and the enterprise in which they were involved from being as prosperous and profitable as they could be.

As I mentioned earlier, we heard a variety of issues about that, including some of the opinions that the member has expressed. We are considering all of them at the current time.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:32 p.m.)

CONTENTS

Thursday, May 3, 2012

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Government Response to Petitions	
Mr. Lukiwski	7491
Committees of the House	
Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics	
Mr. Dusseault	7491
Commissioner for Children and Young Persons in Canada Act	
Mr. Garneau	7491
Bill C-420. Introduction and first reading	7491
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)	7491
Petitions	
Rights of the Unborn	
Mrs. Glover	7491
Mr. Marston	7491
Mr. Hsu	7491
International Trade	
Mr. Hsu	7491
Rights of the Unborn	
Mr. Preston	7492
Privacy	
Mr. Dusseault	7492
Health	
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7492
Human Rights	
Ms. May	7492
The Environment	
Ms. May	7492
Questions Passed as Orders for Returns	
Mr. Lukiwski	7492

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs, Growth and Long-Term Prosperity Act	
Bill C-38—Time Allocation Motion	
Mr. Menzies	7492
Motion	7492
Mr. Cullen	7493
Mr. Pacetti	7493
Mr. Blanchette	7493
Mr. Bellavance	7494
Mr. Toone	7494
Mr. Hsu	7494
Mr. Van Kesteren	7494
Mrs. Turmel	7495
Mr. Marston	7496
Mr. Warawa	7496
Mrs. Hughes	7496
Mr. Easter	7496
Ms. May	7496
Motion agreed to	7498

SECOND READING

Bill C-38. Second reading	7498
Mr. Kent	7498
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	7499
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7499
Mr. Adler	7499
Mr. Bevington	7500
Mr. Casey	7501
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	7501
Mr. Lamoureux	7502
Mrs. Glover	7503
Mr. Sullivan	7503
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7504
Mr. Rousseau	7504
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	7505
Mr. Kerr	7505
Mr. Bevington	7506
Ms. May	7507
Mrs. Glover	7507
Mrs. Glover	7507
Mrs. Hughes	7509
Mr. Lamoureux	7509
Ms. Davies (Vancouver East)	7509
Mr. Lamoureux	7511
Mrs. Glover	7511
Mr. Bevington	7511
Mr. Lamoureux	7513
Mr. Jean	7513
Mr. Jean	7513
Mr. Blanchette	7515
Mr. McQuinty	7515
Ms. Adams	7515
Ms. Adams	7515
Mr. Garrison	7517
Mr. Lamoureux	7517
Mr. Allen (Welland)	7518
Ms. Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	7519
Mr. Lemieux	7519

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Kitchener Rangers	
Mr. Braid	7520
Randy Kapashesit	
Mr. Angus	7520
International Trade	
Mr. Trottier	7520
Human Rights	
Ms. Sgro	7520
2012 RBC Cup	
Mr. Trost	7521

Mefloquine	
Ms. Raynault	7521
Manufacturing Industry	
Mr. Adler	7521
Beef Industry	
Mr. Sorenson	7521
Great Places in Canada Competition	
Ms. Nash	7522
Polish Constitution Day	
Mr. Lizon	7522
Daniel Larouche	
Mr. Côté	7522
New Democratic Party of Canada	
Mr. Gourde	7522
World Press Freedom Day	
Mr. Cotler	7522
Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada	
Mr. Jean	7523
World Press Freedom Day	
Ms. Blanchette-Lamothe	7523
New Democratic Party of Canada	
Mrs. Ambler	7523

ORAL QUESTIONS

National Defence	
Ms. Leslie	7523
Mr. Harper	7523
Ms. Leslie	7523
Mr. Harper	7524
Ms. Leslie	7524
Mr. Harper	7524
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	7524
Mr. MacKay	7524
Mr. Harris (St. John's East)	7524
Mr. MacKay	7524
Mr. Garneau	7524
Mr. Harper	7524
Mr. Garneau	7524
Mr. Harper	7525
Mr. McKay	7525
Mr. Harper	7525
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	7525
Mr. MacKay	7525
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	7525
Mr. MacKay	7525
Mr. Kellway	7525
Mr. MacKay	7525
Mr. Kellway	7525
Mr. MacKay	7525
Ministerial Expenditures	
Mr. Boulerice	7526
Mr. Clement	7526
Mr. Boulerice	7526

Mr. Clement	7526
Mr. Angus	7526
Mr. Clement	7526
Mr. Angus	7526
Mr. Clement	7526
Aboriginal Affairs	
Ms. Crowder	7527
Mr. Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	7527
Access to Information	
Mr. Goodale	7527
Mr. Poilievre	7527
National Defence	
Ms. Fry	7527
Mr. MacKay	7527
Official Languages	
Mr. Dion	7527
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7528
The Environment	
Mr. Mai	7528
Mr. Kent	7528
Mr. Mai	7528
Mr. Kent	7528
Mr. Cullen	7528
Mr. Kent	7528
Mr. Cullen	7528
Mr. Kent	7528
Sealing Industry	
Mrs. O'Neill Gordon	7529
Mr. Ashfield	7529
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation	
Mr. Nantel	7529
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7529
Mr. Cash	7529
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7529
Official Languages	
Mr. Godin	7529
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7529
Mr. Godin	7529
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7530
The Budget	
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7530
Mr. Oliver	7530
Mr. Scarpaleggia	7530
Mr. Lemieux	7530
Foreign Affairs	
Mr. Dewar	7530
Mr. Obhrai	7530
Ms. Laverdière	7530
Mr. Obhrai	7530
Status of Women	
Ms. James	7530
Mrs. Truppe	7530

Science and Technology	
Mr. Hsu	7531
Mr. Goodyear	7531
The Environment	
Mr. Choquette	7531
Mr. Kent	7531
Canada Revenue Agency	
Mr. Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	7531
Mrs. Shea	7531
Finance	
Mr. Thibeault	7531
Mr. Flaherty	7532
Freedom of the Press	
Mr. Fortin	7532
Mr. Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	7532
Presence in Gallery	
The Speaker	7532
Business of the House	
Mr. Cullen	7532
Mr. Van Loan	7532

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act	
Bill C-38. Second reading	7533
Mr. Atamanenko	7533
Ms. Raynault	7534
Mrs. Day	7534
Mr. Saganash	7534
Ms. Young (Vancouver South)	7534
Ms. Raynault	7536
Mr. Hsu	7536
Mr. Wallace	7536
Ms. May	7536
Mr. Strahl	7537
Mr. Larose	7538
Mr. Simms	7538
Mr. Cotler	7539
Ms. Raynault	7540
Mr. Hsu	7540
Mr. Angus	7541
Ms. Duncan (Etobicoke North)	7541
Mr. Wallace	7542
Mrs. Day	7543
Mr. Hsu	7543

Ms. Findlay	7543
Mr. Saganash	7544
Mr. Simms	7545
Mr. Wallace	7545
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	7546
Mr. Simms	7547
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	7547
Ms. May	7548
Mr. Masse	7548
Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	7549
Ms. Freeman	7549
Mr. Paradis	7550
Mrs. Day	7550
Mr. Hoback	7551
Ms. Raynault	7552
Mr. Bezan	7553
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	7553
Mr. Ashfield	7553
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	7555
Mr. Kamp	7555
Mr. Masse	7555
Mr. Wallace	7557
Ms. LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	7557
Mr. Hsu	7557

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Canada Labour Code	
Bill C-307. Second reading	7558
Mr. Simms	7558
Ms. Brosseau	7559
Ms. Liu	7560
Ms. Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	7561
Mrs. Day	7563
Ms. Freeman	7564
Mr. Boulерice	7565
Division on Motion deferred	7565

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

Public Transit	
Mr. Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	7566
Mr. Kamp	7566
Aboriginal Affairs	
Mr. Genest-Jourdain	7567
Mr. Kamp	7568
Fisheries and Oceans	
Mr. Toone	7568
Mr. Kamp	7569

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